ETNICITY, ACCULTURATION, AND CONSUMPTION IN FRANCE

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ABSTRACT

Research has consistently explored the role of ethnicity in consumption. However, very little has been published about ‘ethnic’ consumers in France. Our research attempts to explore the effects of ethnicity on consumption behaviour in France. An interpretative research method and a hermeneutic approach have been chosen for this research. The generation of data from a qualitative approach, by means of triads, is based on the propensity of people to talk about their social experiences in their daily lives and the significance of their consumption. Five triads composed of 15 consumers practising ethnic consumption were then studied using a comparative analysis. The principal results of this research go to underline the hypothesis that situational and emotional theories are as important as acculturation and identity strategies theories in explaining the link between ethnicity and consumption.

Key Words: Ethnicity, Acculturation, Maghrebians

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1. Ethnicity, Acculturation, and Consumption in France

In the USA, from the 1960’s onwards, researchers have been studying the purchasing behaviour and specific characteristics of certain minorities (firstly Afro-Americans, then Hispanics and Asians). These studies are facilitated by the fact that censuses are carried out by the Americans and the British (Hirschman, 1981; Wallendorf and Reilly, 1983; O’Guinn and Meyer, 1984; Deshpande, Hoyer, and Donthu, 1986; Stayman and Deshpande, 1989; Webster, 1994; Hui, Laroche, and Kim, 1998; Jamal, 2003, 2005, etc.). Thus, American census questionnaires contain questions on the topic of ethnicity (ethnic origin and the issue of belonging to a race) and they can define the “minority groups” or “minority populations”. In the U.K., the question asked is “What is your ethnic group?”, which has produced such categories as White, Black or Black British, Chinese, etc. Our research focused on the situation in France. France is one of the European countries with the highest proportion of its population composed of individuals belonging to an ethnic minority. However, the French census does not include this category or any other regarding ethnicity.

Ethnicity appears to be a real taboo for managers, researchers or politicians (Hetzel, 2003). To begin with the origin of this taboo must be investigated. The modern definition of the ethnicity in France was formulated during the colonial period. The first origins of the French taboo against ethnicity can be initially attributed to this disturbing past, which has not yet been fully recognised. Historically, the concept of ethnol was used to classify colonised people, to collect taxes and to recruit workers. In addition, colonised people, in search of an identity, had developed an ethnic feeling that had become a way to mark themselves out as different. The second source of the taboo seems to be the French model of France as a nation-state that sees itself as universalistic and egalitarian. This implies and entails the assimilation of individuals who have become citizens by choice. It is because of this difficulty with regard to its colonial past and its belief in republican unity that France did not mention ethnicity for decades.

Since the 80’s, the term has begun to appear in the public discourse. As opposed to Anglo-Saxon countries, where ethnicity describes a social process of constructing cultural differences (Mehta and Berry, 1991), in France, the point of view is more “exogonic” and the French define the ethnic group of an individual from an external point of view (rather than according to how the individual feels himself).

However, this approach is limited in practice, since in France, contrary to the experience of the Anglo-Saxon researchers, questions relating to ethnicity are considered quite offensive by the respondent.

In France, the terms of ethnic group, community, religion, and tribe are used in an interchangeable way in marketing. These concepts are new, still poorly defined and difficult to accept for a great number of people. For some individuals, ethnicity in marketing is tainted by communalism (Hetzel, 2003). Even today, some leaders or companies hesitate to use ethnicity because segmentation by ethnic group is akin to segregation and can be interpreted as the exclusion of the majority. A new point of view is firmly directed at the internal image of ethnic groups (how they perceive themselves in relation to others in their own group).

This new orientation in marketing is very recent. Jamal (2003, 2005) has studied the case of the UK but it needs to be explored in a French context. In addition, prior research has shown that some individuals from ethnic minorities have a real need to express an identity and a belonging to a group through acts of purchase. Consequently, we believe that ethnic consumers in France are likely to exhibit their identity through their shopping behaviours (e.g., shopping at ethnic outlets). However, given the intergenerational differences reported by prior research, we expect different consumption patterns from one generation to another.

2. Ethnicity in Consumption Behaviour

In this work, we agree that ethnicity refers to some commonly shared features, including “a sense of common customs, language, religion, values, morality, and etiquette” (Webster, 1994, p.321). The conceptualisation of ethnicity seems very fuzzy and differs from one author to another: some use it as an objective variable connected to a socio-demographic variable (country of birth, country of origin of parents, race, etc.), whereas others think that ethnicity is a subjective or emotional variable (Sekhon and Szmagin, 2005). In recent literature, ethnicity has become a dynamic and multidimensional concept.

From an emic point of view, the self-prescribed definition of ethnicity is more relevant (Deshpande, Hoyer, and Donthu, 1986). Here, a respondent is asked to identify the ethnic group(s) to which s/he belongs and then to indicate the strength of his/her identification with the group(s) in question. At this individual level, the process of self-ethnic identification involves a sense of belonging to a social group with an emotional significance and a value attached to this belonging (see for instance, Jamal, 2003; Barth, 1969; Tajfel, 1981).
From a post-modern point of view, Jamal (2003) argued that ethnicity becomes an image and a style that one can conveniently choose and adopt. This was supported by Firat and Venkatesh’s (1993) view that traditional communities are progressively destroyed because of the modern quest to be liberated from social bonds and to move towards a society of individualism. Furthermore, our Western era is characterised by a search for creating social links (Maffesoli, 1996). Ethnicity refers to this re-emergence of earlier values: a sense of tribal identification, religiosity, etc. (Cova and Cova, 2002).

A number of studies have investigated the consumption patterns of ethnic consumers and thus the process of acculturation as a key word. The phenomenon of acculturation, which is studied frequently in Canada and in the USA, measures the psychological changes in individuals who are members of two different social groups. According to Berry (1989), acculturation is the general process and outcome (both cultural and psychological) of intercultural contact. It has been primarily analysed as a one-way process where the micro-culture adopts the dominant culture’s norms without a corresponding influence in the other direction. Berry and certain ethnomarketing researchers are interested more specifically in the dominated groups. The process of acculturation takes place via 4 different processes (Berry, 1980): integration (both the maintenance of cultural identity and the maintenance of relationships in the larger society), assimilation (when it is not considered of value to maintain one’s cultural characteristics and is desirable to move into the larger society), separation (of value to maintain cultural identity and of no value to participate in the larger society) and marginalisation (when there is neither interest in maintaining one’s cultural identity nor maintaining relationships with others in the larger society). Berry’s analysis shows that within the same ethnic group, individuals are different according to their method of acculturation.

From a more intra-psychic perspective than Berry, Camilleri (1997) regards identity as a combination of items related to both cultures (origin/reception) and acculturation as the fact of offsetting these items against each other. Individuals, in an attempt to reduce the difference between their ideal self and their real identity, make use of ‘identity strategies’. According to Camilleri (1970), when individuals are in contact with conflicting cultural codes, they develop ‘identity strategies’ that allow them to manoeuvre strategically between the opposing camps to which they belong, appeasing each culture’s demands with regard to identity and at the same time safeguarding their definitions of self. From the ‘identity strategies’ approach, a great degree of research has been done in sociology on the Maghrebian community in France. In the field of consumer behaviour, however, no research based on this approach has been carried out.

In marketing, researchers have recently begun to explore the process of acculturation: why is it not similar from one individual to another? Why do products not have the same degree of acceptance between ethnic groups? Researchers are interested in those reasons for ethnic consumers’ resistance to the dominant culture that can explain certain consumption behaviours. In addition, Hui, Laroche, and Kim (1998) currently differentiate between formative and reflexive indicators of ethnicity. The authors show that sociological and anthropological literature considers two components of ethnicity: common origin and shared cultural traits. Common origin is a permanent trait, whereas shared culture is flexible and adaptable according to the person’s experience of acculturation. This last element directly influences consumption (the authors have studied media consumption). Thus, the use of media is, for these authors, a formative indicator whereas ethnic origin is a reflexive one, because it can change. Like any cultural act, consumption becomes a formative indicator of ethnicity. Supported by Hirschman’s work (1981), the authors also propose to distinguish objective indicators of ethnicity from subjective indicators: spoken language and ethnic origin are objective indicators, whereas ethnic self-qualification is a subjective indicator of the concept. According to Sekhon and Szmidt (2005) and Hirschman (1981), combining the objective and subjective characteristics is not enough. It is necessary to measure the intensity of attachment to and identification with the ethnic group. The degree of identification with an ethnic group determines the level of group influence on behaviours and attitudes. Donthu and Cherian (1994) show that the intensity of identification with an ethnic group is a significant factor in explaining purchasing decisions.

O’Guinn and Faber (1985) concentrate directly on consumption behaviours and develop a consumer acculturation scale, with indicators like: national origin, spoken language, demographic variables and language preferred to make his purchases or in certain specific roles. Sekhon and Szmidt (2005) criticise this theoretical position because it does not integrate the situational expression of ethnicity. Situational ethnicity explores how various contexts influence the ethnic level of affiliation and how behaviour varies according to situations. Furthermore, the authors propose to take into account the emotional dimension of situational ethnicity: ethnicity seems to be a transitory psychological state. They propose that the concept of “emotional situational ethnicity” be adopted.

In fact, most of this research is North American in origin and application. Since most of the researchers show the importance of situational aspects in understanding the link between ethnicity and consumption, it seems relevant to explore the effects of ethnicity on consumption patterns in France. What are the relevant criteria for defining self-ethnicity?
How does the phenomenon of acculturation take place in France? Are the four processes identified by Berry (1989) relevant? What effects do situational and emotional aspects have on ethnicity and subsequently on consumption patterns?

3. Methodology

The research is based on an interpretive and qualitative research project carried out in France. The study aims to investigate the significance and experiences of consumption of ethnic minority consumers in France, particularly those of Maghrebian. For the purpose of this study, a within-methods triangulation has been conducted. Our aim was to improve our understanding of ethnicity in consumption. As the authors of this study are also from the ethnic minorities studied in this research, we first decided to use an introspective method. This data collection was basically aimed at improving the quality of our interpretation of subsequent interviews. The introspection focuses on “one individual [who is] providing verbal data on aspects of his/her experience that are consciously available to the introspector but not directly observable by another person” (Wallendorf and Brucks, 1993, 340). This first step enables us to gain an understanding through ‘experiencing the experience’ (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994).

As the topic of ethnicity is very recent (and taboo) in consumer behaviour research in France, we organised two brainstorming sessions with marketing experts. Our aim was to establish the boundaries of the study and also to find the most appropriate method of collecting data from ethnic consumers. The interviews that we undertook with the experts lead to collecting data via a three-person focus group with a moderator, also known as a triad. Certain characteristics of triads meant that this was the correct choice of methodology. Triads also offer an opportunity to hear each participant’s views in more depth, and are a good way to explore more complex topics with implications as to identity (they know and choose each other). They allowed us to learn more about feelings, attitudes, motivational factors and past experiences related to an ethnic topic.

According to the topic of this research, the friendship triad, in-depth interviewing is used in order to avoid respondents being intimidated and biasing their answers in consequence. The interviews took place in Paris and in Lille, the cities with the oldest Maghrebian communities in France. They lasted between 55 and 90 minutes. The majority of the respondents were second-generation. The sample consisted of a total of 5 ethnic triads. The participants were born in France or in a Maghrebian country, with their age ranging from 17 to 40. They were all bilingual.

The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim, and supplemented with various notes taken during and after the interviews. During the interviews, questions were asked covering the interviewees’ life stories, their ethnic consumption practices, their feelings about their identity and ‘host’ society, etc. We iteratively analysed our data through continually ‘going back and forth’ between individual transcripts and our emerging understanding of the entire set of textual data (Thompson, 1997). The understanding of interviewees was also improved thanks to the introspective about our ethnicity in consumption. We will discuss the main issues shared by the interviewees in the form of thematic content.

4. Main Results

The purpose of this research is to explore the effects of ethnicity on consumption patterns in France. A hermeneutic interpretation of data confirmed the theoretical foundation of this research, and led to an improvement in our understanding of ethnic consumers in France. The most important findings of our research are related to these patterns. They are obviously exploratory in nature and should be read only as indicative evidence that the authors intend to investigate in more detail in the future.

How do ethnic consumers in France define themselves?

Ethnic identity seems to be multifaceted. It is defined according to one's country of birth, the country of one's parents’ birth, religion, the social and educational level of one's parents, family and friends, the educational network, values and principles (what should or should not be done) and finally, the parents’ bilingualism. Thus, identity is constructed around a core, and that core is the country of birth or childhood. Sometimes, the country where the parents were born is the key component. Being French of Maghrebian origin is externalised in a positive or negative way.

“I have some memories of childhood. I find myself there. It is out of time. I was with my grandmother, and I was in Jerba. I feel there in my ‘world’. In France, I say that I am a Tunisian with French nationality.”

“I’m French from Morocco. I cannot do without that. This country is part of my personality: it is me. I was born in France, but Morocco forms part of me.”

“Even if it is not always obvious in everyday life, I feel really French. Even if people don't see me like that. I am also from Tunisia. For me there is no ambiguity there. If someone asks me what my origins are, I say I am Tunisian.”

“For me, my home country is France; I feel very much at home there. Tunisia is more the family part.”

“I was born there; I grew up there (in Tunisia). I imagine if it were necessary to choose between the two, I would choose France. I don’t feel at home at the consulate. I don’t feel like I have the right to vote in
Tunisia. I go there as a tourist: I inherited that from my parents. I didn’t choose my origin!”

Religion is used in some cases as a means of differentiation from the dominant group. It forms a key element in different ways according to the individual:

“I am French. I was born in France. The only difference between ‘Jean-Edouard’ and me is that my name is Kamel! Maybe also that my parents have a different culture and history. That’s all. Religion also can be a reason, because he will be a Catholic and I’m a Muslim. I feel completely French”.

“I also see myself as Moroccan even if I was born in France. That remains important but religion is really of secondary importance to me. I introduce myself as a Moroccan but I have two cultures: the French culture and the Moroccan one.”

For the majority of interviewees, the centrality of religion depends on their parents’ educational level and their relationship with tradition:

“I think the major problem of Muslims in France is that our parents come from small villages. They don’t know anything about the religion. They just practise the religion the way someone suggested to them!”

Identity is also defined according to the consideration and cultural prejudices of other people.

“’I’m from a family that is very integrated in France. People do not register that we are Maghrebian. Even from a physical point of view, I know that people do not think that we are Maghrebian, of course without knowing our name, I mean.”

“I have a French ID card. I have all my friends here; I vote. But culture lets people think of us as different.”

The regular language is French. The inability to use the parents’ language creates a gulf between people and their parents’ country. This can explain their feeling of being abroad in the parents’ country.

“I feel more Tunisian than they feel that I am. There, from their point of view, I’m not a Tunisian. During my youth, I had to try very hard to be accepted, to speak and understand jokes. But it was always a one-way process. It was not pleasant.”

As a reminder, language is not a factor of identification in France. The level of attachment to the minority ethnic group depends on various criteria: generational effect combined with childhood and birthplace, length of time spent in France, level of education, family life cycle, the person who is central in the family to transmit the principles or values that constitute the identity, emotional ties to the family and context. We observe that the oldest qualify themselves primarily according to their country of birth. Young adults who were born abroad but have been in France for a long time qualify themselves according to their country of birth and host country (“I’m Moroccan first, then French). Young adults born abroad and who have lived and worked in France for a shorter period define themselves according to the nationality and culture of the country from which they originated.

Moreover, they feel on an equal level with their colleagues because they feel like ‘expatriates’ in France. Sometimes, they argue that they are a citizen of the world. In this case, they feel able to live somewhere else.

For the teenaged respondents, clothing style or musical choices also show their origin. But they do not want to be associated with the negative image of Maghrebians:

“I am Algerian but when I’m asked where I am from, it means ‘what’s your other origin besides French?’ Then I say: I’m Algerian. I am proud. And it enables me to break the stereotype because I don’t have the style that they imagine.”

“When I heard that you were Algerian, I said to myself, I won’t be friend with her because I don’t want to fit the stereotype that Algerians always remain together.”

“I don’t want to be seen as one of the ‘beur’ [French slang for Arab] girls who wear jeans with boots and a windbreaker with a hood. They hang out in the shopping malls and like R&B. We are not like that. We like also rock & roll and metal, and we do not dress like that.”

However, young people born here have great difficulty in accepting criticism directed at a part of their identity (French or parents’ origin).

“I like Algeria because it is the country of my parents I have loads of family there. And if anyone speaks badly about Algeria, it hurts me. Of course, I am French, I feel French. But it is a paradox!”

“During the Algeria-France match (…) I felt this identity problem… I was not happy when Algerians booed the Marseillaise [the French National anthem] and they invaded the field.”

We noted an evolution of the borders of identities’ over time. People usually feel better when they discover their own vision of their identity. Thus, by leaving the family cocoon, either when marrying, leaving home to study or to travel, they can easily redefine their identity.

What is their experience of the acculturation process?

Identity is constituted via the family context in France and the country of the parents’ origin. At the same time, family values also evolve according to the socio-cultural context and the lifestyle. On the other hand, some people in France are noticing the reappearance of traditional values related to a more strict interpretation of religion. This also seems to have an impact on food or clothing consumption behaviours.

“I have the Mediterranean culture from my parents because they were born there and they have given me their principles and values, which are different from those in France. My mother’s family is in Algeria. They are different from our culture. I have observed that they are more friendly and accessible, whereas in
France the family of my father (he was born in France) has adopted the French mentality. In Lille, people are not very friendly or accessible.”

“My parents don’t care about halal food. Even in my family circle in France, nobody is aware of halal. Nevertheless, it has evolved. I can say that it is a new concept in France. I saw the change. I saw the evolution.”

“My brother came to France during the 90’s [...] He ate anything without reservation [...] now, there is this phenomenon of ‘Halal’. With his wife, he speaks to me about their butchery where they buy halal meat…”

“In my family, they are not extremely religious. But my mother has a headscarf now. She has started wearing it for 5 or 6 years.”

But for the majority of respondents, that seems excessive.

“Yes, it is becoming too extreme. Some families were not eating halal, and now they eat halal; for example, they don’t buy Haribo candies because of the gelatine - they say that there is pig in it….”

The issue of religion can involve some anxiety in the choice of products. Sometimes their religious identity is expressed in extreme terms.

“I’m usually careful but nevertheless I say to myself if I constantly pay attention [to the ingredients], I find the idea a little too extreme!”

“Religion is very important, but I’m the only one who is concerned. I don’t like women who wear headscarves… It irritates us. It is not the religion! … Especially when we know the girls who wear the headscarves and we know that they do not mean it!”

For others, there is a difference between traditions transmitted by their parents (habits) and pressures from the current generation (social conformism).

“My mother has always worn a headscarf but we don’t practise in the family. We observe Ramadan. I do it by habit: in fact I feel bad if I don’t do it. I feel guilty because, compared to the others… We have a bit of social pressure, so to say.”

We can resume that there is a legitimate religious identity more grounded in tradition and a new religious phenomenon that is poorly perceived and less legitimate. Moreover, the majority of the interviewees emphasise that immigrants living in France are more traditional than in their countries of origin.

“I feel that in France, the Muslims become much more Muslim than in Morocco.”

“For example in Algeria or Morocco, I’m not talking about small villages but rather about the big cities, things have evolved enormously. People are becoming more and more Europeanised. The lifestyle has really changed. People who arrived to France ten years ago remain fixed in a particular lifestyle that they carry on with their children, whereas in their former country, things have changed!”

The process of inverted acculturation is perceived positively. Indeed, respondents appreciate all efforts made by French retailers to develop halal counters or product ranges. They consider it as a source of recognition and satisfaction.

“My mom is so happy when she sees halal products, but the assortment is small!”

“I feel that I am being catered to, because if not, we have to go and buy in shops held by Arabs and Muslims.”

“It is a nice to see that French retailers are thinking of us.”

Moreover, the second generation has integrated the French rites by underlining their non-religious character. Some of them even admit forgetting the Muslim religious festivals.

“I have always celebrated Christmas, Christmas and Eid. Because my parents, at Christmas time, they usually have a tree, without a crib of course. That was just a special time to have great food. There wasn’t anything related to the birth of Christ. Even for the French, it has become commercialised.”

“Last year, I was living alone. If my father hadn’t called the day before Eid, I wouldn’t have remembered it by myself.”

What is the general impact of the ethnicity in everyday life?

Religion and price are very important in determining consumption choices.

“My religion influences my behaviour. I will never buy certain stuff. I’ve never eaten some food and I never will do!”

“In the supermarket, there is a halal department but it is really expensive. I prefer to have contact with my butcher. And of course, it is a lot less expensive.”

“I do like my mother does. She shops for the family and she pays attention to the price because we don’t have that much money. She goes to Lidl and Aldi!”

Other criteria are proposed: life hygiene, cleanliness of shops, dietary aspect, taste, accessibility, practicality. The most frequently mentioned shopping place is the hypermarket, except for specific products like halal meat, green tea, and desserts for feast days. Moreover, during special periods like Ramadan, “ethnic areas” (e.g. Belleville, Nanterre) or ethnic stores are preferred. However, the second generation or recent immigrants highlight the cleanliness problem of halal butcheries and prefer to buy in the hypermarkets.

“Muslim butcheries, they are really disgusting, a horror!”

“When you follow the religion, you take care of your body and shall have a minimum of food hygiene. Eating dirty food just because it is halal is not the right way to go. I have already thrown away meat because it was rotten!”

For the first generation and children who are still living with their parents, the ethnic stores are the most relevant mode of distribution. For example, halal meat...
cannot be sold in self-service departments and it usually has a better taste!

“They sell halal meat in Auchan. My parents saw the halal counter but they will never buy there. Because, in their mind, that is just not possible!”

“It is not compatible, so they don’t want to buy. For them, it can’t be really halal [killed by having the throat slit] and industrialised.”

“The halal is better. It is true. It don’t have the same taste. I tasted both [halal and non-halal] and I find that they really do taste different. I think it is due to the way that the animal is cut: the animal suffers less, it dies directly.”

For the second generation, combining respect for religion and their French way of life would be the ideal attitude for the food industry. For example, companies can offer some products with typically French recipes, without pig or with halal meat.

“My mother doesn’t make the traditional dishes. She only makes her famous couscous when we have guests.”

“I don’t think my parents have ever eaten food like Raclette1. They would be very happy to taste French cuisine.”

Young interviewees have integrated the European way of life and thus want to make easy to prepare and quick dishes that are not as rich as traditional Maghrebian recipes. They also express their need to eat halal fast food!

“Maghrebian food is not easy to stomach. Too fatty”

“I have adapted: I cook without oil.”

“There is no pre-prepared Tunisian food available yet. It would be more practical, because Tunisian food takes too much time to cook.”

“I always eat halal meat; I don’t know what a Big Mac tastes like. In McDonalds, I only ever eat Filet-O-Fish.”

“There is nothing for us in McDonalds. We can eat fish, or we can go to KFC. They have halal food!”

In this respect, we note a difference between young adults born in France or who spent their childhood in France and those having lived their childhood abroad. The latter are indeed more attached to the traditions and sensitive to tastes. Thus, the quality and freshness of the products and respect of tradition are very important to them.

Certain unusual products in France, such as the donkey sausage also respond to the need to consume a variety of products while respecting the first purchase criterion: halal and non-pig.

Hence, someone commented on the transformation of culinary traditions because of the socio-cultural context into new practices combining a contemporary way of life and respect for central values (religious tradition).

The identity transmitted during the socialisation can be perceived as a burden that interviewees wish to get rid of. It is an everyday paradox: at the same time, they want to respect traditions, especially for people who have a strong emotional link with the family.

“I was always different. I don’t feel Tunisian when I return home. My parents would like to return because they are Tunisian. And when I return, the smells, everything is different. When I come back, I feel better.”

“I make a maximum of three Tunisian dishes a year! And that is enough for me!”

“I don’t like halal stuff. I don’t like the way it is presented. I buy halal only for my parents.”

The method of education, the emotional relationship with one’s parents and the nature of one’s experiences in one’s country of childhood seem to play a role in the definition of the link between ethnicity and consumption behaviour.

5. Discussion

Confronting the points of view of the people interviewed and the existing theories can allow a conceptual framework adapted to the case of Maghrebians in France in the consumption context to be chosen. Four areas of particular importance stand out:

(1) Recent literature (Sekhon and Szmigin, 2005) highlights ethnicity as a dynamic and multidimensional concept: results of this research confirm this approach. Indeed, it appears that people define their ethnicity through many variables: objective ones as country of birth, country of origin of parents, country of residence, religion, language, etc. and subjective ones like memories of childhood, affective link to their parents or grandparents, etc.

(2) However, as many recent works show, people typically define different levels of attachment to majority or minority groups depending on the situation (Jamal, 2003). Then, choices of consumption vary with the situation: receiving parents or friends, living alone or with family, being at university or in the country of origin, everyday life or special events, etc. In fact, there is a constant movement going from mainstream to minority and back. As Jamal (2003) and Bouchet (1995) put it: ethnicity can be seen as a bricolage of self-identity construction based on the heterogeneous elements of cultural diversity in society.

(3) The theory of identity strategies propounded by Camilleri (1997) seems insufficient to translate the dynamic movement between majority and minority identity that is a source of identity-building.

Indeed, Camilleri bases the identity strategies theory on an analysis of the difference between ideal self and real self. However, the major change seen in experiencing ‘ethnicity’ in consumption is the transition from ‘I’ to ‘We’, also known as the feeling of ‘we-ness’ (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001). Consequently, in the future, it would seem interesting to use the ‘we concept’ (Zouaghi and Darpy, 2003,

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1 French dish made with ham, cheese and potatoes
which is based on Kaës’ works in psychoanalysis and research on the social identity carried out in social psychology. The ‘We concept’ is defined as the global image that an individual attributes to his reference group. Just as the concept of self influences the choice of brands or products through the idea the individual has of his own personality, the ‘We concept’ may also explain consumption through the idea that an individual has developed of his ethnic group. Analysing the differences between real, ideal and social dimensions of ‘We’ can highlight the diagrams underlying the acculturation process and the emotional experience of ethnicity.

(4) In this regard, one main result of this work is an enrichment of the four modes of acculturation process defined by Berry (1980). In this research, most of the people interviewed had adopted the integration or assimilation manner of acculturation; none had adopted the separation process (choosing religion rules) or the marginalisation process (young people disconnected from their school or parents or from society). But interviewees did mention people they know who were going through these processes. As regards the integration process, it applies to people who are proud of their original identity (cooking couscous for events, eating halal, observing Ramadan, going to their country of origin for holidays or liking to speak their language). They feel good in France (women that work want to have quick dishes to prepare; they look for products representing a compromise between mainstream values - no fat - and minority tastes). In the assimilation process, interviewees emphasise their distance from their origin identity. This one is felt to be more a constraint than a choice. They do not look for halal food or do not like to cook ethnic dishes except when they receive their parents or family. It is interesting to note that they do not want to be identified by their ethnic identity. As a consequence, they reject ethnic products. Moreover, this research shows two new forms of acculturation. The first one is a new type of marginalisation: some people argued that they are looking for another way of life, a culture completely different from the majority or minority one, and that they want to leave France. The other one is a departure from Berry’s model. It can be seen as a way to escape the conflict between majority and minority identities. In this strategy, people try to create their own ethnicity that will be recognised in the host country. It can be considered as ‘individuating’ strategy as defined by Maço (1999). In this context, people do not reject their own or another culture but identify the elements of different cultures that correspond with their values, needs, ideals and way of life, in order to select and construct a specific ethnicity. What is interesting is that some traits are more salient in some situations or moments of life than others. For example, when they receive new French friends, they typically make ethnic dishes; when they receive closer friends, they can serve Japanese cooking, or whatever; ethnic origin ceases to be important.

We call this method of acculturation the mosaic process: ethnicity is designed as a mosaic of several stones coming from various origins. If we liken this stone to colours, some colours are more apparent, duller or brighter according to the emotional or social situation, and the expression of ethnicity is different, so the choices of consumption are different.

In order to summarise all these results, we propose the table 1. The four processes identified by Berry (1989) are indicated in normal text, the identity strategies of Camilleri (1997) in italic, and the emerging results in bold and italic.

**TABLE 1: Summary Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship with minority</th>
<th>Distant</th>
<th>Proximity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distant</td>
<td>Marginalisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>EXIT</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity</td>
<td>Separation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Conforming differentiation</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Individuating&quot; differentiation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BRICOLAGE & SELF-IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION**
This research aims to be an exploratory study. Its objective is more to question the concept of ethnicity in France than to produce answers. Of course, these findings may be limited by some facts related to the sampling, such as the number of triad (5) and thus of interviewees (15). In the future, we will increase the number of triads until the topics mentioned are saturated. The profiles of the interviewees will be also more diverse. For the moment, the study has focused on a majority of individuals with a higher level of studies.

As the interviews were not orientated, the topics mentioned by respondents dealt solely with food consumption. In the future, the authors of this study envisage directing interviews in order to determine the attitudes, needs and motivations with regard to different fields of consumption: textiles, home decoration, telephony, etc. Finally, another limiting factor of this research is the fact that it is confined to the study of the Maghrebian community of France. The results of this research suggest that other ethnic groups such as Turks in France could be productive in order to compare and contrast the role of ethnicity in consumption with a cross-cultural approach.

6. Conclusion

Ethnicity constitutes a real taboo for managers and researchers in France. However, the recent riots in France have revealed the importance of discussing ethnicity in everyday life. Consumption is considered as a cultural act; in other words, it is one of the fundamental expressions of ethnicity for individuals. In the last decade, for marketers, the link has become more important than the objects themselves (Cova, 1997). From this perspective, consumer satisfaction is understood as a cornerstone of marketing and is not only related to purchases but implicitly related to the total quality of life. As France scarcely takes ethnicity into consideration, we can presume that dissatisfaction with products can encourage community adhesion among minorities. Ethnicity has a great linking value; therefore, it is an important element for marketers. According to Bourgeon-Renault, Cova, and Petri (2005), dissatisfaction shared within a group reinforces the feeling of ‘community’. When the community is reinforced, the producer of satisfaction is no longer an isolated individual but the individuals as a group. However, the analysis of our triads reveals some disparities about personal links to community values and the gap from the dominant culture. Indeed, the interviewees appeared to have different feelings and attitudes in this respect. One of the linking points between these isolated individuals is the expression of the need that their community should be recognised on the market. This can explain the current dissatisfaction that caused them to appear as a homogeneous group. Recognition by the professionals of ethnic groups’ wishes to exist on the market will thus show some differences in requirements within the group. At the strategic level for companies, there may be value in using ethnic groups not like a homogeneous group but rather from a ‘segmented’ point of view.

References


