

# Minority Marketing

*the changing face of your target market*

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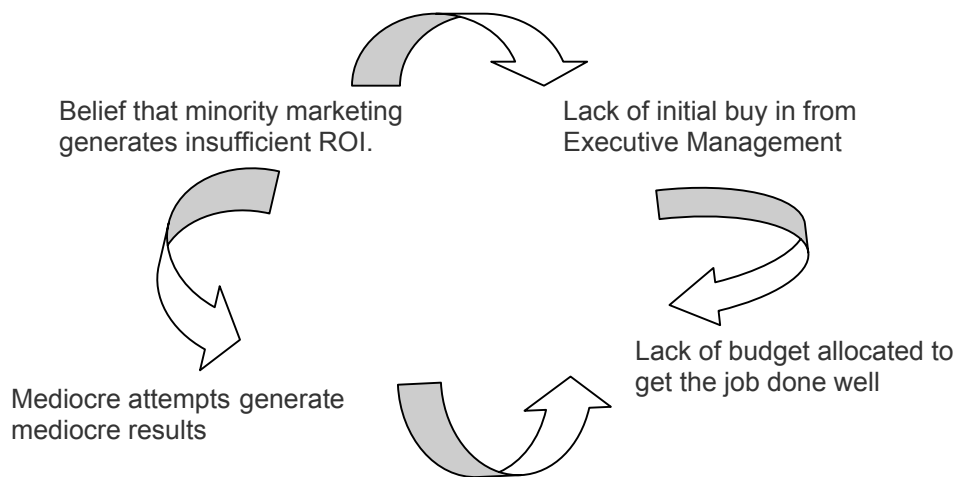
# Sample Chapters

## Chapter 1

We all know sales people will not sell something they are not intimately familiar or comfortable with. They may talk about a good talk to Executives, eagerly nodding heads in training session, but then the minute they are out in the field they quickly revert back to what they know best. They are initially intimidated by the change that comes with the arrival of a new ideology or product - fear of getting the message wrong in front of a customer, for fear of being embarrassed. So they stick to what they know. So it is with Minority Marketing – companies are sticking with what they know best – mainstream marketing to a Caucasian American audience.

When it comes to race, marketing professionals dance around the real issues, sweeping them under the rug and developing complex marketing strategies to hide the fact that the obstacles that come up in practice are never addressed.

Why?



After eleven years of sales and marketing consulting within an array of industries and technologies, in three continents I noticed the same troubling pattern across every industry from Financial Services to Fashion; Minority Marketing is an untapped niche, jam packed with opportunity, increasing at a tremendous rate.

I have created and executed countless marketing strategies and been the target of many more. I have read books and attended seminars by marketing gurus who I respect and admire and conclude that marketing has largely become a one size fits all, archaic machine with little regard for the immense diversity of cultural, religious, ethnic and socio-economic diversity that so richly makes up many of our communities.

We have developed the habit of churning out marketing efforts in the way we always have and are suddenly surprised when we don't get the results we always have. Although the make-up of our communities has not suddenly changed, their buying power has. In the past it simply wasn't regarded as important, or economically logical, to target minority groups. Now it is, and those who pay attention will reap the rewards. Those who don't – won't.

The increase in buying power among minorities is no secret though. Its widely acknowledged and discussed. The key question becomes who are these people? Who are these minorities that are suddenly showing up on the Executive radar screen because of their improved socio-economic standing?

Here lies the real core of the problem. Who corporate America thinks minorities are is often inaccurate. The reasons for this are undoubtedly far ranging, but one answer is the lack of international travel by Americans. The average American travels far less than many other nationals and as such has an often-warped sense of geography, history and culture of international neighbors.

I posted a random question online in an international chat room, specifically asking, "How often do Americans Travel" to try and uncover some statistics. The comments back were both entertaining and informative. Demonstrating what a heated debate this topic is fodder for, they provide us with a taste of the International perception of Americas cultural appreciation. Here is a sample of the comments:

**Andrea:**

One of the reasons America is sometimes described as being an insular country is the low ownership of passports, and thus the low rate of international travel. Which in some ways is fair enough; in comparison to Europeans, for example, popping over to another country is often a bigger deal than jumping on a train.

I have found numerous statistics ranging from 7% to 25%. Does anyone know the real answer?

**Comment from: India**

I can't find an official government statistic for passport ownership. I have found the number of passports issued per year. First, let's be generous and say that every passport was issued to an adult and therefore lasts ten years. Assuming that everyone who's been issued a passport over the last ten years still has it, that's 60,884,784 people with US passports. Given the US population is around 280 million, that gives us 21.7 per cent owning passports. Taking into account some of these will be five year passports, we have a figure that's probably a little under 20 per cent.

Incidentally, there is a dramatic rise in the number of US passports issued per year over the last ten years. This may account for some of the lower figures people give; they could simply be out of date. If the rate of issue stabilised at around 7 million per year, even without further growth, by 2013 around a quarter of US citizens will own a passport (assuming the same total population).

**Comment from: Mexico**

It'd be interesting to see how many of these passport-owners are newly naturalised American citizens, for whom getting a US passport is a natural step to ensure less hassle by the INS when travelling.

Anyway, there's also the fact that it is increasingly harder as an American to travel to Canada and Mexico without one.

Add on the fact that the US is big enough for you to travel domestically for a lifetime and still think a) you've seen a hell of a lot of world; and b) you've still a lot of world to see.

**Comment from: United Kingdom**

The equivalent of the costa brava for most Americans is either Florida or Hawaii, depending on where they live. The cheap package holiday which Europeans take for granted has no equivalent in the states and most Americans enjoy a miserable holiday allowance until they retire.

I don't think they are any more or less insular than we (English) are. They do have trouble understanding people without cars.

**Comment from: American living in UK**

I would add that — despite what people flaunting this statistic seem to assume — the mere act of travelling to another country does not necessarily make one any less ignorant, provincial, etc. While the British do travel abroad quite often, many of them just want to go clubbing, stock up on cheap booze or stay in beach resorts populated entirely by other British tourists.

By contrast, an American who has planned and saved his whole life for a trip to Spain is probably intending to SEE Spain, not to kill as many brain cells as possible in Ibiza.

Americans can indeed spend a lifetime travelling around their country — but I think the British could as well, if they wanted to. Britain packs a startling amount of cultural and linguistic diversity into a small space, but it seems that its citizens are not taught to take pride in this or to explore it. (Londoners, in particular, often seem to know nothing about British culture beyond Hertfordshire or Kent.)

Therefore, unlike Americans, the British do not quite regard travel within their own country as being “real” travel.

I guess what I’m trying to say is that both cultures are equally ignorant! Seriously, having lived in both countries, I find that the ratio of smart people to stupid people, sophisticated people to unsophisticated people, etc., is pretty much the same. I suspect this would hold true in just about any country.

**Comment from: Argentina**

The current US passport population stands at 18% of US adults. Source : European Travel Commission. Recent research indicating that Britain is the most popular overseas destination (excluding Canada & Mexico) for US residents.

Source: Travel Industry World Yearbook 2000.

The top cities for passport ownership are: New York, 38%; San Francisco, 37%; Miami/Fort Lauderdale, 33%; West Palm Beach, 31%; San Diego, 29%; Los Angeles, 27%; Washington DC, 27%. Source: US Office of Central Statistics

**Comment from: Israel**

I think as an Israeli citizen it is unfair to sneer at Americans for not owning a passport because there are many valid reasons for not needing one including cost of holidays, finding time for holidays, living in a large and varied country to begin with and living in a country that is made up of people from other countries.

I have only been able to go abroad twice in my lifetime, mainly due to the cost.

**Comment from: Pakistan**

The average American urban dweller is subjected to 5000 advertisements per day.

The average American household has the television on more than seven and a half hours a day.

The average American urban dweller spends more of his life than ever before stuck in traffic, or working to pay for his car. It is estimated that the average car owner spends 1/6 of his waking hours either in transit or earning wages to support his vehicles(s).

I guess they are all too busy in traffic, working to pay for their car, dealing with advertisements and watching tv. It doesn't leave much time for passport applications, world travel and cultural understanding.

**Comment from: Ireland**

I found this article in the Daily Telegraph:

“A grandmother who has lived in the same village for more than 50 years could be deported from Britain tomorrow because she is considered to be an American.

“Mary Martin ... was born in America to a British mother and came to live in Britain in 1949 when she was two.

“It was only when her mother, June, died two years ago that she became aware that she did not have a birth certificate or a passport and decided to apply for them.

“However, when she attempted to sort out the documentation the Home Office responded by telling her that it did not believe that she was a long-term resident and ordered her to leave the country within days. ...

“She added that she had never previously applied for a British passport because she had no desire to go abroad, nor had enough money to do so.”

See? It's true! Those bloody Americans never get passports! :-)

(I'm happy to say that the Home Office later reviewed its decision, and Mrs Martin will be able to stay in Britain.

**Comment from: Germany**

I back-packed in over 9 countries in South America in 2001 and spent some time in Thailand in 2002, and I hardly ever saw Americans travelling (less in S.A. than Thailand, interestingly). In fact, Israelis seemed to take the cake in both S.A. and Thailand. Surprising considering the distances and costs involved. And there were definitely more Brits, and even Canadians, in S.A. than Americans. Of course, I don't have any stats to back this up, just my own subjective view.

**Comment from: Turkey**

I too was thinking about the issue of US citizens with passports, particularly in the context of recent events and claims of the alleged imperialistic stance being held by the US government.

I have lived in England and Turkey for over 8 years and it amazed me to go back to the US and find out that many Americans have never even left their state, nevermind going to another country. I think this is a better comparison to Europe since many states are equivalent in size to European countries.

The size of the country and the diversity of the terrain and climates also make international travel less necessary.

Honestly, I think the entire issue is being inflated by those Americans who like to wear their passports like a Boy Scout Merit Badge (ie, Yes, I've been to Europe, I'm so much smarter and cultured than the rest of you.)

**Comment from: America**

All of these emails make good points. It's true that America is big and diverse so maybe there isn't the need to travel. But as diverse as it is, Americans seem to know little about the foreigners in their own country. It wasn't until I traveled extensively that I appreciated that the owner of my neighborhood liquor store was from Punjab, India, or that the owner of the Thai restaurant down the street was from Chiang Mai.

Also, how many people from poor countries have passports? Countries like Tanzania or Morocco or Turkey. Many of them want to get passports just so they can go to another country and get a job.

**Comment from: Gambia**

Another possible reason for lack of US travelers abroad could be that US workers have far less vacation days (averaging 13 days) than other workers around the world, especially Europeans who average 28 days.

**Comment from: France**

I currently live as an expat in France with my husband who is working for a French company. He gets 8 weeks (!!!) of vacation here and is expected to take all of it. If he doesn't take all of it, the remaining days are banked and he receives extra vacation days the next year as "interest" on the days he couldn't take.

I worked at some very large financial institutions in New York, where you received a “generous” 3-4 weeks of vacation, but you rarely had the chance to take it, and occasionally, were asked to forgo a planned vacation because of a last minute project. In general, attitudes toward taking vacation seem to be very different in Europe.

**Comment from: Columbia**

I've figured out an amazing comparison between two countries, one of them is under a cruel dictatorship junta style government:

Burma (Myanmar)- less than 10% of the population have passports. The press is controlled by the government and anti-establishment views and reports are not published. The Government there has the right to punish people without a trial, and is pushing for stringent measures that mean even less freedom of speech. The people of Burma are unaware of what is going on in the rest of the world and have a huge poverty and unemployment problem that the government tries to cover up. The 'fatcats' of the nation dictate what policies should be adopted by the government. The government is guilty of the slaughter of innocent civilians. Sounds familiar? Thats because it is. Its identical to the USA.

**Comment from: America**

The last comment comes from someone who clearly does not understand or appreciate the USA. We are far from perfect but we are a long long way from

Burma. The comparison makes me sick. If you live in the US, you should leave. If you dont, dont bother coming. Spend your next vacation in Burma or maybe North Korea.

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After these last two comments I logged off for fear of inciting an race relations online riot!

If only a small percentage of Americans travel would this explain not only a low rate of first hand experience, but a increased reliance on media chanel to gain a global understanding? Perhaps. The travel pattern is also indicative of the level of international interest. Americans are more interested in relaxing in the sun or playing golf, than climbing Mount Kilimanjaro or seeing Girrafes in the Serengeti. They are more interested in eating burgers than Indian food. In England – even the smallest village in Lancashire has a bevy of International culanary choices. The same cannot be said for rural Kentucky.

Fundamental as you begin to explore minority marketing is your ability to identify the inate cultural differences – personal differences especially of Executive Management and business development decsion makers. We are not used to discussing personal traits in relation to such a business based topic, but this is crucial and will govern your approach to minority marketing – which is a largely creative and subjective arena.

Half of the battle is understanding what you do not know. How valuable would it be to have a survey of answers from Japanese Women identifying not only product preferences, but their perception of what American companies understand and fail to understand about their culture. This gives companies trying to target this affluent market a map to not only target them – but to target them in a way that:

- a) No-one else is doing
- b) Appeals to the very essence of who they are

Minority Marketing Agencies are popping up across the country. You may expect me to applaud this – and on one level I do. For the entrepreneurialism, for shining a light on this grey area and for consulting with corporations in an effort to accomplish a goal I share – effective and appropriate minority marketing. I do have a concern though.

Does it automatically follow that a Minority Marketing Agency, run by minorities is more efficient at targeting minorities?

No.

This is a big mistake. Marketing is a science. As such the fundamental principals of that science must always be applied, such as the importance of research discussed above.

It is ridiculous to assume the ethos that only minorities can truly market to other minorities.

The white parents that adopt a Cambodian child, immerse themselves in the culture – learning about it – so they can explain and teach it, gaining an appreciation for the cultural differences and becoming knowledgeable about a country they previously knew very little about. They do not wait to see if a documentary on Cambodia happens to come on television one afternoon. Nor do they assume they can become knowledgeable about their Cambodian child by consulting with random minority groups.

Minority Agencies must subject themselves to the same scrutiny as anyone else. Have you researched your target market – or is there an assumption that just because you are African American you understand just what it will take to target other African Americans? Or even worse – just because you are a minority you understand what it will take to target other minorities?

This type of thinking has numerous flaws.

Who are you? When you apply the stamp as a minority expert you must ask – who are you and is the personal experience you draw on reflective of a larger community and if so – who is that.

**Example:**

A group of black Marketing Executives leave a mainstream agency after years of experience and start a minority agency touting mainstream companies with their specialized minority experience. The problem is – they don't really have experience (R&D) what they have is frustration. The frustration that I too have seen and which prompted this book. The frustration of constantly seeing ineffective and offensive minority marketing. However without the R&D this new Agency is an expert in understanding, for example how three black men born in the sixties and raised in urban America, living in a metropolitan city, may react to marketing. They are no more knowledgeable about how the recent African immigrant may react, (let alone the recent Asian or European immigrant, African American women or children), than their white corporate counterparts they tout with their minority business offering. Their expertise will not even cross gender lines or socio-economic boundaries if their assumption that because they are part of a minority group "they know", results in the sacrifice of research.

If a corporation is committed to the education and fundamental research and discovery (R&D) necessary to create a solid base from which to build a minority program – then they can achieve success. As you will discover in later chapters once you have learned the science – you can quite easily adapt an existing marketing department and adapt existing resources for a successful minority campaign. It is the reluctance on the part of corporations to invest in this R&D that has propelled the numbers and success of Minority Marketing agencies.

Although necessary today, these agencies are a sign of a still very much segregated society. With this book I hope to bridge that gap.

*Minority Marketing* empowers corporations not to shirk their responsibility handing off the minority responsibility to outside experts, but to take the road less travelled and increase their internal awareness and ultimate ability to create a self sufficient voice in the diverse communities they wish to serve.

We must take the time to learn about cultural differences before one cent of marketing money is invested in a minority campaign. It is simply not enough to rely on our own personal data base of international knowledge.

On a daily basis I am charged with the duty of explaining my funny accent (English) and the color of my skin (Nigerian Dad). Americans are perplexed. Openly so after speaking to me on the phone, generating the expectation of a blonde haired blue eyed woman and having someone far from that show up! The confusion lies in large because of the image of England as a cold, wet, always foggy (ok – that part is not much of a stretch), umbrella clad, bowler hat wearing, and regal sounding, bunch of white folks. Couple that with the connotations of Africa. People seriously still believe that the average African is wandering around half naked, fighting lions and living in mud huts.

Then they meet me. Its no wonder they are confused. They have coupled the inaccurate image of these two cultures and cannot possibly believe that the result would be an educated, professional much like them in many respects.

My personal experience is confirmed repeatedly – even by my own ignorance. Every time I speak with a person of Asian origin I at least in part, expect them to speak in poor English and a heavy Korean accent. I am always surprised for a second when they sound, well – American.

My experience anecdotally, supports my theory that we must invest in ongoing global education long after we leave high school, at the corporate level. Not just as a hobby, but as an intricate piece of business operations.

We are all guilty on some level of stereotyping – but when this is applied to marketing the affects are more than just ignorance or a lack of social etiquette.

The affects are:

- a) **Missed business opportunity.** Sales teams are always looking for the new low hanging fruit. Well here you go! Here you have a largely untapped market not yet immune to the saturation of marketing messages.
- b) **Wasted marketing dollars.** As you ineffectively target the minority market.

- c) **Miss the competitive edge.** Here is your opportunity to be first to market with a product or service that you were not first to market with. Be first to the minority market, before your competitors are.

Executives often do not want to apply a minority stamp to their brand heavy with 'white washed' mainstream tradition, but are now pressured to, in order to:

- a) Appear politically correct
- b) Keep up with their competition that also wants to appear politically correct
- c) Keep up with the reality of the country: Today **minorities groups make up 25% of the United States Population** with a predicted increase to 33% by 2010 and 53% by 2040 pointing to the drastic increases in the median income, population, and education of minority groups throughout America. This is an audience with current combined **buying power of \$1.5 trillion** and growing. From Lifesavers to Life Insurance the economic potential and business opportunity cannot be ignored.

So from this somewhat warped base line the mainstream corporate culture starts to target minorities, but it's a farce. A guessing game - applying minimum effort and resources without a real consideration for results. When it comes to minority marketing (MM) the approach many companies are guilty of, is to for example, simply replace a white man with a black woman in a print ad or direct mail piece. This is both insulting and ineffective and ignores huge demographic variants.

The fear factor and risks are very real. The subject matter is fully loaded for explosion within an extremely litigious society; race, gender, religion, and ethnicity – these are areas we have been conditioned to avoid or treat with kid gloves. I suggest we take the gloves off and attack those very areas with a marketing tornado!

## **Chapter 2**

The essence of MM allows you to effectively target minority groups that are outside of the white American majority. It allows you to speak their language and have them identify with your brand. It allows you to target groups effectively, while conveying respect and sensitive. It allows you to be first to significantly impact a market that has largely been ignored, rejected or both and gain unprecedented mind share.

To understand MM, we should first take a look at the traditional mainstream approach to marketing. The Marketing Specialist's approach generally goes something like this:

What are we selling?

Who is the target market?

Gather information – may include market research, may not

Get marketing budget approved

Plan & execute a series of advertising & PR activities

## Track Results

Produce glossy ROI (Return on Investment) report

. . . Start again with a new product or service.

All this is done with strategic sales goals and objectives in mind.

The problem is, Marketing Departments and individual Marketing Specialists are running on overload and under funded budgets. As a result, one marketing project largely becomes a template for another and real market research takes a back seat. I have seen this in both boutique agencies as well as from the marketing giants responsible for creating annual campaigns for the likes of GM and Pepsi. With teams of Account and Creative Directors scrambling to win business in a tight economy, the emphasis is heavy on the creative concepts and light on the supporting research. Clients are looking for instant gratification, and quick results to fill the pipeline.

In practice the goals and objectives become: how quickly can I get the job done so I can move on to the next project and eventually, finally go home!

This is not a huge problem when your target market hasn't changed much. If you have been targeting middle aged, middle class white men and you are still targeting them you can get away with a tunnel vision focus for quite some time -

until the target group becomes immune to your approach and language that was attention getting and cutting edge, becomes passé.

Working with one of the top five financial services corporations I discovered that over 50% of their annuity clients had no idea that what they had was in fact an annuity. The marketing department that continued to flood their existing client database with messages about investing additional capital in annuities was missing one important factor; their clients had no idea what they were talking about. Their basic assumption, lack of ongoing research and client education created a huge dent in the basic principals their campaign was built on.

The bigger question is how did they get away with it? How come no one noticed that a campaign they were throwing millions of dollars at was in fact largely ineffective? All around the country corporations invest in **fear based habitual marketing**. By this I mean that they start with the premise that:

- We better do this because I'm afraid of what might happen if we don't
- We don't really know where our sales are coming from, so I dare not stop this campaign, incase this is a major driver
- We have been doing it for years and I don't want to be the one internally to effect that change and risk being wrong.

At least 75% of the clients I consult with come to me with past budgets including millions of dollars spent on largely untracked print advertising. In many cases my final business plan includes the recommendation that they stop print advertising for a year. When I announce this I have seen CEO's close to tears at the mere suggestion – riddled with fear.

This recommendation does not come lightly – but the results are astounding often uncovering

The pause in print advertising resulted in little or no change in sales

The fear factor ignited an entire company to look at the opportunity of previously ignored low hanging fruit, such as cross selling.

The revenue saved enabled new campaigns – equally or more affective

At the very least this 'cease fire' on marketing, just because we have always done it that way – gives companies an alternative and an answer; what does our print advertising really do for us and what would the results be if we did something else in stead.

When your market demographic has significantly changed and your marketing hasn't changed with it – you are just wasting your time. As Doctor Phil would say "How's that working for you"? The telecommunication companies have identified that their biggest growth sectors are African American, Asian and Latin minority groups, but with all the heave-ho of these communication giants none has

managed to establish clear leadership within these communities. No-body wants to take that brave first step. Each is waiting for the other and then there will suddenly be a scramble to the finish line.

At some point your return will diminish to such a level that all companies will all be forced to observe the basic principals of MM. Right? Wrong. Marketing Specialists are constantly criticized for rolling out marketing programs that look fantastic, and do absolutely nothing for the sales bottom line. I can still sing the commercial jingles of a company who's sales plummeted or worse, completely went out of business. The dot com era saw the abandonment of marketing fundamentals and common sense in favor of sensationalist creative with inefficient strategic planning to support it. We all remember the million dollar super bowl commercials. I'd love to see a 'where are they now' on them.

For some reason doing *something* has taken priority over doing something that actually works. The consequence is usually to replace an agency or employee with another agency or employee who will do exactly the same thing, only better. It is quite bizarre, goes against basic business principals – is emotionally driven and stems from a place of fear, insecurity and impatience.

**Fear:** that presenting a program that actually works will not appear as innovative or as interesting as the alternatives and involves someone, perhaps you, stepping out onto the ledge of un-chartered territory.

**Insecurity:** stemming from the lost of business to the world of advertising and marketing. This has made what was already a highly competitive industry, fierce. Marketing professionals now clamor for the safe bets, initiatives that are tried and tested and will provide them with job security.

**Impatience:** It takes time to properly develop and execute a truly efficient campaign. Couple a corporate environment of instant gratification, a rocky economy and a turbulent global state the value and emphasis of months or years of dedicated R&D has diminished.

In many ways marketing as a whole is screaming for a whole renaissance movement – out with the old approach! In with the new! In terms of minority marketing (MM), the old approach was that there simply wasn't one. Which prompts the next question: if companies have not done MM in the past and got along just fine and dandy, why rock the boat? Why bother now?

## Chapter 3

Even when good, valuable market research is conducted and available, you rarely see this reflected appropriately when targeting minority groups. We can all think of brands that seem to have effectively crossed the minority divide.

Here are some stereotypes of brands with their commonly associated minority group - marketing matches made in heaven:

Designer/Couture handbags (Louis Vuitton et al) = Asian Women

Heavily branded champagne (Moet & Chandon/Crystal etc) = The hip hop generation of African American Young Men

Diamond District and fur coats = Hasidic/Jewish Women

Some companies arrive at MM quite by accident – Burberry scarves became ‘must haves’ to deviant football hooligans in England. Ralph Lauren and Hennessey gained huge mind share within the young, African American, low income, hip-hop demographic. It happened by accident and companies took

advantage of it, sometimes through additional sponsorship and sometimes just by gladly accepting the sales.

For some companies – the arrival of a minority market is well welcomed at the cash register yet played down on wall street, for fear of weakening the brand identity and alienating their long established and loyal customer base.

The images of brands and minority groups have become so entrenched in our minds that they are now accepted as part of the common culture. Why then aren't more companies capitalizing on this and not just letting it happen by accident, but doing it on purpose?

The answer lies firmly rooted in paranoia. We have become overly sensitive as a society. We are afraid to speak out and identify minority groups in our marketing efforts. We are paranoid about offending and insulting them and being sued for discrimination. We are even more paranoid about offending, insulting and losing the majority group that has been our financial bread and butter.

An example of this can be seen in the business dilemma of one of my clients:

**Example:**

**CPA Wholesalers** – Owners of a distribution channel comprised of 30 top 50 (the 50 firms immediately under the big 4) accounting firms. As Wholesalers to

this channel they provide access to CPA's for insurance vendors (such as Guardian Life Insurance, Nationwide etc) who want to partner with CPA's with a goal of reaching their accounting clients with their insurance products.

Accountants have a powerful relationship with their clients and are always a call you return as a priority and an opinion you want to trust.

Through a chance venture with an Asian client the founder began to explore the Asian market and found a hot bed of potential. While the United States is flooded with CPA's and other CPA wholesalers – Asia was an untapped market with few CPA's and due to past complex government restrictions and current tax laws there is a clear need for Life insurance products. (The details of this example are proprietary in nature and as such have been purposefully withheld).

In addition there is a significant number of dual Asian/American citizens – that make business sense to target.

With this strong value proposition why are the company's investors and partners reluctant to embrace the Asian market at home or abroad?

- New unproven territory – lets stick to what we know
- Anxiety – different culture, different rules
- Threat to corporate identity and fear of perception: Is this an American Company or an Asian Company? How will our existing clients react to this?

The result was a separate corporation with separate funding is spun off to target the Asian market for fear of a culturally mixed and culturally confusing brand message.

Even corporations with claims of as a “global enterprise” with reaches in EMEA, limit these initiatives before they have chance to create a climate of corporate discomfort. There may be corporate offices in global locations, even information translated into a different languages and a dedicated manager of a region, but this cross border opportunity does not lead to any significant corporate change at the U.S. based home office.

Why doesn't the manager responsible for Brazil overseas also support or transition into a role that more accurately targets South Americans living in the US, maximizing valuable internal international resources? That individual usually falls under the sales umbrella and marketing is on a completely different planet and the two worlds rarely collaborate.

Why not take advantage of existing international relationships as part of your education process prior to a minority campaign. If you want to target 'Hispanics' in the U.S. and have a sales office in Puerto Rico – why not send your marketing/business development professional there to absorb the culture and gain a better understanding of the group they want to target. Key to understanding where minority groups are going in the future and how they will

get there is understanding where they have come from. This is the very spirit of minorities and what differentiates them and cannot be fully understood or appreciated from behind a big desk and sitting in a big chair.

I have herded Executives happy and content in their expansive offices to get out in the field. Knock on doors. Pound the pavement and experience what your sales teams experience and see your prospective clients face to face.

The experience is always enlightening and enables policy to be made not on lofty corporate dreams, but taking into account practicalities and realities.

Minority marketing is no different. Stop hiding behind your desks. Get out and discover who these people really are.

Oddly enough, the hypocrisy of this phenomenon stares us in the eye daily. It is accepted for companies to target the young or the old, women and men, the rich and the poor. Why then can't companies target Muslims in Chicago and Baptists in Philadelphia? It is even accepted that companies can target minority groups when the audience is significantly minority, but it is not accepted to address minority groups when the audience is bipartisan.

For example – during the 2003 Latin Grammy's aired on CBS all the brands seemed to pull 'Latin ad's', with great minority representation out of the closet.

Sears even showed a line of clothing by a Latin designer. As I flicked through the channels I saw an array of Sears commercials – all featuring mainstream fall advertising with very limited minority representation and certainly no mention of the Latin Designer.

It doesn't impress me that Sears put the spotlight on a minority group, during a minority dominated program. It does impress me that "Dunn and Bradstreet" sent me an invitation to a marketing seminar (with no minority or race subject matter) that had only one image and that image was of an African American woman. My colleagues – mostly white Jewish men – all received the same invitation. That is a powerful statement on a companies commitment to the minority marketing and understanding of it.

In only targeting the majority demographic, companies by default are discriminating against minorities. Just because you choose to ignore cultural differences, rather than risk portraying them incorrectly does not make you any less discriminatory. This is not an extremist approach or theory. I am not talking about partnering with some radical militia group or religious fanatic sect.

Rather practice true equality in your marketing approach. Adopt the principals that you have used to target majority groups and apply those same principals, to target minority groups. No short cuts. Do the research, learn your market and make the investment in them.

If you do bother, you will benefit by being among the first to have established mind share in the emerging market of minorities. You will also have started to prepare your organization for the future. Minorities aren't going anywhere. Statistically they become the majority within 5-10 years.

## Marketing & Minorities: Why is it SO important?

Marketing: those institutions which with increasing sophistication communicate ideas for the purpose of information, entertainment and persuasion, by newspaper, radio, television, books, magazines, sweepstakes, advertising, billboards and on, and on, and on.

Compared to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the twenty first century gives marketing huge scope both in terms of the audiences they reach and the way in which those audiences receive the message. Exposure and consumption of this messaging as become an integral and accepted part of our daily lives. We do it unconsciously and it paints a picture of what we perceive to be the social reality.

Television for example, represents the most pervasive mass medium today. In some minority groups it is a well-accepted fact that in an environment of debt, when utility companies are threatening 'turn off' and the rent is late, the cable TV bill is still being paid. The perception being, "I can live without a lot of things – TV is not one of them". TV is a primary leisure activity of most adults and children, the tool around which other aspects of life are organized, missed when unavailable (TV on the plane, TV in hotel rooms, TV at the gym, TV in cars), and a source of information and ideas widely regarded as authoritative and trustworthy.

As P. Golding says (The mass media 1974) "The media are central in the provision of ideas and images which people use to interpret and understand a great deal of their everyday experience". Mass media and marketing has become a powerful channel for the distribution of social knowledge and therefore a hugely powerful tool for social control. They can choose to sustain or challenge the status quo.

I recognize that we are all exposed to a variety of influences, church, school, family etc all disseminating ideas, values and shaping our perceptions, so the roll of media and it's affect on our psyche cannot be simplified. Sociology scholars have done much research on this topic and a variety of fine books are available for further reading.

The world has become much larger and more fragmented for most of us, no longer encompassed or measured solely by the immediate community in which we live. But we don't all travel to every community. The average American travels 80% less than the average European and a recent trend has shown a resurgence in American's opting to enjoy the comforts of home, rather than travel.

We get our indirect experience of the entire world of events outside of our small social circle directly from the media. The media have become steadily more influential in defining reality and encouraging a common image of society. They provide a major source, of knowledge in a segregated society of what the consensus actually is and what the deviation from that is. They conjure up for each group a picture of what 'everyone' else believes and what they too should believe.

The image of the media as a funnel through which all information is unbiased, reflected and disseminated to the masses is incorrect. On the contrary, while giving us information they also tell us what we should think of that information. When you overhear a conversation in the lunchroom about a current event that was on TV or in the newspaper, the conversation also reflects the content and context in which the event was reported.

It is no surprise then, that the media constructs an image and understanding for one group in society, of the lives, practices and values of other groups in society. In this case the media tells the White American majority what they should think of minority groups, in terms of their lives, practices and values. Likewise minority groups are flooded with images of successful White American culture upon which their ideas are largely built.

Neither view is often challenged as the groups live heterogeneous lives with minorities having little 'common' interaction with the majority. Yes, your train conductor or the accountant in your office may well be African American, but do you shop in the same grocery store? Do your children go to the same schools? Do you attend the same church? Probably not.

American society is segregated. New York is a perfect example. Italians in lower Westchester. Koreans in Queens. Jews in Rockland. Nigerians in New Jersey. We talk about areas by calling them "little Mexico" because there happens to be a large community of Mexican's in that area. This is not an accident. It stems from groups wanting to cling onto their identity and what is familiar to them, rather than be swallowed up by the majority with their values and beliefs.

So the propaganda theory (which itself has received much attention) states that marketing deliberately aims to further particular ideologies. More subtly, yet I

think more fundamental, is the way that marketing provides guidelines for social issues by encouraging certain perceptions and discouraging others. The false reality that is created is based on a selective framework that may exclude alternative interpretations.

What is more interesting is that media and marketing don't really create from scratch what they want us to think. No. It's based on whatever the prevailing consensus is and climate of opinion are. But guess what? Marketing has helped to create that climate and consensus to begin with. So they both create a consensual image of society and then recreate it. It's like talking to a friend who makes a blue t-shirt then tells you "everyone is wearing blue t-shirts today, you should too". Then you turn around and say, "what do you think of my blue t-shirt and she says, "I love it"!

This approach assumes that the majority all agrees on a number of acceptable patterns and behavior. The events that become the basis for marketing campaigns and the way they are interpreted and conveyed function within the terms of these acceptable patterns and behavior.

In defense of marketing professionals everywhere, this is not necessarily consciously done. Often it's the opposite. You may try to be unbiased and objective in an attempt to examine an issue, product or service from a 'rational' journalistic view stance, while unconsciously adapting consensual values.

However, the opportunity to influence the production of ideas is unequally distributed and those who sit in the marketing chair daily affect what is accepted as conventional wisdom and public opinion.

Hall et al (1978, Policing the crisis) said it best “This consensual viewpoint has important consequences . . .it carries the assumption that we also all have roughly the same interests in society, and that we all roughly have an equal share of power in society . . . The media are among the institutions whose practices are most widely and consistently predicated upon the assumption of a national consensus”.

So what happens to minority groups when this national consensus does not apply to them, because it's not about them? When it ignores some or all of their beliefs and values. Non-consensual opinions receive more critical attention if any. You are seen as deviant, going against the grain, the black sheep – whether you happen to be black or not.

Take a look at everything from minority community leaders to minority marketing companies and products and services by minority groups. The majority (and ironically the minority themselves) perceive these ground breakers as less credible, fanatical delusions, fads and generally misunderstanding of the consensual reality. Even extreme scholars will be pressed to justify their works,

while spokespeople that express what are perceived, as 'legitimate opinions' will not.

Those who do not play the rules of the majority are regarded as and portrayed as marginal, extremist or irrational. This, in sharp contrast to majority community leaders, marketing companies, products and services. Which even at their most bizarre and unsound, are almost accepted without question and quickly incorporated into common culture. Minorities have to be able to operate within the majority framework or face struggle for recognition and legitimacy with the cards stacked heavily against them.

So how does the majority market? The goal becomes getting the biggest marketing bang for the buck and to do that brands have to speak to the largest audience. They find the lowest common denominator on which to base campaigns, which surprise, surprise, talks little to the beliefs and values of the recent Haitian immigrant or Pakistani shop keeper. As Murdock and Golding (1977 Beyond Monopoly – mass communications in an age of conglomerates) put it, "It is those views and opinions representing the least powerful social groups which are systematically excluded".

I have identified that majority marketing and its effect on minority marketing falls into two distinct views.

## The Pluralist View

In this view marketing organizations and individuals are:

- Important agencies within the democratic process of a 'free society', ensuring the differences in public opinion and issues of public interest are conveyed healthily in the marketing materials they produce.
- Their creativity is independent of (not state-controlled for example) institutions presenting a variety of definitions on reality.
- They provide a neutral stance on such w eighly topics as social injustice, concentrating purely on the product or service at hand.

## The Marxist View

In this view marketing organizations and personnel are:

- A fundamental instrument of control (like family, religion and education) possessed by the dominant majority, who in addition to controlling actual materials produced, also control the production and dissemination of ideas by owning communications media giants such as AOL/Time Warner.
- Responsible for systematically reproducing the ideas of the majority and flooding the minority market with these ideas, thus impacting the value systems of these groups.

- Justifying and legitimizing prevailing socio-economic issues, while purposely excluding challenges to this and ignoring material and power inequalities.
- Responsible for the majority distortion of a wide range of minority groups (by the portrayal of poverty, social deviants and women for example), since they take the bourgeois capitalist society as their foundation for interpreting the effect of a product/service on society.

**Next:**

**What are the effects of these two views, do they encourage racial prejudice and once we have understand the challenges, what can be done in order to realize organizational and operational change that result in effective minority marketing.**