

## **The Negro Marketing Dilemma:**

### **Dominant Discourses from the 1950s to the 1970s**

#### *Abstract:*

This paper examines the resonant discourses in the construction of the Negro market in post-war America and observes that the field of marketing provides a historiography where Negro marketing was constructed as dilemmatic and through a duality of the Black market impacting the well-established White market. A survey of marketing literature from the 1950s to the 1970s reflects a discursive turn from scepticism and caution in approaching the Negro market to evoking the ethical discourse and advocating equal rights for the Black consumer.

#### **Introduction**

The history of a nation can be documented in a myriad of ways. Whether through oral narratives, official documents or media archives, history can be re-enacted from different perspectives and sources. Dominant discourses and discursive spheres can convey both the ideologies and the attendant subjectivity of a population and context. In this regard, marketing research and literature are rich repositories of histories, cultures and belief systems. The conceptual, methodological and discursive approaches to markets and consumers can provide temporally an historical trajectory to marketing as a distinct sphere of economic activity and social practices underpinned by ideologies and belief systems. In post-war America terms such as 'integrated marketing' and 'market segmentation' had a distinct racial context. The term 'integrated marketing' in the field of advertising, for example, referred to advertising where Blacks and Whites appear together in socially intimate situations (Gould et al. 1970: 20).

This paper contends that in Black civil rights history the field of marketing became both a mirror of the racial struggle and dominant ideologies in America as well as a source for academic, intellectual and social interventions, gathering momentum towards the end of 1960s and 1970s and charged with being somewhat lacking agency in the earlier years. A review of marketing literature from 1950s to 1970s on the Negro market and marketing practices reveals that the discourses shift from being sceptical and dismissive of the Negro market to being interventionist and advocating marketers to play an active social role in negating cultural stereotypes of the Black consumer. This moral turn in the literature, palpable from the mid-1960s captures how marketing as a field of academic enquiry as well as an industry which could influence media and the market was responding to the changing

political consciousness. The turn in discourse can be categorised as a movement away from academic distance to one of advocating change and intervention through market practices. This paper reviews the literature on the construction of the 'Negro market' and assesses the resonant themes as well as the strategic and intellectual responses of the marketing academics and professionals. A review of articles on the topic reveals that research occurred in other academic fields beyond the remit of marketing and these different disciplines approached the issue of the Negro market from different research orientations and fields of enquiry. This paper focuses on academic literature that was published in marketing and business journals which were concerned with marketing to the Black community. The journals reviewed in this paper include *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Marketing/Communications*, *The Journal of Business*, *The Journal of Marketing* and *Journal of Advertising Research* published from the 1950s to the 1960s. In reviewing the marketing literature from these journals it highlights the recurrent and resonant themes and shifts in discourse in the period mentioned.

### **Historical Context and the Negro Market**

There were unprecedented changes in the post-war years in race relations in America and the era from the 1950s to the 1970s represented a transformative journey from severe limitations on personal and civil liberties to the reclamation of rights and redressing of injustices (Morris 1999; Allen & Farley 1986). Black Americans, due to discriminatory laws, experienced severe restrictions in everyday life and liberties in the 1950s. Jim Crow laws were a significant aspect of American society in 1950s and had been so for over seven decades. These laws inhibited Black communities from attending the same schools as Whites or eating in the same restaurants or staying in the same hotels. Beyond denying Black Americans opportunities in education and employment, Southern states extended these restrictions to voting rights. This created distinct divides between the Whites and Blacks with regard to education, employment, earnings, savings and standard of living.

When the Supreme Court on 17 May 1954 declared segregation in public schools to be illegal it was considered a watershed ruling in American Black struggle for emancipation and equality. The civil rights movement, employing a range of tactics from civil disobedience, court litigation, and economic boycotts to mobilization of the mass media, changed the rudimentary structure of race relations in America. The sustained political action resulted in reconfiguring the social status of Black Americans through the enactment of legislation and presidential executive orders which in turn mediated public opinion. Racial politics dominated both the economic and social fabric of America. Various sociological studies reiterated that race and economics are conjoined (See Frazier 1937; Johnson 1934; Davis et al. 1941; Myrdal 1962; Du Bois 1967). Du Bois' (1967) study of Black Americans in Philadelphia profiled how a regime of racial discrimination impacted a whole host of factors including educational attainment, health, occupation, family organization and the overall quality of life. In the 1950s and 1960s there was a rising representation of Blacks in

professional, managerial and clerical positions (Allen & Farley 1986). There were distinct occupational shifts in Blacks compared to the Whites between 1960 and 1970s as well. The 1950s and the early 1960s also marked the coming of age of modern technologies and appropriation of these into households. As early as 1958 over 83% of the population owned television sets (Sterling and Kitross 1978). The broadcasting medium was exploited by the Black protest movement and it provided a lens with which to view the struggles of the Black community, foisting it into the American national consciousness.

In the domain of marketing in the 1950s various social and technological processes created a need to review historic tendencies to ignore the Black population as consumers. Improvements in the economic conditions of Black consumers meant there was increasing interest in how they spent their income. Equally, the movement of Blacks into inner cities impacted the market importance of Blacks in urban quarters. Over the four decades including World War Two there was a mass migration of Blacks out of the South. From 1940 to 1950 the proportion of blacks residing in urban areas grew from 47.9 to 60.6 per cent (Alexis 1962). Undoubtedly, various forms of social and economic discrimination throughout history had created different consumption patterns amongst the Black population and they were largely ignored by the marketers and advertisers. Blacks were also becoming better educated and were developing a degree of self-confidence and pride as they progressed economically (Gould et al. 1970) and they were demanding to be addressed as consumers in their own right. In the 1960s 'a new 'Negro Market' had emerged according to management, retail and advertising literature (Sewell 2004, 138). The 1960s was a prosperous decade for Black women as well as it brought improvements in their relative income and reduced the gap in purchasing power between themselves and White women (Allen & Farley 1987).

The movement of Black Americans to inner cities, rising education standards and improvements in employment, the role of the Black civil rights movement in advocating political, social and economic reform for Blacks and minorities, increasing industrialization and consumerism along with rising consumption of news and advertising through television brought unparalleled changes to America. Television began to emerge as a national cultural force in the 1950s. Much of the discussion of television and race centred on the phenomenon of stereotyping and a projection of a reality which conceived its audiences as primarily White (Winton 1982: 177). Nevertheless in the sixties and seventies many of the worst forms of stereotyping on television disappeared (Winston 1982: 178). When the civil rights movement began to attract national attention in the late fifties, Negroes hardly existed in the TV world except for sitcoms such as *Amos 'n' Andy* which portrayed Blacks in a stereotyped manner. Whilst there were objections in the South to the inclusion of Black characters in television roles, the increasing use of technology in people's everyday lives meant it was difficult to reinforce the separation in every sphere. For example, airplanes were never forced into the segregation system unlike railroads and buses (Winston 1982: 180). With increasing industrialisation and growing consumerism, television advertising presented a platform to capture mass audiences for advertisers and marketers. Television presented its own economic barriers as the medium was heavily dependent on large advertisers due to the programming costs involved. This 'sponsor barrier' was a real issue in television as it strove to deliver large

audiences and as a result its ability to reach Black audiences and represent Black consumers was limited. Conversely, purchasing power represented a weapon in post-war American and the marketers and advertisers were becoming increasingly aware of its potency (Sewell 2004). This was demonstrated in the purchasing boycotts employed by civil rights movements before and after the struggle against employers who exhibited discriminatory practices.

The political advocacy by Black civil rights leaders for more representation of Blacks in mainstream media created pressures for positive images especially in television commercials (Schlinger & Plummer 1972). The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) lobbied the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to end discriminatory advertising and advertising practices, particularly the depiction of Blacks in a derogatory manner (Cox 1969). While research reveals that the percentage of total television commercials using Black actors increased each year from 4.6% in 1967 to 11% in 1969, it was also noted that Blacks appeared more in public service and programme-promotional advertising rather than product-related advertising (Dominick & Greenberg 1970). The Black consumer was absent from mainstream advertising yet present as a form of political consciousness that was sweeping the country. Marketing as an academic field and as an industry with a set of distinct practices found itself in a conundrum. On the one hand, its strategic practices had been shaped by the economic and political landscape of segregation and race relations, but on the other it could not afford to ignore the pressures being exerted on American society by the Black civil rights movement nor the changing demographics of the Black consumer. The construction of the Negro consumer and market is captured both as a social imaginary as well as a physical entity through statistics in marketing literature. The following sections examine the resonant themes which emerged in marketing literature between the 1950s and 1970s.

### **Marketing Literature in the Period under Review**

Marketing research and literature from the 1950s to the 1970s show a distinct shift in viewpoints from perceiving the Negro market as a mythic notion to assessing the relevant strategies to reach the market. The initial discourses reflect the construction of the Negro market as a non-existent entity often premised on the assumption that race alone cannot be a characteristic to construct a market. From this ensued a discourse of framing strategic marketing responses to the Negro market underpinned by an overarching recognition that it was dilemmatic as it potentially held the risk of alienating the established White market. This dilemmatic discourse was a recurrent theme in marketing discourses throughout the 1960s

where reaching out to the Negro market was framed as a risk and marketing research was pre-occupied with administering strategic responses and in testing the reception of Black or White consumers to advertising with Black or White models. A discursive shift occurs in the marketing literature in the 1960's where there is a lobby to not only recognise the rights of the Black consumer but to end the segregation in marketing strategies and practices. From the 60's marketing discourses argue for integrated marketing and lobby for a review of the practice of market segmentation along colour lines. The segregation in society and the reconfiguration of race relations was intimately projected in the field of marketing where the research imperative and strategies mirrored the struggles and progression of ideas in the wider society. Alan Andreasen (1978) arrives at a similar conclusion in his assessment of the market literature on 'ghetto marketing' which focused on economically and socially deprived consumers including those with lower income or minority racial status. While the Black consumer is implicated in ghetto marketing, the term targets a wider population beyond ethnic distinctions.

Andreasen (1978: 22) believed that urban riots in the mid 60's altered the prevailing views of marketing leading to research which was more politically relevant as opposed to merely addressing managerial issues. In the earlier marketing and economic discourses the Black consumer was ignored both because of her economic status and her racial identity. Even though the discursive shift is evident in the marketing literature and rhetoric between the early 1960s and the tail end of the decade, the research is far from voluminous and does not necessarily emanate from the field of marketing. More importantly, the early literature on ghetto marketing which included the Black consumers lacked an element of continuity. Seminal research theories and findings were not employed to build on more recent works. This failure to integrate earlier seminal works and theoretical paradigms impeded a consolidation and augmentation of research in the area. This meant that research in the field was often reactionary and short-lived rather than trend-setting and anticipatory of emerging social conditions, with a preponderance of certain issues whilst others were overlooked. The time lapses within one seminal scholarly work and another and the failure to cite these works often led to a discontinuity in the rhetoric. The fact that new theories did not build on related fields or relevant work often led to ideas and advocacy on the Negro market being disparate in the early 1950s till the mid-1960s.

Andreasen (1978:20) cites the example of David Caplovitz's book *The Poor Pay More* (1963) in making his point. Caplovitz's book was the first major study to focus exclusively on the consumption problems of the disadvantaged and laid the ground work for a theoretical model of poor consumers' problems and made recommendations about what should be done. Caplovitz observed the marketing system in ghettos as unethical, deviant and rife with illegal practices (1963: 180). From 1964 till 1967 only ten articles were written and none cited Caplovitz's work. Andreasen's survey on ghetto marketing revealed that for the four years after the publication of Caplovitz's work the contribution of the marketing profession to the field was sparse. He noted that until 1968 two of the three most frequently cited works were published prior to 1964 and outside of the marketing literature by people not within the mainstream of the marketing discipline. These two works by Marcus Alexis (1962) and

Henry A Bullock (1961) were anchored in the segmentation research tradition and sought to test for differences between Blacks and Whites and had only secondary interest in the question of marketing disadvantage raised by Caplovitz's work (Andreasen 1978:22).

Another type of research resonant during this period was the comparison of pricing in low-income and high-income areas. The research findings often revealed that while there was no discriminatory pricing in ghetto areas by supermarkets there were fewer supermarkets in low-income areas and that corner and independent shops tended to charge more in low-income areas (Andreasen 1978: 23). Frederick Sturdivant's book *The Ghetto Market Place* published in 1969 similarly lamented the dearth of research in this area. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that in the late 1960s marketing research was starting to make renewed emphasis between ghetto consumer issues and minority economic development. D Parke Gibson's book *The \$30 Million Negro* (1969) for example marked a milestone in Negro market research as it stressed the importance of the Black market as a vital market segment in its own right. It also prompted studies which countered the claim that there were negative effects in using Blacks in advertisements.

By the end of 1968 three articles on the problem of ghetto marketing had appeared in an issue of *Social Science Quarterly* devoted particularly to Black America. Additionally several books and articles published in 1969 confirmed the salience of this issue (Andreasen 1978: 22). Andreasen observes that the topic of Negro marketing received institutional backing when the American Marketing Association (AMA) sponsored a conference on 'Improving Inner City Marketing' at the State University of New York at Buffalo in June 1970. This in effect helped bring Black marketing research into the mainstream and to encourage an exploration of the issue in terms of breadth, depth and sophistication. Andreasen concludes that while there was a growing interest in ghetto and minority marketing in the late 1960s, there was a maturing of interest in the field between 1970 and 1972 and a distinct demise after 1973 and 1974.

Geng Cui (2001), in assessing literature on the topic of ethnic marketing from 1932 to 1997 points out that the first scholarly research that focused on minority consumers was published in 1932 entitled *The Southern Negro as a Consumer* by Paul Edwards. The next study on the Negro consumer did not appear until two decades later. Cui (2001:24) concurs with Andreasen that during the civil rights activism in America in the 1960s the economic conditions of Blacks became a major concern in American society and this prompted the need to consider strategies such as integrated marketing. Cui points out that there was a renewed interest amongst marketers to look at access to goods and services and to discern and advocate against discrimination in the market place. In 1973 with the beginning of the affirmative action programme there was a loss in momentum in such research.

### **Dominant discourses in marketing literature**

As mentioned earlier, a dominant theme of the marketing literature was to frame the Negro market as dilemmatic. This dilemmatic discourse permeated academic and intellectual

thinking throughout the period under review. Even with interventionist paradigms there was an implicit recognition that many of the marketing strategies were experimental, not completely conclusive and yet to be widely accepted in the market. Controlled studies and observations of White and Black consumers did not completely provide all the answers as to how to approach a market which hitherto had been under-explored and considered unimportant in economic terms.

One of the recurring themes during this period under review is that the early articulations often doubted or explicitly dismissed the existence of a Negro market. There was a palpable scepticism of whether ‘there is such a thing as a Negro market and to what extent is its substance?’ (cf. Young 1963). Often questions were raised about whether the Negro market could be distinguished from ‘any other lower-income, lower-educated and geographically concentrated groups’ (Bauer et al. 1965:2). Questions about the validity of a Negro market were complemented by racial stereotyping of the Black consumer as she was often constructed as being uninterested or incompetent to judge the quality of goods. There was an explicit recognition that ‘marketing to Blacks mystifies both the marketing and advertising community’ and whether the problem stemmed from characterising a Black market when there might be no more a Black market than a White market (Cohen 1970: 7; Bauer et al. 1965:2). From the middle of the 1960s this view was replaced by discourses which sought to represent the Black consumer as discerning and perhaps more diligent about the symbolic value of goods compared to the White consumer (Bauer et al. 1965:2). Researchers also discussed the stereotype of the Blacks being more brand conscious than the Whites. This consumerism and love for branded items was perceived as a compensation for their status in society. Henry Clark (1969: 69) in assessing the change among better educated young Black consumers with regard to their attitude towards brand loyalty commented that ‘many Blacks are learning the hard way that a collection of prestige symbols only superficially relieves psychic wounds left over from years of racial apprehension’.

Those arguing against the dismissal of the Negro market often substantiated it either through the actual dollar worth or through elements which made it distinctive. Alexis (1959) pointed out that ‘America’s 17m Negroes spend an estimated 17 billion dollars per year on goods and services and their purchases are vital to the success of any business and that the potential of the market was often unrealised’. In 1968, 25 million Black consumers represented \$30 billion worth of purchasing power per annum (Gould et al. 1970) and this market was seen to be neglected both in terms of sales and market research (Sullivan 1945:68). These marketers who lobbied for more interest in the Negro market were also equally interested in how to appeal to the Black consumer. Alexis (1959) observed that ‘Today the Negro rightfully wants to be advertised to’ and hence they ‘Should be talked to and not talked down to’. Other researchers reiterated the existence of a Negro market based on the government’s programme of economic development for the Black community and initiatives for Black businesses (Bauer & Cunningham 1970). These, they argued, provided the basis for a difference in consumer behaviour.

A resonant discourse in marketing literature was whether the term ‘Negro market’ should be captured in economic terms or through racial lines. The argument often centred on whether

race was an important determinant in purchasing patterns and consumer behaviour. Marketing discourses raised doubts on whether markets could be segregated along colour lines instead of social demographics such as income levels, education and standard of living. The strategy of segmenting the market through the colour line thus came under scrutiny and criticism. Barban & Cundiff (1964) argued common characteristics of ethnicity or race cannot be the basis for market segmentation as it should be based on common characteristics as consumers with their attendant habits and lifestyles. Similarly, B.E. Sawyer (1962) proclaimed that race was less of an issue and that there were other determinants in consumer patterns. Other marketing discourses argued that this market had special characteristics that distinguished Negroes from other groups portraying them as 'self-segmenting' (Bauer et al. 1965). Nevertheless, race was generally considered a demographic variable and was used as such in measuring the size and growth of the market (Cohen 1970: 8). Much of the research in the 1950s and 1960s also rested on the assumption that Black communities were homogenous in terms of behavioural habits. Towards the end of the 1960s researchers were much more conscious of assuming it as a homogenous community (Portis 1966). Dorothy Cohen (1970) recommended a segmentation strategy to target different segments within a community rather than treating the whole of the Black population as one community. According to Cohen (1970:11) advertising can provide the opportunity for the higher-level Black to secure the recognition he deserves and incentive for the lower-level Black to strive for similar status (1970:11). John Petrof (1967: 407) argued that segmentation of the market in terms of White and Black consumers can be useful when advertisers are trying to target products exclusively to the Black consumer but it is more efficient to advertise in a general newspaper if the product is not targeted at a niche community like the Negro market.

Segmentation was viewed as being segregationist and particularly in relevance to specialised advertising to Blacks and Whites. Segregated marketing strategies came under criticism on moral and social grounds and there were calls to integrate advertising (Barban & Cundiff 1964: 53). Barban and Cundiff (1964) observed that marketers often targeted their advertising messages at White audiences and assumed it would reach Black consumers at the same time. However a turn to treat Whites and Blacks as separate markets had led to advertising becoming racially segregated. Their criticism is that research tended to stress on how Blacks lived and how they perceived advertising rather than how they consumed. Others such as D. Parke Gibson, contended that 'special marketing was not a form of segregation but rather a form of recognition' (cf. Time Magazine 1962). The strategy of market segmentation was polarised in marketing discourses. It was either viewed as sustaining racial segregation and stereotypes or a form of endorsement and recognition of the Black community which hitherto had been ignored or dismissed by the industry.

The token inclusion of Black models and their lack of presence in mass-market product advertising came under notice and criticism. Harold Kassarian (1969), in surveying the number of advertisements in selected consumer magazines, found that there were 5.3% blacks in 1946 compared to 6% in 1965. He noted that while Black models endorsed clothing, records and travel and tourism, they were not portrayed in heavily-advertised categories such as medicines, automobiles, toothpaste, deodorants, ready-to-eat cereals and

soap products. Academic research at this time was increasingly interested in verifying whether Negro representation in the advertisements had increased in this period and the research design often entailed a quantitative content analysis of counting advertising pages in magazines (Kassarjian 1970; Cox 1972).

Fred Aker noted (1968: 283) that while trade publications emphasised Negro-White differences in consumption behaviour academic research tended to either minimise Negro-White buying behaviour differences or demonstrate that Negroes are less brand conscious than Whites (Aker 1968: 283). Brands had become a sign of achievement among Blacks and a status symbol. Such research orientations, particularly segmentation research tradition, created a discourse of duality where comparative studies were designed to show how Blacks behaved in comparison to the White consumer. This research tradition saw a number of studies to negate the assumption that Blacks and Whites shop differently. For example, Haines et al. (1963) demonstrated that residents of a Black community shopped no differently than did Whites in other areas within or near the same city. Most studies showed little difference in purchase patterns (Gensch & Staelin 1972: 141; Hair et al. 1979). Some discourses depicted the Black consumer as more brand loyal than the White consumer and having a propensity for branded goods (Cohen 1970; Kassarjian 1964; Bauer et al. 1965).

Other discourses highlight the rise of 'Black capitalism' based on the assumption that Black consumers prefer to buy products from Black-owned firms (Gensch & Staelin 1972: 141). Gensch and Staelin's (1972: 147) discourse of Black capitalism was based on their study which found that 'buying Black was an important consideration for consumers who used the local black-owned shopping area'. In most parts there is less discussion or silence about the historical trajectory of the Black consumer or the injustices or unequal treatment they have been subjected to. Often the discourses glossed over the realities that faced the Black community. Academic marketing discourses often appropriated a pseudo-rational objectivity in engaging with the emotive issue of race. However, it was not always possible to conceal cultural stereotypes of Black consumers as revealed by this extract from Bauer et al.;

*'Some exceptions give the Negro market some distinctive characteristics. For example, it would appear that toilet soap, particularly as associated with deodorizing properties has special importance for the Negro women as compared with White women. Perhaps this is only a reflection of middle-class dictum about cleanliness being next to godliness, perhaps also a reaction to the belief that Negroes smell different than Whites' (Bauer et al. 1965:2).*

The discursive turn in the marketing discourses, whilst palpable in late 60's and early 70's, was intimately tied to the performance and reaction of the White consumers. This entwining of the Black consumer with the reaction and response of the White consumer limited the areas of research as well as the attendant methodologies that emerged. This delimited the field, often restricting the research imperative as well as research design. This overriding discourse of the White backlash and the cautious approach of marketers are examined in the next section.

## Discourse of the White Backlash

Since the mid-1960s whilst there was increasing interest in marketing goods to Black consumers they were not openly courted as it was perceived there would be a backlash from White consumers (Alexis 1959:115; Barban 1969; Cagley & Cardozo 1970; Guest 1970; Muse 1971; Stafford et al. 1970; Schlinger & Plummer 1972; Hair et al. 1977). The discourse of the 'White backlash' is a resonant theme in marketing literature where marketing to Black consumers is framed as a risk strategy. There was an overt acceptance that appealing to the Black market came at the price of alienating White consumers. The issue of White backlash meant that marketers and advertisers were interested in exploiting the Black media to keep their advertising distinct and separate from advertising to the White consumer (Gould et al. 1970; Cohen 1970). According to Bush et al. (1979: 341), research measuring the reaction of White consumers to White models has been conducted since 1964 and the findings have not been consistent.

As mentioned earlier, marketers, advertisers and advertising agencies were cautious about using Black models in advertisements despite societal pressures to review such practices (Schlinger & Plummer 1972). Some marketers argued against all Black advertising and reasoned that Black advertising might have an adverse effect on Black consumers where a Black man is supposed to identify with his oppressor and react negatively to Blacks (Grier & Cobbs 1969). This theory that middle-class Negroes don't identify with Blacks and seek validation through White America provided a premise to resist using Black models in advertising (Frazier 1962). With the Negro market largely ignored in the pre-war and post-war eras, marketers often assumed that they lacked the purchasing power and bought popular national brands anyway as they emulated the Whites (Bauer et al. 1965: 2; Krugman 1966). Such normative assumptions about Blacks appropriating White values often influenced the research design and research imperatives. For example, Bauer and Cunningham (1970) in their study of Black male Scotch drinkers, assumed that the cultural reference group for middle- and upper-income Blacks is Whites. These discourses often portrayed Negroes as a group who had accepted the aspirations and values of the White middle-class culture but lacked the purchasing power to acquire the goods which symbolised these values. The Black consumers were constructed as facing a 'Negro Dilemma' where they have accepted the social values of white middle-class culture but are at a disadvantage in acquiring the goods which represent some of these values (Bauer et al. 1965:2);

*'...the basic dilemma of Negroes is whether to strive against odds to attain these middle-class values (and the goods which come with them), or give in and live without most of them. It is this response of Negroes to this dilemma that creates two categories of persons whom we have labelled as 'strivers' and 'non-strivers' (Bauer et al. 1965:2).*

Marketers had cultivated a perception that for advertisements to be effective they had to be either Black or White (Cohen 1970: 7). This need to understand how Blacks and Whites reacted to all-Black or all-White television commercials led to an 'effects tradition' in marketing research, particularly one of measuring White and Black audiences responses to

commercials endorsed by Black or White models (Solomon et al. 1976). This effects tradition continued well into the 1970s. Most research sought to measure the White response to Blacks in advertising or vice versa. This meant replicating studies after a period to test for consistency or change. Others entailed comparing reaction to advertising materials consumed by Black against White consumers. Mixed reaction and inconclusive findings from such studies meant that businesses were often reluctant to use Black models in promotional materials (Solomon et al. 1976: 431; Bush et al. 1974; Schlinger & Plummer 1972). Many studies also found that Blacks responded very favourable towards integrated advertising (Barban & Cundiff 1969; Barban 1969; Tolley and Goett 1972; Choudhury and Schmid 1974). Marketing researchers such as Solomon et al. (1976) sought to assure through their research that cautious attitudes towards Black models may be unwarranted. They advised marketers from being too concerned about the adverse sales resulting from the use of Black models in promotional materials as White consumers respond in a similar manner to models of both races. They sought to assure that slight attitudinal differences between Black and White consumers would not result in point-of-sales differences. Others argued that Black models themselves should be credible for the audiences in order for them to believe in the message and brand. Marketers deliberated endlessly about whether integrated advertising was the way to go for advertisers.

The practice of using Black models began from the mid-60s but advertisers and marketers were less forthcoming about mass media advertising. In the 1960s and the early 70s, despite the civil rights movement's lobbying with the NACCP for Black representation in advertisements, most consumer-product companies refused to use Blacks in their mass market television advertisements as they feared Whites would be unwilling to use products endorsed by the Blacks. Marketers seeking to capitalise on Black and White consumers would run advertisements in the Black media but would guard against their products becoming Black. Nevertheless integrated marketing was most noticeable on television where Blacks and Whites appear together in more or less socially intimate situations. In such instances advertisers often said that they were under a double-bind as they 'risked' a backlash from Whites who viewed integration as undesirable and also a product boycott from Blacks who consider it as hypocritical (Gould et al. 1970). Inevitably, the market was conceived and experienced through the colour line rather than the social demographics such as income level, education or consumer attitudes and lifestyle.

Marketers in general adopted a cautious approach to integrated marketing. Marketing and advertising discourse produced much debate about whether the Negro market was a special one which should be treated differently. Proponents of this special market approach argued that Blacks will respond more to material which reaches them through Black media which employ Black people's idioms and speech. Those who opposed such polarisation contended that market decisions are made on economic and or sociological grounds rather than racial lines ((Wheatley 1971). Advertising-related dilemmas also brought to the fore discussions about whose social reality these advertisements should portray. Unlike the normative assumptions made by the likes of Bauer and Cunningham, Gould et al. (1970: 21) argued that Black consumers 'do not identify with situations portrayed in the mass print media and that

what they need is assurance and confidence that the product is for them and their business is wanted.’ These researchers advocated that commercial representations must be slices of Black not White people’s lives (cf. Gould et al. 1970: 21).

While marketers were experimenting with integrated marketing in the late 60s and early 70s Black consumers felt that the primary motive for integrated advertising was prompted by the profit motive and by pressures from the civil rights movement. As such they viewed it as tokenism and attributed it to avarice rather than political reform in the industry (Gould et al. 1970: 26). Kassarian (1971:393), while observing that 1.3% of all advertising in 1969 contained a Black face, nevertheless concluded that ‘unfortunately progress is still slow, and we have very little to be proud of – the Black model quite clearly is still a token Negro’.

Despite the scepticism there was a recognition among market researchers that they were ‘in a unique position to influence significantly the future relationships between Blacks and Whites in America’ (Gould et al. 1970: 26; Kassarian 1971; Hair et al. 1977; Solomon et al. 1976). The marketing discourses also showed reluctance in supporting Black media as advertising agencies did not have a preference for it. Black advertising organizations, while providing access to the Negro market, were seen as having high preparation costs and high costs per thousand in terms of reaching the population. There was also dissatisfaction expressed with the results of the copy (Alexis 1959).

The moral turn in advertising is evident in the late 60s and early 70s where marketers spoke of intervention beyond market strategies. Cohen (1970: 3) argued fervently that there exists an opportunity for advertising to improve its social image by giving more attention to the Black community. The moral discourse of social responsibility as marketers and advertisers sought to go beyond advocating consumer rights to recognising that structural changes and attitudinal shifts was required to reform the industry through recruitment and training of Black staff in creative and consultative roles. Kevin Wall (1970: 48), in commenting on integrated advertising, observed that beyond producing advertisements which create a sense of equality in life style and values, Black employment is vitally important in creative levels in the advertising industry to improve credibility and acceptance.

## **Conclusion**

The construction of the Negro market in marketing literature was overwhelmingly framed as dilemmatic or evoking a ‘Negro dilemma’. The need to approach and find marketing strategies to address the Black consumer created a body of literature which can be seen as a historiography of racial struggles and politics which saturated marketing practices, research imperatives, research design as well as the underlying ontological assumptions. The shifts in constructions of the Black consumer as uninitiated and emulating White values rather than embracing the rising wave of consumerism in industrializing America crafted much of the deliberations as an opportunity cost where reaching out to the Black market meant in some ways compromising the established White market. In the late 1960s and early 70s these articulations are much more nuanced and sought to de-couple the Black consumer from the White backlash discourse and to study the Black market as an entity in its own right without

simplifying it as homogenous. The moral and interventionist turns in research and the need for change beyond strategic marketing interventions invited close scrutiny of the structural impediments of the industry itself and its recruitment practices. This introspection into itself marked a maturing of the Negro market discourse from one of reticence and dismissal of the Black consumer to that of recognising its own contributions to the disparities in society.

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