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Ethnicity’s Effect on Brand Loyalty among American Consumers

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**ABSTRACT**

The United States has one of the largest multicultural populations in the world. It is home to millions of people from varying countries, ethnicities and cultures. International migration over the years has established a foundation for what is now a cultural mosaic, comprised mainly of several generations of Americans born to people of varied ethnicities and cultures. This diversity presents a challenge for US marketers. The heterogeneity of this nation requires marketers to do more research and to cultivate an understanding of the various cultures at play in order to connect with their target consumers.

In this research, we attempted to examine the theorized connection between the ethnicity and by extension culture and a specific consumer behavior construct: brand loyalty. The study attempted to address two major questions: (1) Do ethnic groups differ significantly on brand loyalty? and (2) Can ethnicity be considered a significant predictor of brand loyalty? We examined the differences in brand loyalty across five major ethnic groups: Caucasians, African Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Hispanic English and Hispanic Spanish. The survey methodology was utilized for this study. Data was collected in 2011 as part of a larger multicultural study conducted by the Center for Hispanic Marketing Communication at The Florida State University.

The results of the study supported the theory that ethnic groups differ significantly from each other in brand loyalty. Ethnicity was observed to be a significant predictor of brand loyalty, even after accounting for education and income. Income was also found to be a significant predictor of brand loyalty, which supported DeMooij’s (2000) argument that as income increases, consumer behavior will reflect their cultural foundations. Education was also found to be a significant predictor of brand loyalty. The results indicated that people who have achieved higher levels of education are more likely to be influenced by their cultural values and are more likely to be brand loyal. African American respondents were found to be the most brand loyal group, despite having achieved lower levels of education than other ethnic groups. The research did not reveal any possible explanations as to why this group was more brand loyal than the others. There were no other significant differences among groups, after controlling for education and income.
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Neleen Leslie is a Mass Communication PhD student at the Florida State University where she specializes in multicultural marketing communication. She also holds a Msc. in Integrated Marketing and Management Communication from the Florida State University.

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