

IN SEARCH OF THE ETHNOCENTRIC CONSUMER: EXPERIENCING “LADDERING” RESEARCH IN INTERNATIONAL ADVERTISING

Thi Minh Ho
Wayne State University
ba5447@wayne.edu

Hugh Cannon
Wayne State University
ad6183@wayne.edu

Attila Yaprak
Wayne State University
aa4506@wayne.edu

ABSTRACT

One of the most exciting developments in the literature on advertising research has been the development of laddering, or means-end chaining theory. Whereas conventional attitude research focuses on superficial consumer predispositions towards products and brands, laddering links these attitudes with a deeper chain of motives, revealing different motives behind the same attitude. This, in turn, provides a rich body of material for developing advertising strategy. This paper applies laddering theory to the illusive concept of consumer ethnocentrism, developing an experiential exercise that will immerse students in a simulated cross-national advertising research project.

INTRODUCTION

A key ingredient in marketing management is the development of marketing strategy based on a thorough understanding of consumer behavior. Indeed, the seminal issue of the *Journal of Marketing* dedicated to the significant questions in marketing at the turn of the century identified consumer behavior as one of four fundamental questions marketing needs to answer as both an academic discipline and a managerial practice (Day and Montgomery, 1999). Of particular note is the role and understanding of consumer behavior plays in advertising. An understanding of consumer behavior leads managers to sound decisions about what segments to serve with their product or service offerings and how to position their products among the plethora of competitive choices consumers can select from. An even deeper understanding enables advertising copy writers and art directors to craft ads that speak to the heart of consumer motivation.

What is this deeper understanding? It is the kind of insight decision makers get by immersing themselves experientially into the role of consumers. In practice, this immersion comes through

the conduct and use of consumer research. The task, however, parallels Gentry's (1990) description of the educational task assigned to experiential learning. That is, it is personally involving at every level -- cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally. It confronts the participants with an uncertain and variable environment, requiring them to interact with each other and the situation in a highly engaging task.

It follows that an effective approach for preparing international advertising students would be an experiential exercise that immerses them in an international consumer research project. Gentry (1990) discusses a “live case” research project as prototypic example of a business-oriented experiential learning exercise. He uses the example of survey research. Our problem is more intellectually and emotionally challenging in that the objective of the exercise is not to experience “research,” but to experience what it is like to experience research from the perspective of the person being researched – the consumer. This suggests a kind of complex role-play exercise where students take the part of both researchers and respondents. Role playing a respondent requires participants to make the conceptual leap of translating research data into a mental simulation of what consumers must be thinking in order to respond in the manner specified by the research. This, of course, is exactly what an advertising copywriter or art director must do to be effective. Creating a research setting, where simulated respondents must interact with other students who are taking the role of researchers, adds insight regarding the kinds of biases and interpretive issues that arise from the interview process.

One approach to such an exercise features “laddering” research, an application that assumes consumers develop purchase preferences to ultimately satisfy their personal values. Its underlying roots, then, derive from value systems theory (Rokeach, 1973). The approach has become very popular as a form of advertising research because of the richness of motivational insight it provides by developing means-end chains, linking product attributes to desired consumer consequences to the values from which the desirability of the

consequences is derived (Reynolds and Gutman, 1988).

Notwithstanding the impact it has had on the advertising industry, the concept of laddering has received little attention in the business simulation literature. The one exception is a paper by Anitsal and Codotte (2007) in which they used laddering theory to investigate the perceived benefits of business simulations as tools for marketing education. By developing means-end hierarchy maps for executives and undergraduates, the authors found that undergraduate students and executives benefit in many ways from their participation in a simulation experience.

While this is interesting, and the information provides a useful contribution to the simulation and gaming literature, the study uses laddering to determine the effectiveness of business simulations. It does not address how means-end chaining might be incorporated into simulations or experiential exercises.

The exercise described in this paper will have a dual focus. First, it will address the use of laddering as a marketing research tool. Second, it will use laddering research to address the specific problem of consumer ethnocentrism; a construct that has been used extensively as a basis for understanding consumer behavior in international marketing (Shankarmahesh, 2006). Consumer ethnocentrism is a particularly useful construct to address, not only because of its broad application and popularity, but also because of its illusive nature. While research suggests that it is a relatively stable construct, a deeper analysis of its antecedents suggests that it may be subject to a number of dramatically different patterns of motivations (Shankarmahesh, 2006) – that is, different means-end chains. Thus, laddering becomes a particularly useful technique for studying it.

Our paper will proceed in four stages: First, it will discuss the literature from which laddering theory is derived. This will provide a useful background for instructors as they set the stage for the exercise.

Second, we will provide background on the methods used in laddering research. This will also provide background material for the instructor, but more important, it will provide the basis for orienting interviewees, which is one of the components of the exercise.

Third, we will discuss the consumer ethnocentrism construct. Our discussion will trace the development of the

construct as currently used in the marketing literature, pointing to the problems and how laddering research might be used to address them. This discussion is not critical to the exercise in general, but it is important in this particular application. It will not only provide a general orientation to the instructor, but it will provide important background for debriefing and for the development of the orientation documents that will be given to interviewees as part of the exercise.

Fourth, we will discuss the actual structure of the exercise. This will include not only the conceptual approach, but a specific sequence of activities, including suggested time allocations for each activity. In the Appendix, we will attach sample support materials, illustrating the documents that might be handed out to students as part of the exercise.

Finally, we will summarize and discussion the logic behind the exercise. We will discuss the pedagogical implications at both the general level and at the level of this specific ethnocentrism/laddering exercise. We will also discuss the research implications, suggesting that the exercise might contribute to a new tradition in both simulation research and also research in which simulations are used to study human decision processes.

LADDERING RESEARCH

Laddering was developed as a research technique that harnesses means-end theory for improving the implementation of advertising strategy (Gutman, 1982; Gutman and Reynolds, 1988). It can be best understood in the context of its strategic roots. These ultimately trace back to Colley's (1961) classic DAGMAR (Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results) framework. Colley argued that, while marketing objectives were generally stated in terms of purchase behavior, advertising objectives should generally be attitudinal. This reflects the fact that advertising typically addresses only a portion of marketing strategy, namely the use of marketing communications, to influence the way consumers think.

Boyd, Ray and Strong (1972) go beyond this, drawing on traditional attitude theory. This, in turn, draws on expectancy-value theory, which argues that that consumer motivation comes from an instrumental relationship, where consumers value

Exhibit 1 Linking Perceptual and Preference Change Strategies in Advertising Strategy

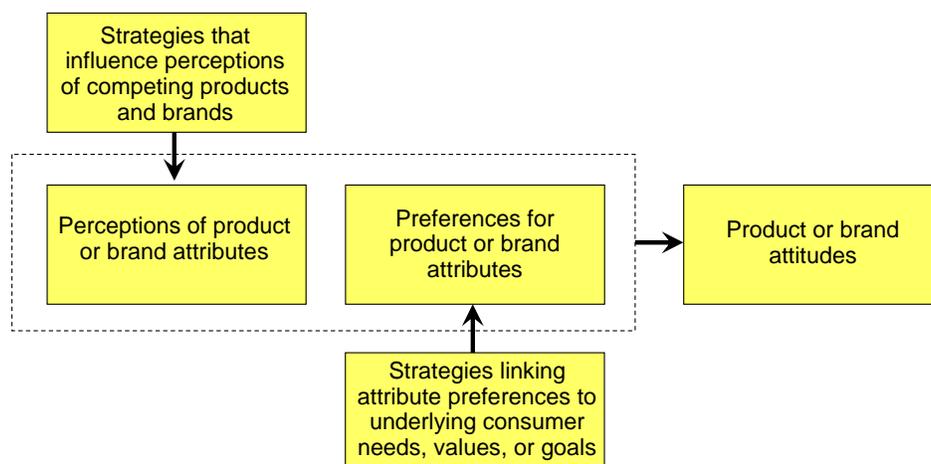
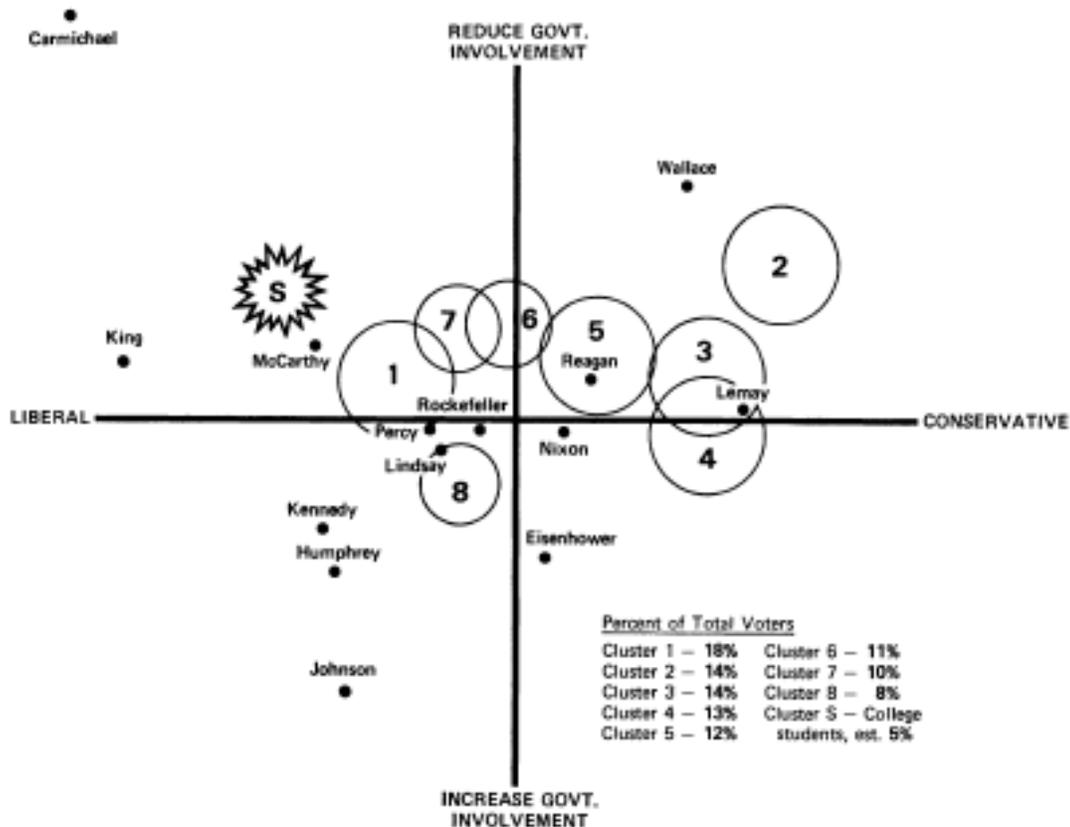


Exhibit 2

A Map of Voter Segments and Candidate Positions in the 1968 U.S. Presidential Election



Source: Richard M. Johnson. Market segmentation: A strategic management tool. *Journal of Marketing Research* 8:1 (February 1971), p. 17

product attributes that provide a means to achieve valued outcomes (Rosenberg, 1956). Traditionally, advertising strategists and researchers typically focus on either product perceptions or preferences, but rarely both. However, both are an essential part attitude formation. Boyd, Ray and Strong address this by suggesting a strategy planning framework that is built around both perceptions and preferences. It suggests various forms of perceptual and preference change as alternative strategic approaches. Exhibit 1 provides a visual representation of the logic behind their approach.

Boyd, Ray, and Strong’s model elaborates on the basic logic of positioning theory, as expressed in the superimposition of preference and perceptual maps, as shown in Exhibit 2. This, in turn, provides a rationale for research approaches designed to identify perceptual and preference maps (Johnson, 1971). In the simulation, it provides the basis for the “gravity” model (Teach, 1984, 1990, 2008; Gold and Pray, 1999) that has now become a mainstay of modern marketing simulation design (Gold, 2005).

Note that the circles in Exhibit 2 represent preference groupings, or market segments. The points with associated names are the perceived positions of competing candidates. The axes represent the attributes that define both the preferences and perceptions. The physical distance between a candidate and a segment indicates the relative attractiveness of the candidate to the segment.

Preference and perceptual mapping generally rely on

numerical taxonomy algorithms that seek to group consumers by similarities in their preferences and brands by similarities in how they are perceived. Numeric approaches are very useful, because they lend themselves to the calculation of an actual distance between preferences and perceptions of consumers. This is a particularly useful simulation, because it provides an easily quantified representation in a standard demand algorithm (Gold, 2005). It applies not only to both simulation games, but also to decision support systems (Urban, 1975).

The weakness in the taxonomical approach is apparent in the Boyd, Ray, and Strong (1972) model, as portrayed in Exhibit 1. Product and brand attitudes are not simply a function of attribute perceptions and preferences, but rather, a means-end chain, linking attributes to needs, or preferences, they serve. But these preferences themselves are simply a means to addressing deeper needs, values, and goals. In many cases, the same preferred attributes may actually represent dramatically different motivations. For instance, some people would find an innovative technology such as a rear-view video monitor in the dash board of a car to be a means of increasing prestige, and prestige the feeling of self-importance. Another group might actually find the prestige to be negative, focusing instead on issues of safety and social responsibility. A model that focused on the distance between attribute preferences and perceptions would miss this distinction. It might be adequate for modeling demand, but it might lead to very ineffective advertising.

Exhibit 3
An Application of the Grey Benefit Chain Analysis to the Use of Hair Spray

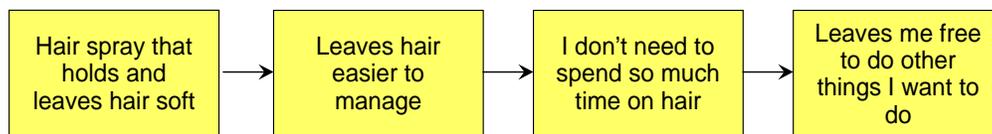


Exhibit 4
Evaluating “Buying Local” from a MECCAs Strategy and MEC Framework

MEC Framework	MECCAs Framework	“Buy local” Example
Product attitude or behavioral intention	Product attitude or behavioral intention	Disposed against consumer ethnocentrism
Terminal and instrumental values	Driving force (implicit end goal or value orientation)	Patriotism
Psycho-social consequences	Leverage point (“hook” connecting attribute or benefit to driving force)	Protects jobs
Functional consequences	Consumer benefits (benefit communicated verbally or visually)	Supports local businesses
Concrete or abstract attributes	Message elements (product or brand attributes)	Products made locally

Advertising responded to the inadequacies of taxonomical research by embracing means-end chaining. The first published application was Young and Feigin (1975), using the Grey Benefit Chain, “The Product → Functional Benefit → Practical Benefit → Emotional Pay-off.” Exhibit 3 presents an example, diagramming the way women express the advantages of using hair spray.

Conceptually, means-end theory states that people choose among alternative means towards reaching their valued end-states, or goals (Gutman, 1982). Gutman focuses on the attribute-consequences-values (A-C-V), where attributes are the “means” and “values” are the end goals. Among other applications, the pay-off is to give advertisers insights that can be turned into effective advertising appeals. In service of this objective, Reynolds and Gutman (1984) develop a “Means-End Conceptualization of the Components of Advertising Strategy (MECCAs). They note that, “To utilize the attribute → consequence → value connections for creating brand images with advertising, the components of advertising strategy have to be coordinated with the levels of the means-end chain. The Means-End Conceptualization of the Components of Advertising strategy...accomplishes this purpose” (p. 31). Exhibit 4

summarizes the components of the MECCAs framework, as compared with the more general means-end chain (MEC) framework. It maps both onto an example based on consumer ethnocentrism, connecting the local sourcing to values of patriotism.

In a later conceptualization, Gutman (1997) suggests that consumers are not necessarily driven by the entire chain at any given time. He draws on Miller, Galanter, and Pribram’s (1960) test-operate-test-exit (TOTE) framework as a basic unit of goal-directed behavior. These behaviors are then chained to achieve higher-level value-directed goals. For instance, he looks at a student consuming a soft drink in the context of a value-driven goal of earning more money and becoming successful. At the moment of study, the student is drinking a caffeinated drink to stay awake and study longer, and to quench his thirst to concentrate better. This is part of a larger goal-driven plan to get better grades, leading to the kind of job that will, in an even larger plan, lead to the desired money and success. This would suggest that means-end-driven campaigns might be layered as well, with some ads addressing the thirst-quenching and the ability to stay awake, with a larger series of ads linking these consequences to better grades, and ultimately, to a better job,

money, and overall success.

In the end, a laddering research project will generally result in the construction of what Reynolds and Guttman (1988) refer to as a *hierarchical value map*. Exhibit 5 presents such a map, constructed to represent people’s use of long-distance telephone services instead of travel. We have added colored dotted lines as a rough indication of patterns, leading to market segments. For instance, “tree huggers” represent consumers for whom telephone communication represents a socially responsible alternative to fuel-consuming travel. “Ambitious professionals” see telephones as an economic alternative to business travel – something that would enable them to deliver more value to their organizations. “Social comfort seekers” are individuals who are looking for a comfortable and rewarding life, including fulfilling relationships with the people they love. “Social interactionists” are people who seek excitement from their social interactions.

Note that the segment ovals are not perfect. In the end, evaluating hierarchical value maps involves judgment. The user (in this case, our experiential students) must project themselves into respondents’ minds, imagining what they would be thinking and how they would be motivated if they were the kinds of persons represented by the chains. The first point of judgment is where to place the chains, so ones that characterize similar motivational patterns will be adjacent to each other. The second is placing the dotted ovals to capture as much of the segment motivation as possible. And third, judgment is needed to pick out exceptions and sub-patterns that are not clearly represented. For example, on the left-hand side of the chart, “good citizen”

doesn’t appear to be a valued consequence for “ambitious professionals.” However, if being socially responsible is one of the firm’s values, this would be very important. In the middle of the chart, “comfortable life” does not seem to be an important value for “ambitious professionals.” In fact, it probably is important, but it is appropriately left out, because it takes on a subordinate position to “self-esteem” when people are psychologically immersed in the “ambitious professional” role.

The figure should prove useful in preparing students for the exercise, as we shall see later. It is busy, and potentially confusing. It becomes much simpler as the instructor walks students through the different segment patterns, showing how motivations portrayed in the map represent people with whom the students can actually identify.

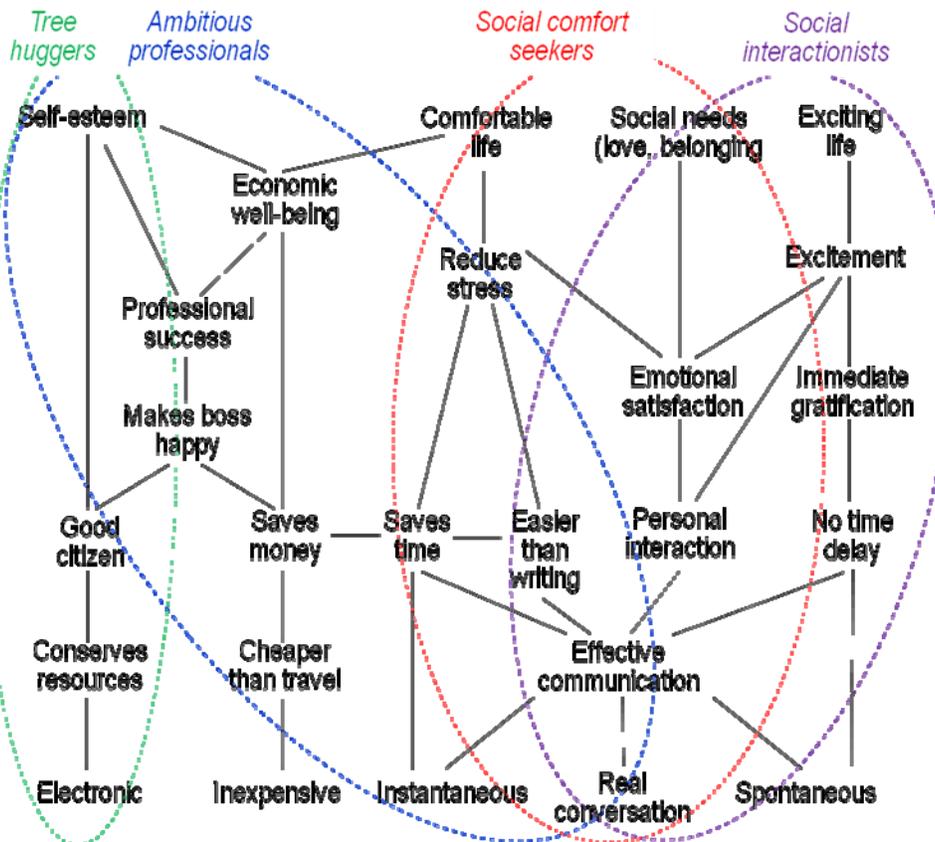
LADDERING METHODS

When we speak of means-end chaining (MEC) theory, we are speaking of the general theoretical underpinnings of the approach. Laddering, or laddering theory, refers to the research techniques used to elicit means-end chains. Reynolds and Gutman (1988) discuss a number of useful laddering research guidelines that can be used in conjunction with our exercise.

ELICITING BRAND DISTINCTIONS

Methodologically, the first task of laddering is to elicit distinctions among the alternatives from among which

Exhibit 5
A Hierarchical Value Map Showing Five Segment Patterns of Response to Telephone Usage



consumers must choose. These are the initial “means” in the means-end chain. Reynolds and Gutman (1988) offer three basic methods for eliciting an initial set of distinctions: (1) *triadic sorting*, (2) *preference-consumption differences* and (3) *differences by occasion*.

Triadic sorting adapts a method originally developed by Kelly (1955) to separate out one product from a set of three, reminiscent of the Sesame Street game, “One of these things is not like the other.” For instance, respondents might be given three automobile brands – Toyota, Ford, and Chevrolet. They would be asked which two of the three are most similar, and what characteristic is the basis for their similarity. The relevant distinctions might include such attributes as foreign/domestic, engineering and design quality, price, availability of service, and so forth.

In the *preference-consumption* approach, consumers rank order their preferences from their most to their least preferred brand. Respondents are then asked to discuss what they like about the preferred brand versus the others. Drawing again on the automobile example, respondents might be given a list including Chevrolet, Ford, Honda, Nissan, Toyota, and Volkswagen. They would then discuss which they liked best, and why.

The *differences by occasion approach* can be used in conjunction with either triadic sorting or the difference-consumption approach. It is based on the assumption that consumers’ often think of products in the context of specific situations. By anchoring the question in a specific situational context, an interviewer can frequently elicit a richer set of distinguishing characteristics. For instance, in our automobile example, rather than asking respondents which two of three cars are the most similar, interviewers might prime respondents by saying, “Imagine that you are in a position to purchase any kind of car you want.” Or you might say, “You are looking for a ‘family car.’ Rank-order the alternatives from your most to your least favored brand.” By changing the occasional cue, the interviewer can often elicit a different set of relevant attributes. For instance, the “... purchase any kind of car you want” cue would likely elicit important attributes that might otherwise be screened out as too expensive.

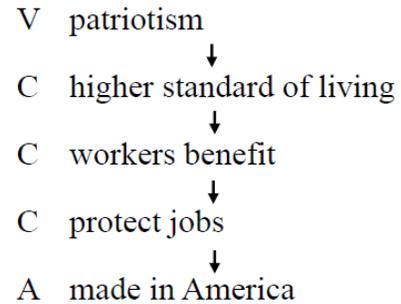
LADDERING TECHNIQUES

The second task of laddering is to elicit the attribute-consequence-value chains that describe the motivations for selecting one brand over another. Reynolds and Gutman (1988) suggest that the interviewer might use any one (or a combination of) six techniques.

1. *Evoking the situational context.* We have already noted the power of context in eliciting an initial set of product distinctions. In fact, contextual anchoring provides a methodological theme in virtually every aspect of laddering theory. While consumers may develop general preferences for products and brands, they generally make purchase decisions in order to achieve a particular goal. By evoking a usage context, the interviewer is potentially changing the goal. A full means-end analysis should ultimately include chains addressing all the goals for which the product might serve as a means of fulfillment. This suggests that the interviewer would begin by eliciting information about usage occasions, probing for the chain of underlying

motives active in each one. For instance, the interviewer might ask questions such as, “What about a car you drive to work?” The respondent might answer, “Well, I can tell you this: I would never drive a Toyota! I work at a Ford plant, and we are all worried about our jobs.” The follow-up questions might lead to a result looking something like the chain shown in Exhibit 6.

Exhibit 6 A Sample Ladder Evoked by Situation Context



2. *Postulating the absence of an object or a state of being.* Respondents often have trouble articulating the rationale for their preferences. For instance, an interviewer looking at motivations behind restaurant selections might ask, “Why do you like Lebanese food?” The respondent might say, “I don’t know. I just like it.” The interviewer might then ask, “What if you couldn’t find a good Lebanese restaurant?” The respondent might reply, “Well, frankly, it’s not just the taste. I like to experience authentic tastes from all over the world. So, I guess I would browse Citysearch.com for other kinds of food that sounded interesting.” Pursuing this line of questioning might lead to the chain shown in Exhibit 7.

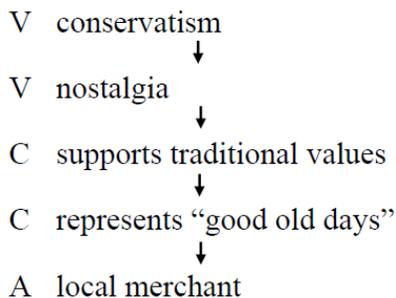
Exhibit 7 A Sample Chain Evoked by Postulating the Absence of an Object or a State of Being



3. *Negative laddering.* Another method of bringing out unconscious motivations is to ask respondents why they would not want some particular attribute. For instance, if respondents said they like to shop at a local furniture store but couldn’t explain why, the interviewer might ask, “Why wouldn’t you shop at Ikea?” The respondent might respond, “It’s just not me! IKEA is a hotsy-totsy Swedish furniture store. I like the good old days, when you bought from a store owned by your neighbor, where your kids worked while going to school.” This might lead to questions

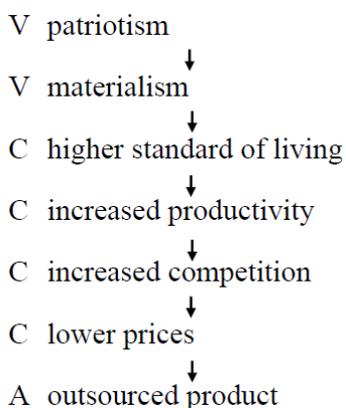
regarding how the places one shops serves as a visible badge of one's personality, personal identity and values, as suggested by the chain shown in Exhibit 8.

Exhibit 8
A Sample Chain Evoked
by Negative Laddering



4. *Age-regression contrast.* A good source of motivational insight is often embedded in the way motivations have changed over time. For instance, in response to a question about how her attitudes toward buying from companies that outsourced their products have changed over time, a respondent might say, "Well, I used to be into this 'buy American' thing. Then, as I began learning more about how economics work, I concluded that buying less expensive foreign products not only reduced prices, but it creates competition and makes our own workers more efficient." Follow-up questions might result in the chain shown in Exhibit 9.

Exhibit 9
A Sample Chain Evoked
by Age Regression Contrast

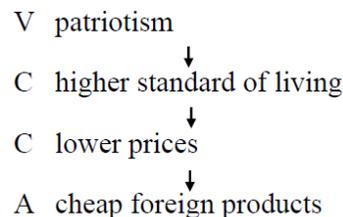


5. *Third-person probe.* When respondents have trouble explaining their own motivation, asking about the motivation of others can often bring out details of how they think about a product or behavior. For instance, suppose a respondent was having trouble explaining why he buys from stores like Wal-Mart that buy so many of their products from foreign countries. The interviewer might ask, "What about other people?" The respondent might say, "I know people who won't shop at Wal-Mart, but Wal-Mart has the lowest prices in the industry. That means everybody has more money to spend. Isn't that good for America?" The

follow-up questions might lead to the chain shown in Exhibit 10.

6. *Redirecting.* In cases where a respondent provides short,

Exhibit 10
A Sample Chain Evoked by a Third-Person
Probe



uninformative answers, redirection can elicit more elaboration. The simplest form is strategic silence. This tends to make respondents uncomfortable, and they try to head off the discomfort by talking. A second approach is to use a communication check, saying something like, "Let me see if I understand you." For instance, when respondent is asked about the advisability of delivering technical support functions online from India, the respond might say, "Dah! That's a no brainer." By waiting in expectant silence, the interviewer might elicit a response such as, "Look, we live in a global marketplace. That means competition, which makes everything more efficient. Everybody does what they do best – like the Indians providing technical support." The chain that evolves might look like the chain shown in Exhibit 11.

Exhibit 11
A Sample Chain Evoked by Redirecting



CONSUMER ETHNOCENTRISM

The purpose of this section is twofold: First, a review of consumer ethnocentrism will be useful in giving instructors who administer the exercise background material that can be used in their pre- and de-briefing activities. Second, it highlights one of the purposes for building the exercise around consumer ethnocentrism. As we noted in the introduction, consumer ethnocentrism, a construct that has been used extensively as a basis for understanding consumer behavior, but it remains particularly illusive in nature. Research suggests that it is a relatively stable construct, but it is subject to a number of dramatically different patterns of motivations that lend

themselves particularly well to the use of laddering as a research technique.

Ethnocentrism is “the universal proclivity to view one’s own group as the center of the universe, to interpret other social units from the perspective of their own group, and to reject persons who are culturally dissimilar while blindly accepting those who are culturally similar” (Shimp and Sharma 1987, p. 280). The most common business application is consumer ethnocentrism (CE), or “the beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness, indeed the morality, of purchasing foreign-made products” (Shimp and Sharma 1987, p. 280).

Sharma, Shimp and Shin (1995) contend that ethnocentric tendencies in consumers develop as part of an interplay among many socio-psychological influences in a person’s earlier development. They argue, for instance, that cultural openness (consumers who are more familiar with, and open to, other cultures will show less ethnocentric tendencies), patriotism (patriotic consumers will show more ethnocentrism), conservatism (conservative consumers will evaluate imports more negatively), and collectivism (consumers with more collectivist goals will show more ethnocentrism) all influence the development of ethnocentric tendencies in the consumer’s socialization. Baughn and Yaprak (1996) support this view as they show that economic nationalism, one manifestation of CE, is related to intolerance for ambiguity, authoritarian personality, and prejudice against out-groups, all traits of consumer personality. Balabanis, et al (2001) underscore this hypothesis as they; too, show that CE tendencies are associated with high levels of nationalism and patriotism and low levels of internationalism, very much in line with propositions introduced by Adorno et al (1950) and the arguments advanced by Kosterman and Feshbach (1989).

Sharma, Shimp and Shin (1995) also contend that consumer ethnocentricity is affected by the socioeconomic characteristics of the consumer. In this context, they show that age (older consumers are more ethnocentric), gender (women are more ethnocentric), education (educated people are less ethnocentric), and income (higher income individuals are less ethnocentric) affect the ethnocentricity of the consumer. Balabanis et al (2001) confirm this in their study. They find, based on research conducted in Turkey and the Czech Republic, that older consumers and women tend to be more ethnocentric and the highly educated and higher income consumers tend to be less ethnocentric. Good and Huddleston (1995) challenge this hypothesis in their study of Polish and Russian consumers. Their findings reveal mixed results: while all socioeconomic variables are in the predicted direction for the Polish consumers when correlated to ethnocentricity (older and female Polish consumers are more ethnocentric, and they are less so when highly educated and belong to higher income brackets), for the Russian consumers only the education variable is in the predicted direction.

Sharma, Shimp and Shin (1995) also hypothesize that several moderating factors would influence consumers’ ethnocentricity when they engage in purchasing imported products. They feel, for instance, that the effect of consumer ethnocentricity on attitudes toward foreign product purchase would be relatively stronger for products perceived as unnecessary. They propose that consumer ethnocentricity would have a strong impact on attitudes toward purchasing imported products when consumers feel either personally threatened or

fear that the domestic economy might be threatened by foreign competition. Their findings confirm both hypotheses indicating that consumers’ ethnocentricity is elevated when *unnecessary* products are imported and when they feel that their personal welfare is *threatened* or fear that the domestic economy might be hurt by foreign competition. Baughn and Yaprak’s (1996) study underscores this view (with regard to *economic threat* only). They find that their respondents’ perceptions of the economic threat posed by foreign competitors predict elevated levels of economic nationalism (though job insecurity, per se, is not as strongly related to economic nationalism). Balabanis et al (2001) demonstrate that the influence of these variables (though in their study these are main effect, not moderating, variables) vary between Turkey and the Czech Republic leading them to conclude that only in some countries is consumer ethnocentricity related to political nationalism. Indeed, Sharma, Shimp and Shin’s (1995) contention that patriotic consumers are more likely to show higher levels of consumer ethnocentrism is consistent with studies suggesting that consumers who have stronger positive attitudes toward their home countries are expected to exhibit higher levels of ethnocentricity toward imports than others (See Baughn and Yaprak, 1993 and Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2003, for comprehensive reviews).

In still other studies, various psychological constructs were linked to CE. For example, Durvasula, Andrews and Netemeyer (1997) found that CE had a statistically significant influence on consumer beliefs about imported and domestic products, attitudes toward imported and domestic products, the importance of buying domestic vs. imported products, and beliefs about the quality of domestic vs. imported products in both Russia and the United States. In their study, Balabanis and Diamantopoulos (2004) linked consumer purchase preferences for domestic products in the United Kingdom (domestic country bias) and country of origin effects to CE across eight product categories and found that consumer preferences for domestic products were a function of CE to some degree, and these effects varied from one product category to the other. These more recent findings support similar findings in previous studies (Baughn and Yaprak, 1993; Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2003) and suggest that CE might be a holistic construct that manifests itself in a person’s cognitive, affective, and behavioral orientations.

Additional studies in cross-cultural psychology and sociology have explored the linkages between ethnocentric tendencies (or its manifestations) and such orientations as a society’s stereotyping of itself and other societies and its individualistic vs. collectivistic orientations. In this context, Triandis and Gelfand (1998) for example, have explored correlations among definitions of the self as interdependent (thus giving priority to in-group goals and norms) and independent (thus placing importance on personal values and initiatives). They observed, among other things, that interdependent societies are likely to display greater degrees of ethnocentricity, while independent societies are likely to show lower degrees of it. In a similar vein and focusing on rugged individualism, a core American cultural value, Hirschman (2003) explored the role this cultural trait might have on advertising imagery, and hypothesized, in contrast to Triandis and Gelfand that *rugged* individualism, an especially potent form of individualism, might be a source of higher ethnocentricity.

Other researchers have commented on the impact that the

“psychic distance” (or cultural distance) among societies might have on the similarities and/or differences in their ethnocentric tendencies (Shenkar, 2001). They have proposed that psychically close countries are likely to have similar backgrounds and geographic locations and might share similar ethnicities (as detailed in Shenkar, 2001). Composed of such key societal characteristics as dominant religion, business language, form of government, market size and sophistication, and levels of emigration, this closeness (or distance) might help create identification as a we-group (or out-group) and drive consumers’ ethnocentric tendencies in like patterns (Shenkar, 2001). Although the utility of this construct has been challenged in the literature in light of such recent trends as globalization, convergence, acculturation, and cultural diffusion (Shenkar, 2001), we feel that it is still a valid construct to help us understand consumers’ likely ethnocentric tendencies. Indeed, Kogut and Singh’s work (1988) shows that cultural/psychic proximity (or distance) does involve overlaps (or separations) in such traits as uncertainty avoidance and power relationships, and thus impact the choice of market entry mode used by multinationals.

A parallel research stream in political psychology has implied a link between ethnocentric tendencies in a society and its evolution along its “modernization” trajectory. Studies in this stream have suggested that secular-rational societies (those who tend to rely on logical reasoning rather than tradition to make their decisions) will become less ethnocentric as they move toward “postmodernization”; that is as they travel down self-expression paths from their survival-oriented pasts (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart and Baker, 2000).

A summary of this literature would suggest that consumer ethnocentrism is a very complex construct at best. From the perspective of laddering research, it includes motivational chains incorporating attributes and consequences that have a positive on ethnocentric motivation in some cases, and negative impact in others. Exhibit 12 presents a *hierarchical value map* summarizing many of these patterns. Rather than beginning with any specific product, they begin with the general attributes of local versus global sourcing. From these, the diagram shows a number of chains, ultimately leading to the identification of four basic consumers segments – *nostalgic conservatives*, *labor-oriented materialists*, *free-market materialists*, and *Internationalists*. *Nostalgic conservatives* and *labor-oriented materialists* tend to be high in consumer ethnocentrism, while *free-market materialists* and *Internationalists* tend to be low. We have used different color dotted lines to represent the value chains that characterize these four segments on the map.

----- Insert Exhibit 12 about here -----

The Exhibit simply groups a number of means-end chains together in a single diagram. The actual chains follow the basic patterns presented as examples in the section on “Laddering Methods.” The four colored dotted ovals represent groupings of patterns that seem to represent the same basic kinds of consumers. This analysis will provide the basis for the actual exercise.

THE EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE

The exercise involves four student teams. The first requires four sub-teams – either four individuals, or four groups of

individuals. These will serve as the interviewers for the laddering research project. Each of the remaining four teams will take the role of interviewees, one team for each of the four segments depicted in Exhibit 12.

The actual exercise should take about 2 ½ hours. We suggest that it be preceded by a lecture on means-end and laddering theory, drawing on the materials discussed in the “Laddering Research” and “Laddering Methods” sections above. The exercise proceeds in four stages:

STAGE 1: PRE-BRIEFING (1/2 HOUR)

The interviewer and interviewee groups will meet separately. The instructor will work with the interviewers to train them in the actual administration of laddering interviews. This will begin with a review of the instructions provided in Appendix A. It will then address the material discussed in the “Laddering Methods” section above. It should include demonstrations, practice interviews, instruction on data recording, all with interactive feedback, sufficient to prepare the interviewers to conduct actual interviews.

While the interviewers are receiving instruction, the interviewee teams will meet to prepare themselves to play the roles portrayed in Appendices B-E. We recommend that a teaching, or better, two assistants be assigned to assist in this preparation. Ideally, they would provide a short initial discussion (to all of the teams together) on the general requirements of the role play, along with a brief role play of their own, in which they model a sample interviewer-interviewee dialog. The teams then break into separate groups to digest the roles they have been assigned. They should come to a general agreement about the central attitudinal theme of that defines their segment and discuss the differences in thought patterns that separate the various prototypic members of each simulated segment. During these discussions, the teaching assistants would circulate, answering questions, offering suggestions, and coaching team members as they try out their roles.

STAGE 2: INTERVIEWS (1 HOUR)

During the actual interview period, each of the interviewer sub-teams teams will meet with each of the segment interviewee teams for 15 minutes to conduct laddering interviews. During this time, their task will be to develop ladders to capture means-end chains underlying the attitudes expressed by the members of each team of interviewees.

At the end of each 15-minute period, the instructor will signal interviewers to move on, and they will begin interviewing another team. The result, then, will be that each of the four interviewer sub-teams will interview each of the segment interviewee teams.

During the interviews, the instructor and assistants will circulate to monitor how the interviews are progressing. They may make helpful suggestions when necessary. However, they should avoid this wherever possible. Too much intervention will distract students from their role-play tasks and dampen the experiential effect of the exercise. It will also tend to make students dependent on the instructor, thus short-circuiting the learning they gain from wrestling with the problems they encounter.

One of the legitimate interventions would be to help

students stay on task and working within the allotted time. While failure to complete the interviews can be a good learning experience in itself, it is not one of the key objectives in this exercise.

STAGE 3: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION (1/2 HOUR)

In the analysis and interpretation period, the interviewer and interviewee teams will meet separately as two groups, again under the cautious tutelage of the instructor and assistants. The caution is again to avoid dependence. In contrast to the interview stage, having the instructor and/or assistants participate in the discussion in the analysis and interpretation stage should not detract from the experiential aspect of the exercise (because they will not be causing the students to “break role”). Nevertheless, if students are struggling to conceptualize what they have experienced, having instructors available can cause them to slip into a passive learning role, waiting for the instructors to provide an answer.

The task of Stage 3 will be for the students to develop a *hierarchical value map*, such as the one illustrated in Exhibit 12. This should summarize the value chains the students have discovered in the course of the exercise. While the students should discuss the patterns they have seen, they need not try to formally group them.

Note the richness in perspectives, as suggested in Exhibit 13. The four interviewee groups have specialized in one segment each. Joining them together for discussion will give them an opportunity to compare and contrast the differences across groups. By contrast, each of the four sub-teams in the interviewer group will have been exposed to all four interviewee segments, so they will be comparing and contrasting their individual readings of the overall hierarchical value map.

As noted earlier, the exercise is designed to immerse students cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally in the process of finding out how consumers relate to consumer ethnocentrism and to the laddering research process. The two perspectives portrayed in Exhibit 13 help give breadth and depth to this immersion.

Appendix A contains instructions for the interviewer group. Appendix F contains instructions for the interviewee groups. In both cases, the instructor and/or assistants should walk the students through what is expected. This is a critical stage and one where students will likely experience a sense of anxiety and confusion.

STAGE 4: DEBRIEFING (1/2 HOUR)

In the final stage, all the students are gathered together, and the instructor leads a discussion of the results achieved from the two perspectives in the exercise. Both the interviewer and interviewee groups have sought to construct hierarchical value maps. The difficulties they faced conceptualizing the map and their actual experience with the value systems fresh in their minds, the students will be primed for closure on a map, such as the one shown in Exhibit 12.

----- Insert Exhibit 13 about here -----

As is usual in experiential exercises, the dynamics of the groups may be very different from one exercise to the next. This must be reflected in the debriefing. Thus, while the principal

agenda of Stage 4 of the project is to finalize the map and answer any questions it raises, instructors might find that they have to address any number of related issues related to ethnocentrism and the research technique. The instructor should be prepared to present short, impromptu sidebars to address these issues. The earlier “Consumer Ethnocentrism” section of this paper should provide a good background for discussing content. A good way to handle questions regarding research technique is usually to explain the principle and then model/role-play a proper approach.

REFERENCES

- Adorno, T. W., E. Frankel-Brunswick, D. J. Levinson, N. R. Sanford, B. Aron, M. Hertz and W. Morrow (1950). *The Authoritarian Personality*. N. York: Harper and Row.
- Anitsal, M. Meral, and Codotte Ernest, R. (2007). “The Application of Means-End Theory to Understanding the Value of Simulation-Based Learning”. *Developments in Business Simulation and Experiential Learning* 34. Reprinted in the *Bernie Keys Library* [Available from <http://ABSEL.org>]
- Balabanis, G. A., Diamantopoulos, A., Mueller, R. D., and Melawar, T.C. (2001). “The Impact of Nationalism, Patriotism, and Internationalism on Consumer Ethnocentric Tendencies”. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 32 (1), 157-175.
- Balabanis, G. A. and Diamantopoulos, A. (2004). “Domestic Country Bias, Country-of-Origin Effects, and Consumer Ethnocentrism: A Multidimensional Unfolding Approach”. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 32 (1), 80-95.
- Baughn, C. Christopher and Yaprak A. (1993). “Mapping Country-of-Origin Research: Recent Developments and Emerging Avenues”, in *Product and Country Images*, N. Papadopoulos and L. Heslop, Eds, International Business Press, 89-115.
- Baughn, C. Christopher and Yaprak, A. (1996). “Economic Nationalism: Conceptual and Empirical Development”. *Political Psychology*, 17 (4), 759-778.
- Colley, Russel (1961). *Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results*. New York: Association of National Advertisers.
- Durvasula, S., Andrews, C., and Netemeyer, R. (1997). “A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Consumer Ethnocentrism in the US and Russia”. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 9 (4), 73-93.
- Gentry, James W. (1990). What is experiential learning? In James W. Gentry (ed.). *Guide to Business Simulation and Experiential Learning*. East Brunswick: Nichols/GP Publishing, 9-20. Reprinted in the *Bernie Keys Library* [Available from <http://ABSEL.org>]
- Gold, Steven C. (2005). “System-dynamics-based modeling of business simulation algorithms.” *Simulation & Gaming* 36:2 (June), 203-218.
- Gold, Steven C. and Thomas F. Pray (1999). “Changing customer preferences and characteristics in the design of demand functions.” *Simulation & Gaming* 30:3 (September), 264-282.
- Good, L. and Huddleston, P. (1995), “Ethnocentrism of Polish and Russian Consumers: Are Feelings and Intentions

- Related?", *International Marketing Review*, 12 (5), 35-48.
- Gutman, J. (1982). "A Means-End Chain Model Based on Consumer Categorization Processes." *Journal of Marketing* 46, 2, 60-72.
- Gutman, J. (1997). "Means-end chains and goal hierarchies". *Psychology and Marketing* 14, 6, 545- 605.
- Hirschman, E. C. (2003). "Men, Dogs, Guns, and Cars: The Semiotics of Rugged Individualism". *Journal of Advertising*, 32 (1), 9-22.
- Inglehart, R. (1997), *Modernization and Postmodernization*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey.
- Inglehart, R. and Baker, W. (2000). "Modernization, Cultural Change and the Persistence of Traditional Values". *American Sociological Review*, 65, 19-51.
- Kelly, George A. (1995). *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*. New York: Norton.
- Kogut, B. and Singh, H. (1988). "The Effect of National Culture on the Choice of Entry Mode", *Journal of International Business Studies*, (Fall), 412-431.
- Kosterman, R. and Feshbach, S. (1989). "Toward a Measure of Patriotic and Nationalistic Attitudes", *Political Psychology*, 10 (2), 257-274.
- Johnson, Richard M. (1971). "Market segmentation: A strategic management tool". *Journal of Marketing Research* 8:1 (February), 13-18.
- Miller, Geoge A., Eugene Galanter, and Karl H. Pribram (1960). *Plans the structure of behavior*. New York: Holt.
- Papadopoulos, N. and Heslop, L. (2003). "Country Equity and Product Images: State of the Art in Research and Implications", *Handbook of Research in International Marketing*, S. C. Jain, Ed. Edward Elgar Press, 402-433.
- Reynolds, Thomas J. and Jonathan Gutman (1984). "Advertising Is Image Management." *Journal of Advertising Research* 24:1 (December), 27-37.
- Reynolds, Thomas J., and Jonathan Gutman (1988). "Laddering Theory, Method, Analysis, and Interpretation". *Journal of Advertising Research* 28:1(February/March), 11-31.
- Rokeach, M. J. (1973). "The Nature of Human Values", N. Y.: The Free Press.
- Rosenberg, Milton J. (1956). "Cognitive structure and attitudinal affect". *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 53:3 (November), 367-372.
- Shankarmahesh, M. (2006). "Consumer Ethnocentrism: An Integrative Review of its Antecedents and Consequences". *International Marketing Review*, 23, 2, 146-172.
- Sharma, S., Shimp, T., and Shin, J. (1995). "Consumer Ethnocentrism: A Test of Antecedents and Moderators", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 23, 26-37.
- Shenkar, O. (2001). "Cultural Distance Revisited: Towards a More Rigorous Conceptualization and Measurement of Cultural Differences". *Journal of International Business Studies*, 32 (3), 519-535.
- Shimp, T. and Sharma, S. (1987). "Consumer Ethnocentrism: Construction and Validation of the Cetscale". *Journal of Marketing Research*, 24 (August), 280-289.
- Teach, Richard D. (1984). "Using Spacial Relationships to Estimate Demand in Business Simulations." *Developments in Business Simulation and Experiential Learning*, Vol. 11, 244-246. Reprinted in the *Bernie Keys Library* [Available from <http://ABSEL.org>]
- Teach, Richard D. (1990). "Demand equations which include product attributes." *Developments in Business Simulation and Experiential Learning*, Vol. 17. 161-166. Reprinted in the *Bernie Keys Library* [Available from <http://ABSEL.org>]
- Triandis, H. C. and Gelfand, M. J. (1998). "Converging Measurement of Horizontal and Vertical Individualism and Collectivism", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74 (1), 118-128.
- Urban, Glen L. (1975). "PERCEPTOR: A model for product positioning." *Management Science* 21:8 (April), 858-871.
- Verleigh, W. J. P, and Steenkamp, J-B., E. M. (1999), "A Review and meta-analysis of Country of Origin Research", *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 20, 521-546.
- Young, S., and B. Feigin. (1985). "Using the Benefit Chain for Improved Strategy Formulation." *Journal of Marketing* 39 , 70-77.