

# First Generation Marketing

Importance of the Ethnicity of First Generation Immigrants in Developing Marketing Strategies to serve Indian Diaspora in the USA

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# ABSTRACT

This research study uses two theoretical scales from consumer behavior and social psychology to explore the notion of ethnicity and arrive at strategic implications for marketers targeting the Indian diaspora in the United States. Empirical data was obtained from a sample of customers in an ethnic diaspora, a validation of the relationship between brand community integration scale and the Suinn-Lew ethnicity scale performed. The results of this study contribute in introducing a respected scale in social psychology to the marketing literature, validating an existing scale of brand community in the ethnic marketing context, and suggesting implications for future research with larger samples and scope. Findings of the study are of interest to Indian firms utilizing marketing strategies to reach ethnic minorities within the country. In additions, firms in other countries would find the results of the study to be of interest as they employ marketing strategies targeting the ethnic diaspora in the USA.



# **INTRODUCTION**

The American marketscape is replete with substantial and profitable segments of customers that identify themselves as ethnic minorities. An always and ever growing population in the United States is becoming more and more diverse. Soon we as a nation will have to reexamine the definition of ethnic minorities as the traditional ethnicities referred to as minorities are quickly becoming the majority (Nasser and Overberg 2004). This research examines the impact of a person's ethnic identity upon marketing stimuli that are presented to them. We attempt to answer research questions that deal with consumption patterns of ethnic minorities in the USA. How does ethnicity impact the purchase patterns of customers? Do customers continue to demand, procure, and consume products from their home country? How may such preferences aid a marketer in serving these customers in a better fashion? What are the strategic marketing implications for corporations – domestic and global – as they market to the ethnic minorities in the United States?

It is becoming more and more apparent to marketers that customer segments that unite by virtue of their affinity for a specific brand often behave as a community (Quinn and Devasagayam 2005). According to Muniz and O'Guinn, brand communities are "based on a structured set of relationships among admirers of a brand" (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001, p.412). Quinn and Devasagayam (2005) state that "An Individual's feeling of connection between oneself and one's cultural heritage can be referred to as one's self-ethnicity". In this research, we combine the constructs of brand community and self-ethnicity to seek answers to some of the research questions raised earlier. For this study, we specifically examined first generation Asian Americans from the India subcontinent. Our goal was to build on the Quinn and Devasagayam paper that posits measurement scales for both these constructs.



# ESEARCH SETTING

The United States of America's foundation was based upon welcoming immigrants from all over the world. As time has progressed the number of different races and ethnicities found in the US have grown considerably. Table 1 shows data from the United States General Demographic Characteristics: 2004 American Community Survey (factfinder.census.gov) related to the different ethnic minorities in the US.

# Table 1

## United States General Demographic Characteristics: 2004 American Community Survey

General Demographic Characteristics 2004	Estimate
Total population	285,691,501
One race	280,285,784
White	216,036,244
Black or African American	34,772,381
American Indian and Alaska Native	2,151,322
Asian	12,097,281
Asian Indian	2,245,239
Chinese, except Taiwanese	2,829,627
Filipino	2,148,227
Japanese	832,039
Korean	1,251,092
Vietnamese	1,267,510
Other Asian	1,523,547
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	403,832

Table based on 2004 American Community Survey (factfinder.census.gov)

In a recent article, USA Today reports that in 208 of the nation's three thousand plus counties diversity has spread to the point that whites who are not Hispanic have lost the majority status, a characteristic that has altered since the 2000 census. As of the 2003 Census white Americans make up 68% of the population, however all trends lead experts to believe that a rapid shift in this statistic is in progress. One such expert, Robert Lang, the head of the Metropolitan Institute at Virginia Tech posits that, " ... [in a few years] ... the majority will be the minority and we'll re-label minorities the majority - it's just a matter of time." (Nasser and Overberg 2004).



# MERICAN-ASIAN INDIAN ETHNICITY

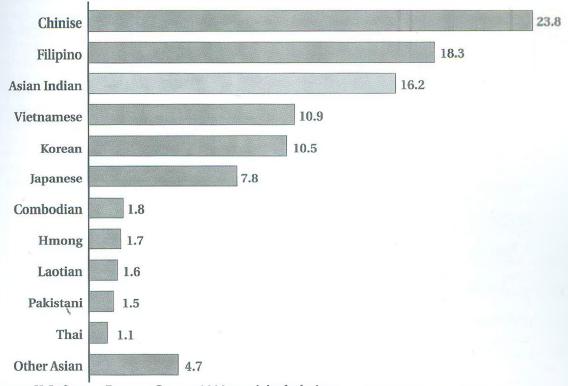
In order to facilitate an understanding of our sample -- the ethnic diaspora from India, it might be prudent to examine the salient features and resultant market potential of this group. "The 2000 U.S. Census shows the

existence of several notable trends among Indian Americans living on American soil. The census data shows that as much as 75 percent of Asian Indians living in America were born outside of the country. Perhaps even more startling than this figure is the fact that over 50 percent of them migrated to America between 1990 and 2000. Quinn and Devasagayam (2005) point out that the census revealed interesting facts about the education and careers of Asian Indians. About 64 percent of Asian Americans living here reported having at least a bachelor's degree, which is the highest rate among immigrants from Asia.

Asian Indians also had the highest rate of labor force participation, with 79 percent. Sixty percent of Asian Indians reported being employed in management, professional, and related occupations. In contrast, less than 15 percent of Asian Indians reported being employed in the service sector. In terms of earnings, Asian Indians held the highest year-round full-time median earnings of all Asian categories with \$51,900. Asian Indian women were found to earn between \$4,300 and \$8,800 more annually than all women represented in the census (Quinn & Devasagayam 2005).

Included are some graphs which visually represent trends seen in the Asian Indian American community and are compared with other Asian immigrant communities. We have included these graphs to further aid the reader in gaining an understanding of the Asian Indian community in the U.S. as well as the opportunity it presents to businesses that choose to target this substantial, growing, and profitable segment.

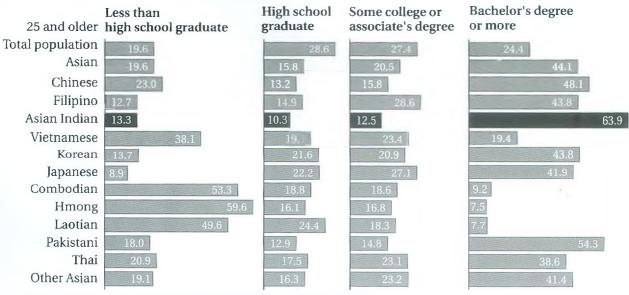
Asian Population by Detailed Group 2000 (Percent distribution. Data based on sample for information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, non sampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation.

## **Educational Attainment: 2000**

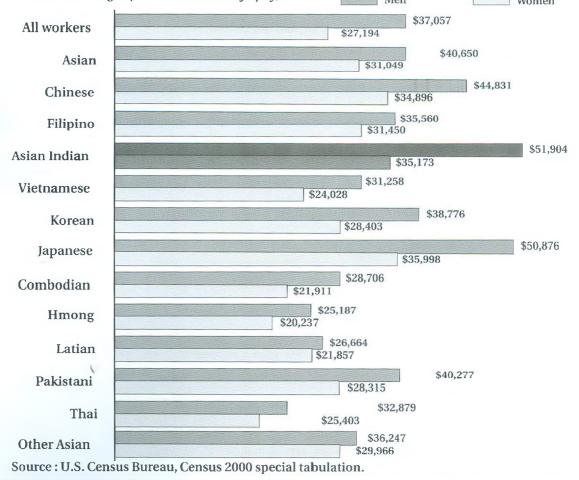
(Percent distribution of population 25 and older-Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, non sampling error, and definitions, see *www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf*)

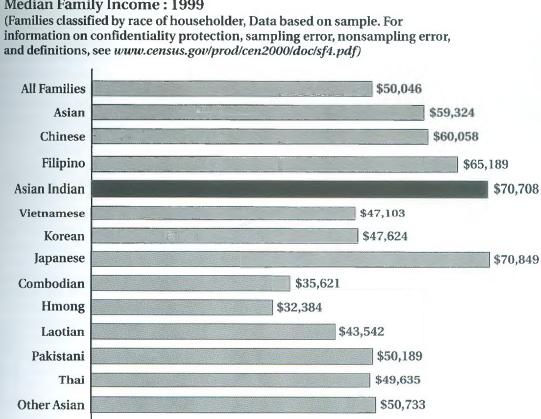


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation.

# Median Earnings by Sex: 1999

(For employed full -time, year-round workers 16 and older. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, non sampling error, and definitions, see www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/doc/sf4.pdf) Men Women





# Median Family Income: 1999

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 special tabulation.

Our research of the Indian diaspora in the USA highlights several interesting facts. First and foremost, the Asian Indian population in America is growing at a steady and surprising rate. Next, the vast majority of this population was born outside of the country, and thus can be expected to have at least some affinity to their homeland and home brands. The Asian Indian population in America is also extremely well educated, as well as extremely active in the workforce. The percentage of Asian Indians working in the professional sector is about four times as large as the percentage working in service jobs; the professional sector is traditionally viewed to offer good earning potential and growth. Median earnings for both men and women topped the rest of the Asian population, and even the American population in some cases. As we conclude this section of the paper, it is clear that there is a rapidly growing population of well-educated, wealthy Asian Indian men and women living in the United States. These facts in mind, this population is arguably the most attractive growing immigrant market existing in the US today, and should be treated by marketers as such.



# **HEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

This study uses the scales of ethnicity and brand community modified and validated by Quinn and Devasagayam (2005) in the cross-cultural marketing context. Their previous study was based on two preexisting theoretical constructs and scales. First, a brand community scale (McAlexander, and Schouten 2002) that measures a customer's felt sense of belonging in a consumption community through a shared brand experience. Second, an ethnic self-identity scale, measuring one's level of acculturation from his or her traditional culture to modern American culture and resultant ethnic identity" (Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, and Vigil 1987).

Brand community is defined by McAlexander, Shouten, and Koenig (2002) as, "Communities whose primary bases of identification are either brands or consumption activities, that is, whose meaningfulness is negotiated through the symbolism of the marketplace. A brand community is a specialized, nongeographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand. It is specialized because at its center is a branded good or service. A brand community from a customer-experiential perspective is a fabric of relationships in which the customer is situated. Crucial relationships include those between the customer and the brand, between the customer and the firm, between the customer and the product in use, and among fellow customers."

The existence and influence of Brand communities continue to offer specific brands the opportunity to involve the customer in a variety of relationships with the brand and with additional customers of that same brand. Traditionally customer and brand relationships were viewed as a one to one

relationship. Brand communities have gone a step above this and have offered customers the feeling of belonging in a special relationship similar to that of a social network. Based on the work of Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), Algeheumer, Dholakia, and Herrnann (2005) discuss the cognitive component of brand community and state that "...identification with the brand community involves categorization processes, whereby the consumer formulates and maintains a self-awareness of his or her membership within the community (e.g. "I see myself as part of the community"), emphasizing the perceived similarities with other community members and dissimilarities with nonmembers". It has been shown in previous studies that the formation of brand communities can cause strong bonds among brand customers and ultimately can influence a customer's decision in a specific marketplace (Algeheumer, Dholakia, and Herrnann 2005).

Many different types of brand communities have been identified that include a seemingly heterogeneous group of customers displaying diverse characteristics but with a common interest in a common brand. McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig (2002) found that customers that attended Jeep Brandfest exhibited a significant increase in their affinity for the Jeep products they owned. Muniz and O'Guinn's (2001) study emphasized the information sharing and caring that the Macintosh computer community members provide for each other. Muniz and Schau (2005) found a vibrant and still very active brand community that was built around the Newton brand of Apple Computers Inc. six years after the brand was discontinued! (See O'Guinn, Algeheumer, and Dholakia, 2005 for more details).

In McAlexander, Shouten, and Koenig's (2002) study they use an ethnographic fieldwork methodology when reporting their study of brand communities. Using this methodology, they continue to triangulate their findings with a quantitative study that uses a customer-centric relationship scale to form a composite brand community integration scale. Using a five point Likert type scale, four customer relationships were measured: owner-to-product, owner-to-brand, owner-tocompany, and owner-to-other-owners.

Each scale had multiple-item measures founded on the theoretical underpinnings of the ethnographic study by the authors. They then proceeded to conduct Confirmatory Factor analysis (n = 259) at both first and second-order construct levels to see if the individual dimensions of the construct did in fact converge and display validity in measuring the higher-order construct of brand community. McAlexander et al (2002) report good psychometric properties of the scales used to ascertain the construct validity of the overall integration in brand community.

The scales used in our study are based on those developed by Quinn and Devasagayam (2005) which were modified versions of the scales employed and tested by McAlexander et al (2002) with contextual changes made to ensure conformity to the research setting. Based on this prior study, in our study respondents were asked to look over a brief list of popular ethnic brands from the India subcontinent when responding to our brand community scale. We have reworded and slightly modified the questions used by Quinn & Devasagayam (2005) per their recommendations at the conclusion of their study. In keeping with the original scale, our measurements are based on five-point Likert-type scale anchored by (1) "Strongly Disagree," and (5) "Strongly Agree." (see Table 1 in the Appendix)



### **CCULTURATION AND ETHNICITY**

The definition of acculturation and ethnicity we use is from Suinn and Lew's (1987) original work:

"a process that can occur when two or more cultures interact together. There are several possible outcomes of this process, including assimilation, whereby a host culture absorbs the immigrant culture, or multiculturalism, whereby both cultures exist side-by-side. On an individual level, exposure to another culture can lead a person to resisting change in his/her values and behavioral competencies, adopting the host culture's values and behavioral skills and styles as a replacement for his/her parent culture's values/behaviors, acquiring host culture values/behaviors while retaining parent culture values/behaviors are in effect at different time."

The level of acculturation and resultant self-identified ethnicity of an individual is conceived to be based on several factors, including the subject's personality, the amount of duration of one's stay in the host country, and the willingness to adopt and embrace new ideas and values. Suinn and Lew present an instrument designed to measure an individual's level of acculturation, along with a scale, which serves to gauge the ethnic self-identity of Asian Americans. The Suinn and Lew scale is a well respected and oft used scale which has formed the bases of several research streams in the social psychology literature (Negy et al 2003; Del Pillar and Udasco 2004; Reeves and Bennett 2004).

As suggested by Quinn and Devasagayam (2005) in adapting the Suinn & Lew scale for our study, we attempted to maintain the original flow and style while providing ease of response. As the participants in our study were random volunteers (as opposed to students or other cooperative groups) we wanted to minimize the time needed for them to contribute to our study. We followed the Quinn and Devasagayam scale format of the Suinn and Lew scale of rating 1 through 5, with (1) being 'Strongly Disagree' and (5) being 'Strongly Agree.' This also helped us in ensuring consistency with the brand community scale. We included clearly stated instructions in order to ensure participation of first generation immigrants that might not be well versed with the English language. For our research, we decided to focus on Americans with Indian heritage, as such, the survey was adapted to appropriately reflect and respect their cultural diversity.

Listed below are some of the original questions from the Suinn and Lew's scale. Do you:

- 1. Read an Asian language better than English?
- 2. Read both Asian and English equally well?
- 3. Read English better than an Asian language?
- 4. Write an Asian language better than English?
- 5. Write both Asian and English equally well?
- 6. Write English better than an Asian language?

Based on the questions of from Suinn and Lew's scale and the subsequent revision by Quinn and Devasagayam (2005) we use the validated scale in our study with minor modifications (see Table 2 in the Appendix).

### **ETHODOLOGY**

### **Development of Measures**

We began by pretesting the data collection instrument. We made every attempt to ensure that the survey was manageable and

efficient in terms of ease of response. A second wave of pretesting was done with an edited and modified questionnaire based on the results of the first pretest. We then proceeded to reformat the survey with aesthetics and the logical flow of content in mind.

Our ethnicity scale consists of a 13 item Likert-type scale, anchored by (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Respondents were alerted that the word "Ethnic" in these items referred to their Indian heritage. In order to ensure that the respondents were attentive to the implications of the statements, five items were reverse-scaled. Prior to conducting an analysis of the scale, these items were recoded in the right direction.

The Cronbach's alpha for the ethnicity scale was found to be 0.819. A scale item (referring to participation in Ethnic holidays) had an item-to-total correlation of +0.211 and was removed from further analysis. Interviews with members of the ethnic community under study revealed that the Indian diaspora is not usually aware of holidays that are based on a lunar calendar developed in the Indian subcontinent. A more refined 12-item ethnicity scale resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.876. We decided to use this scale for all further analysis. Similarly, the Brand Community scale displayed excellent psychometric properties. The 12-item scale had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.947, which was not surprising given the use of this scale in prior studies and the refinements that have all been found to be robust.

### **Participant Selection**

Data was collected through an anonymous survey. Survey participants were asked to fill out surveys in person on a volunteer basis, and through an online survey. Online copies of this survey were e-mailed to members of the TRICITY India Association with the appropriate permission. Data collection took place at various events including the Association of Indian Economic Studies – Sixteenth Biennial Conference and the TriCity India Association, Inc.'s Spring Festival Of India. As a token of out appreciation survey participants were offered the option to be entered into a drawing for one of five gift certificates toward Fine Indian Restaurants in the Capital District. Drawing information was kept completely separate from the survey data in order to ensure anonymity.

### Sample Characteristics & Measures

Sample Profile (N=61)			
Gender		Household Income	
Male	61.8%	Below \$19,900	2.0%
Female	38.2%	\$20,000-\$29,900	2.0%
	\$30,000-\$49,900	7.8%	
Age		\$50,000-\$74,900	27.5%
18-24	5.3%	\$75.000-\$99.900	31.4%
25-34	28.1%	\$100.000-\$149.900	27.5%
35-44	40.4%	\$150.000+	2.0%
45-54	12.3%		
55-64	10.5%		
65+	3.5%		
Educational Level		Size of Family living at home	
High School Graduate	8.8%	1	3.4%
College	31.6%	2 - 4	87.9%
Masters	45.6%	5-7	8.6%
Ph. D	14.0%	8+	0.0%
Occupational Status			
Student	5.5%	NONE	31.5%
Homemaker	7.3%	1	25.9%
Skilled/Service Worker	7.3%	2	40.7%
Professional	72.7%	3	1.9%
Retired	1.8%		
Other	5.5%		

Of the 61 participants surveyed the majority were male (62%) between the ages of 35 and 40 (40%) with an education at the Masters level (46%). An overwhelming amount of our survey participants are currently professionals in the job market (73%) with a household incomes ranging between \$50,000 and \$149,900 (86%) and have families of 2-4 people (88%) of which 2 of them are children under the age of 18 (41%). We also noticed that all of the members of our sample (100%) are 1st generation immigrants born in a country other than the United States (India/Pakistan) and in addition 86% of our respondents stated that they were raised in India/Pakistan only. Another critical fact to include; 76% of respondents identify themselves as Indian.



### INDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results from an Analysis of Variance procedure indicated that the self-reported ethnicity measure had a statistically significant impact on the respondent's perceived relationship with the brand

(F=2.963, p: 0.091). Specifically the relationship between the brand and ones ethnic heritage was deemed to be of importance (average response of 4.931 on a 5-point scale) by the respondent. This finding is important in its implication that the self-reported ethnicity of a customer might be important in promoting the brand as one that is cloaked in ethnic heritage over other characteristics of the product.

Results indicate that the ethnic origin of friends and peers one had in their formative years (we asked both up to age six and then from age 6 through 18) is a significant predictor of one's ethnicity. The ethnicity of a respondent as measured by their friendships up to the age of six had a significant impact on the respondent's perceived relationship with a brand, with the sponsor of a brand, as well as the fellow owners of a brand. The respondents indicated that whether they would recommend a brand to friends within their stated ethnicity (F=2.376, p: 0.082) and to friends from other ethnicities (F=3.974, p: 0.013) are significantly influenced by the friendship up to age 6 measure of ethnicity. Friendship up to age 6 measure was also found to have a significant impact on the sense of kinship with other owners of the brand (mean 4.6, F=4.104, p: 0.012) and an interest in meeting other owners with similar interest in the brand (mean 4.4, F=4.957, p: 0.005). These findings provide strategic direction in organizing brandfests and events in addition to guiding promotional decisions in sponsoring ethnic events. A significant impact was also detected in the relationship between the owner and the sponsoring company (mean 3.02, F=2.379, p:0.081). In addition to these measures of brand community, results indicated that the ethnicity measure of friends up to age 6 influenced other constructs of brand community, albeit such influences were not statistically significant at the .1 level. Future studies might be well advised to explore these constructs further with a larger sample size. The friends and peers up to age 6 findings could provide interesting avenues of exploring proxy measures of ethnicity for corporations that would like to ascertain the ethnicity of

### their customers.

The ethnicity measure of friends and peers between the ages of 6 and 18 was seen to have a statistically significant impact on the how customers view a brand as a representation of their culture, the owner-to-owner constructs mentioned above, and the owner to company relationship. All these items were statistically influenced by this proxy measure of ethnicity at the 0.10 level. In fact, more noteworthy might be the fact that both friendship and peers measures (up to six and from 6 to 18 years of age) did not statistically (mean 1.28, F=1.512, p: 0.214) display any influence on a customer's perception of product quality represented by a brand. Managerially, this finding would underscore the importance of communicating product attributes that are closely related to ones ethnicity over product quality when approaching ethnic markets.

The educational level of respondents was found to significantly affect the owner to brand ties. The decision to recommend brands to friends of similar ethnicity was significant at the .05 level (F=3.016, p:0.038) and the decision to recommend brands across ethnicity was significant as well (F=2.942, p:0.042). However, the strength of association seemed to differ, the mean score on within ethnic background was close to 3 while across ethnicity was 1.97. One could conclude (albeit with caution due to limited sample size) that the decision to recommend a brand within ones ethnic community as opposed to across ethnicities might not follow the same directionality as the level of education of the respondent changes. Further analysis with larger sample size will be needed to make a definitive comparison of these two important owner-to-owner relational constructs.

Other classificatory variables followed the logical patterns expected. For instance, larger family sizes necessitated more frequent and larger purchases and therefore had significant impact on a respondent's shopping cart. Surprisingly, the size of family significantly influenced the respondent's perception of the owner to company relationship. Respondent views on how far a company understands their needs and cares about their opinion varied by family size. We are unable to explain this finding in a meaningful manner at this time.



## ONCLUSION

While the findings of this research are of interest to domestic firms that would like to serve the substantial and profitable market segment of ethnic immigrants, we believe that the findings also provide strategic

insights for international firms interested in serving their respective ethnic diaspora. The relationship between ethnicity and membership in brand community is a strong one, as our findings indicate. This bond provides a variety of strategic opportunities for marketer, while Indians in the US may not constitute a "captive audience" for marketers, their strong sense of ethnicity will undoubtedly result in favorable outcomes for marketers who appeal to their sense of national pride and loyalty.

A conceptual contribution that our research makes is in the arena of suggesting measurement scales that attempt to visualize abstract concepts of ethnicity and integration into brand communities. Companies would benefit from using our scales to measure, quantify, predict, and forecast hitherto esoteric constructs that are already in existence among their customers. The next logical step would be to integrate the firm specific (perhaps brand specific) findings in the day-to-day marketing of their products.

This study is a preliminary attempt at exploring the important ties between ethnicity and brand community that is founded on ethnic heritage. As is usually the case with exploratory studies of this nature, we must underline several limitations of our research findings. With larger samples, perhaps patterns of diaspora in different regions of the USA might be of interest to marketers. Similarly, the findings within the US based diaspora might not be generalizable to the Indian diaspora

### scattered across the globe.

Given the limited sample size of the study, we find our results to be encouraging. We foresee a need for continued study of the relationship between ethnicity and membership in brand community. Larger sample sizes would aid in clarifying the relationship between these important constructs and the implications could be of interest to both domestic and foreign firms. Marketing strategies that focus on invoking a sense of homeland could lead to favorable purchase decisions and, more importantly, membership in a brand community that nurtures the sponsoring brand. It would also be prudent for companies to conceive and foster communities built around strong brands that find their origin in distant lands. For example, Hormel foods is currently marketing Pathak's Spices in the USA and might consider building brand communities that partake in the use of their product in a variety of regional Indian cuisines and recipes. Ethnic brands such as Brooke Bond Tea leaves, Lijjat Papad, and Bedekar Pickles have brand loyal customers that would react favorably to marketing strategies that appeal to their ethnic identity and pride.

### APPENDIX

Table 1: Ethnic Product Brand Community Scale	Table 2: Modified Ethnic Self-Identity Scale					
These brands are among my most common	I fluently speak English	1	2	3	4	5
purchases These brands provide products of the highest	I fluently speak my Ethnic language	1	2	3	4	5
quality I value the connection between these brands and	I prefer speaking in my Ethnic language over English	1	2	3	4	5
my heritage	I prefer reading in my Ethnic language	1	2	3	4	5
I value the culture that these brands represent I would recommend these brands to my friends of	I prefer writing in my Ethnic language	1	2	3	4	5
similar ethnicity	I prefer performing arithmetic in my Ethnic language	1	2	3	4	5
I would recommend these brands to my friends of differing ethnicity	I prefer eating Ethnic cuisine	1	2	3	4	5
I feel a sense of kinship with other consumers of I participate in Ethnic celebrations and holidays		1	2	3	4	5
these brands	I believe in Ethnic values about marriage, families, education, work	1	2	3	4	5
l have an interest in meeting others that are interested in these brands	I believe in American values about marriage, families, education, work	1	2	3	4	5
The companies that offer these brands understand my needs	I fit well with my Ethnic community	1	2	3	4	5
The companies that offer these brands care about my opinion	I prefer Ethnic movies to English movies	1	2	3	4	5
I love these brands	I prefer Ethnic music to English music	1	2	3	4	5
Lam proud of these brands	For the following questions please base your answers on the following					
	1 = Indian, 2 = Pakistani, 3 =Indian-American, 4 = Pakistani-American, 5 = American					
Which identification does (did) your mother use?						
Which identification does (did) your father use?   What identifications do your children use? (If applicable)						

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