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FACULTY OF BUSINESS ECONOMICS
Master of Management: International Marketing Strategy

Masterproef
Acculturation and brand loyalty

Promotor :
Prof. dr. Pieter PAUWELS

Supervisor :
De heer Wouter FAES

Ghadi Khatatbeh
*Master Thesis nominated to obtain the degree of Master of Management , specialization
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Master's Dissertation

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter we will briefly describe the title and purpose of this dissertation from a scientific perspective. This signifies that we try to clarify the problem statement, the research questions to be addressed and the methodology used.

1.1 Problem statement

Acculturation is mostly defined as a process in which members of one cultural group adopt the beliefs and behaviors of another group (Hazuda HP, Stern MP, Haffner SM, 1990). Although acculturation usually talks of the adoption of habits and language patterns of a dominant group by a minority group, acculturation can be reciprocal, which signifies that the dominant group also adopts patterns typical of the minority group.

Several conceptual definitions of acculturation exist in scientific literature on acculturation research. In anthropology, acculturation is defined as the set of processes of change in artifacts, customs, and beliefs resulting from the contact of two or more cultures (<http://www.britannica.com>). The term is also used to refer to the results of such changes. Redfield et al. (1936), defined acculturation as: “. . . those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns . . .” (p. 149). The Social Research Council in their Summer Seminar in 1954 defined acculturation finally as: “. . . Culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems . . .” (SSRC 1954, p. 974).

Comparing those definitions shows that acculturation results from contact between two (or more) groups from different cultures. The three of the quoted definitions indeed claim this. The first one indicates that acculturation can be reciprocal, while the third definition claims that "first-hand" contact is required for acculturation to take place. The SSRC's definition finally is broader, as it contends that "Acculturation change may be the consequence of direct cultural transmission; it may be derived from non cultural causes, such as ecological or demographic modifications induced by an impinging culture." (p. 974)

In business and marketing consumer acculturation is the effect of acculturation on the consumer process of people or groups adapting to one another. Thus, in consumer marketing, consumer acculturation is more generally seen as the general process of adaptation. Its scope is broad and it examines social and market learning and interaction at individual, family, community, societal, and transnational levels. (Peñaloza, L. 2010).

Just as acculturation in general implies changes, consumer acculturation does so as well. They may be situated in all kinds of consumer behavior parameters, such as for instance product choice, brand choice and distributor choice. Individuals will however be confronted with various barriers in making these consumer acculturation changes (cf. Zaltman and Wallendorf, 1983, p. 508). Type and "height" of these barriers, whatever they are, have implications for which aspects of the consumer behavior that will be changed, in what order, and the speed of changes that will take place when entering a new culture. Understanding of barriers faced by the consumer is thus of importance to grasp the phenomenon of consumer acculturation. Companies will be interested in them to assess whether the acculturated minority groups can be considered as a viable market segment or have to take acculturation phenomena into account when entering new markets. In fact they will face equal barriers when doing so. Thus acculturation forms an interesting topic for both marketing researchers and practitioners.

Consumer acculturation research has mainly dealt with the conflict acculturation accompanies for those who gradually adapt to the habits of another group, how far reaching the acculturation process goes and which factors are influencing the acculturation process.

Researchers have also tried to measure the phenomenon. Murguia (1975) and Lennon (1976), both cited in O'Guinn and Faber (1985) stressed that in past research acculturation measures usually included demographic variables such as urbanization, age, religious affiliation, language ability or preference, national origin, number of generations in the host country, and education. Research in this area has been predominantly the work of sociologists. Buyer behaviorists have yet to explore the area to any significant degree.

Most research thus ignored communication variables in favor of demographic characteristics in composing simplistic measures of acculturation (O'Guinn and Faber, 1985). Communication is however an essential element in the process of acculturation, since the process of becoming acculturated depends highly on communication. Some efforts have been made to relate communication variables to acculturation. O'Guinn and Faber, (1985) found both interpersonal and mass media variables to be related to understanding the difference between ethnic and host society values and norms. Moreover these authors claim that most of the past efforts to develop an acculturation index have either included many demographic variables and just one

or two communication variables or have used many communication items and just a couple of demographic ones. A clear balance was certainly not present.

In addition to that, most acculturation measures did not take in consideration all elements and roles in a minority group member's life, and how the speed of the acculturation process differs from one individual to another, even if they share the same ethnic group. Having a quantitative measure for consumer acculturation is too general indeed. We intend to investigate this gap in the existing acculturation research.

1.2 Research questions

We will study the consumer acculturation process in depth and as it is, namely as a process, that individuals go through. The group factor is in that case an influencing variable, not the unit of measurement any more. Consumer acculturation is very relative and differs from one person to another. The dynamics of the process over a period of time should be studied. Not only the end result but the changes over time then become visible. The major research questions of this longitudinal study of the acculturation process of individuals are:

- 1- How does acculturation develop?
- 2- Does the speed of acculturation differ from one person to another, although they belong to the same social group?
- 3- What are the stages people are going through during the process of acculturation?
- 4- Do people show periods of higher and lower acculturation during this process? In other words: Is this process erratic in nature?
- 5- Do people who become acculturated to the host country draw back in time and go back to the origin country behavior's, values, and practices?
- 6- Which factors help in explaining the changes in the acculturation process over time of individuals?

Chapter 2 Literature Review

In this chapter we want to give an overview of the existing scientific literature on acculturation and its influence on consumer behavior. The structure of this chapter is as follows. After having defined culture and acculturation more in detail, we want to describe what science tells us about the acculturation process: how and why it works. Finally we give an overview of the influence of acculturation on consumer behavior and what influencing factors exist, as described in literature.

2.1. Definitions

2.1.1. Culture

Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) have made a seminal effort to define the concept thoroughly: "...We think culture is a product; is historical; includes ideas, patterns, and values; is selective; is learned; is based on symbols; and is an abstraction from behavior and the products of behavior....All cultures are largely made up of overt, patterned way of behaving, feeling and reacting. But cultures likewise include a characteristic set of unstated promises and categories which vary greatly between societies (p. 157)..." In her penetrating analysis, Swidler (1986) on the other hand, sees culture as shaping "...a repertoire or "tool kit" of habits, skills, and styles from which people construct "strategies of action" (p. 273)". In order to act purposefully the individual needs both "procedural and contextual knowledge", i.e. domain specific knowledge allowing for "contextual rationality" (March, 1978, p. 592) in addition to rules and procedures to exhibit "procedural rationality" (Simon 1978, p. 8). The acquisition of a repertoire of habits and skills as proposed by Swidler (1986) reflects the belief that relevant knowledge to exhibit intended rational behavior may be both learned or enacted in a specific context, and that this knowledge may be (more or less) context bound.

Anyway, all these definitions and thoughts indicate that culture is a learned phenomenon by which groups define their identity as different from the one of other groups through a process of social learning.

2.1.2. Acculturation

Acculturation has been conceptualized in several ways in past research. Redfield et al. (1936), for example, defines this concept as: ". . . those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns. . ." (p. 149). In their Summer Seminar in 1954, the Social Research Council proposed the following definition: ". . . culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems. . ." (SSRC 1954, p. 974). A closer look at the two definitions reveals that a prerequisite for acculturation is contact between two (or more) groups from different cultures. The first of the quoted definitions claims that "first-hand" contact is required for acculturation to take place. The SSRC's definition is broader, as it contends that "Acculturation change may be the consequence of direct cultural transmission; it may be derived from non cultural causes, such as ecological or demographic modifications induced by an impinging culture;. . ." (p. 974). These definitions are completed by two other ones. O'Guinn, Imperia and McAdams (1987) defined acculturation as "the process by which those new to a society adopt the attitudes, values and behaviors of the dominant host culture." Berry et al. (1992) interpreted acculturation as the cultural transmission experienced by an individual due to his or her direct contact with another culture.

Acculturation implies change(s). Culture is a complex phenomenon consisting of a variety of cultural elements (amongst others the "toolkit" previously mentioned) Various cultural elements are gradually learned, adopted or rejected (Berry, 1980). This is also reflected in previous research conceiving acculturation as a process. A new culture may be learned (and adopted to) more or less fully. When the new culture is learned to the extent that the newcomer is accepted as a genuine member of the new culture s/he is said to be assimilated. Even though acculturation may take place among both (all) groups with different cultural background encountering each other, the focus here will primarily be on individuals crossing borders, i.e., newcomers often facing the new situation as cultural minorities.

Meredith et al. (2000). Proponents argue that acculturation cannot be captured adequately unless cultural, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions are included. Alternatively, acculturation can be modeled unidimensionally as a means of documenting an individual along a continuum of change toward more involvement with the culture with which the newcomer comes into contact. Further, most multidimensional conceptualizations ultimately specify a single score with aspects of cultural background such as country of birth and language usage having the greatest contribution to the overall score. Thus, they may be better suited for examining the

relationship to psychological measures of interest (i.e., perceptions of emotional health or attachment to the broader community) than to acculturation itself.

(Ángeles Arjona Garrido 1, Juan Carlos Checa Olmos 1, Noemí García-Arjona 2 and Rodrigo Pardo 2) 2012 Since immigrants come to settle, they try to secure a new position within society, both in the material sense (employment, housing, education, etc...), and in the social and cultural sphere of their lives. Hence, integration includes at least three different analytical dimensions, on which they depend to help them in becoming an accepted part of society. They are the political-legal, economic, cultural and religious dimensions. However, if there is an ambiguous and polysemic concept in migration, it is “social integration”. This term has taken many forms in political practice and public discourse. Therefore, it is easy to find countries that have understood integration as “assimilation”, inferring the meaning that immigrants should adopt the cultural norms of origin of the country they move to. Other countries have defined it as “multiculturalism”, accepting cultural diversity and in some cases offering the same scope to all other cultures, while in other cases establishing a certain hierarchy between those cultures. It is likely that these last countries will install border control to limit or at least control the immigration process.

Similarly, numerous definitions have been given by the scientific literature on “social integration”, but here there is greater consensus among scholars. The most widely accepted definition is that social integration is “a process of mutual acculturation between two different sociocultural segments which are nonetheless equal in rights and obligations” (Giménez, 1997). Moreover, the social integration of immigrants, as Portes and Rumbaut (2005) argue, depends on two factors. It firstly depends on the immigrants themselves, especially with regard to their group characteristics, such as age, gender, educational level, marital status, number of people, and above all, their origin and generation, which determine the possibilities and efforts made to adapt to new surroundings. Secondly, it also depends on the receiving society, since this will design the policies to incorporate the different cultural groups. Hence, these authors speak of hostile, neutral and favorable “contexts” in line with the host’s border policies and the welfare state.

2.2. The acculturation process and culture conflict.

(Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995; Cuellar et al., 1980; Klonoff & Landrine, 2000; Landrine & Klonoff, 1994) Thus the concept of acculturation is complex and comprised of multiple domains (e.g., religious beliefs, family structure and practices, and language).

Berry (1990) views acculturation as a bidirectional process in which the acculturation of the minority subculture can be measured along two dimensions: the degree of adoption of the majority culture and the degree of retention of the culture of origin. The model leads to four outcomes, depicted in Figure 1 (p. 619).

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">H- Host Culture</div> +	+M+H Integration When there is an interest in both maintaining one's original culture and engaging in daily interaction with other culture.	-M+H Assimilation When individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural heritage and seek daily interaction with other culture.
	-	+M-H Separation When individuals place a value on holding on to their original culture and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with the other culture.
	+	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">M- Minority Culture</div> -

Figure 1: Berry's model.

The similarity of the original and host cultures plays an important role in determining the degree of change that occurs. Those who come from a similar culture are more likely to adopt the host culture (Wong-Rieger and Quintana, 1987). Moreover, the degree of individualism of the home and host cultures may play a crucial role in determining the pace and type of acculturation that takes place. Hui et al. (1992) noted that acculturation on the selfidentification (attitudinal) dimension tends to proceed more slowly than on the behavioral

dimension. Triandis (1992) argued that collectivists can handle more discrepancy between attitude and behavior than individualists.

Portes and Rumbaut (2005, 2006) propose a model of acculturation in their study that perfectly fits this dichotomy between adaptation and retention. It is called the “segmented assimilation theory”. It maintains that there are three possible paths of adaptation among “bridgehead” immigrants and their children. The first one involves a process of acculturation and integration into the country’s middle class, which coincides with the classical concept of assimilation. The second takes the opposite direction, that is, a situation of permanent poverty and assimilation with the underclass. The last one states that, despite possible economic progress, immigrants may choose deliberately to preserve their own values of origin through the communities’ social networks and the support of solidarity within groups (“selective” acculturation). Consequently, it consists of a process in which the multiple factors are involved – family, individual and contextual – but these do not operate separately.

Acculturation is moreover a very dynamic process. Acculturation may be uneven across domains of behavior and social life (Berry, 1990). O’Guinn and Faber (1985) noted that individuals may be at different levels of acculturation in different roles. This is echoed in Stayman and Deshpande’s study (1989), which found that the level of consumer acculturation depends on the situation. Nor should it be assumed that acculturation is an irreversible one-way process. Jun et al. (1994) found that acculturation is neither static nor linear; it moves in non-linear fashion.

Finally one should mention that acculturation is wider than scientific research normally takes into consideration. Studies on acculturation are indeed mostly limited to looking at those who come from another country. Perhaps the interest in the acculturation of immigrants is more valuable or more impactful. However, a new dialogue about acculturation is necessary when we consider that everyone acculturates: for example, from high school to college, from college to work, from one job to another, from single to married, from city to suburb, from own-home to retirement community, etc. Acculturation can be defined as the process of cultural change and adaptation that occurs in any type of “change”/“new environment” situation. This certainly represents a new way of considering acculturation.

2.3. Acculturation and Consumer Behavior

Consumers and their behaviors represent an important arena for inquiry which has for long attracted researchers from several disciplines. Several definitions of consumer behavior appear in the consumer behavior literature. These definitions vary in scope and width. Most of the definitions focus on the individual, emphasizing consumer behavior as decision making (e.g., Assael, 1984), and de-emphasizing the social aspect of this behavior (for an exception, see Zaltman and Wallendorf, 1983). Moreover, it is not unfair to say that past research on consumer behavior has demonstrated a strong bias towards pre-purchase behavior (cf. Arndt, 1976). Consumer behavior can be conceived as a process, including acquisition (i.e., recognition of buying problems, search behavior, evaluations and execution of purchases), use and disposal of goods. Consumers seek product and services to satisfy specific needs. According to Boyd and Levy (1962) consumers emphasize specific goals related to their consumption system. Thus consumers become buyers to obtain something; i.e., purchase (and use and dispose) of goods may be seen as means to reach specific consumption goals, whatever they are.

Consumption activities including consumption goals and symbolic meaning of goods (Levy, 1981) are learned and shaped in a cultural context. An important aspect of the cultural context is the product/service environment in which the consumer is embedded. The individual is immersed in a cultural context over the whole lifespan, so are her or his consumption activities. Through observation, imitation and interactions with socializing agents, individuals learn the culture brought up in and they become socialized as consumers (Moschis, 1984). Consumer acculturation refers to the subset of acculturation related to consumption activities.

It is one of the social factors influencing consumer behavior. (O.C. Ferrell , Michael D. Hartline 2010,Marketing strategy) discuss indeed that there are a number of factors affecting the consumer's buying process, including the complexity of the purchase and decision. There are individual influences, social influences, and situational influences. Social Influences just like individual influences include a wide range of factors that can affect the buying process. Social influences such as culture, subculture, social class, reference groups, and family have a profound impact on what, why, and how consumers buy. Among these social influences, none is more important than the family. From birth, individuals become socialized with respect to the knowledge and skills needed to be effective consumers. As adults, consumers typically exhibit the brand and product preferences of their parents. The influence of children on the buying process has grown tremendously over the last 50 years. Reference groups and opinion leaders

also have an important impact on consumers' buying processes (O.C. Ferrell , Michael D. Hartline 2010,Marketing strategy). Reference groups act as a point of comparison and source of product information.

A consumer's purchase decisions tend to fall in line with the advice, beliefs, and actions of one or more reference groups. Opinion leaders can be part of a reference group or may be specific individuals that exist outside of a reference group. When consumers feel like they lack personal expertise, they seek the advice of opinion leaders, who they view as being well informed in a particular field of knowledge. In some cases, marketers will seek out opinion leaders before trying to reach more mainstream consumers. Software manufacturers, for example, release beta (test) versions of their products to opinion leaders before a full-scale launch. Not only does this practice work the bugs out of the product, it also starts a word-of-mouth buzz about the upcoming software release.

As culture includes, as previously stated, among other things learned and shared symbols, values, attitudes, knowledge and behavior., the opportunities and situations (Belk, 1975) in any new cultural setting may influence the individual consumption acculturation. Consumer behavior and consumer acculturation may be conceived as "all cultural". The many cultural influences reflected in learned values, attitudes, knowledge, behavior and opportunities are exposed in the individual's consumption activities. Since culture lies within the social sphere of impact on consumer behavior, acculturation does as well. (Kelvyn A. Moore, Bruce D. Weinberg, Paul D. Berger 2012) Studies of acculturation in consumer research began in the early 1970s (Hair and Andersen 1973; Pruden and Longman 1972). Within the area of consumer research, acculturation has been defined as immigrants' "acquisition of traits of the host culture" and "maintenance of traits of the culture of origin" (Laroche et al. 1997, p.34). Acculturation is the resocialization of accepted prescribed ways of doing things, whether they be communication, media usages, product and service usage or any other aspect that includes consumption. As consumer behavior is one of the "habits and styles", thus the "strategies of action" by which people define themselves. There is thus also a close relationship between acculturation and consumer behavior.

When people of any culture (e.g., popular culture, racial culture, geographic culture, etc.) move or interact with a culture other than the dominant culture of their lives, acculturation is ongoing and will have an impact on every aspect of their consumer behavior. Johnston (1963) distinguished between two aspects of acculturation, the behavioral part which he called "external" assimilation and the attitudinal part named "internal" assimilation. Under this structure, the individual may take on the behaviors expected by the host culture, including speaking the language of the culture, dressing like most people in the culture and eating what these people eat, but still be his/her original self in all other aspects of life. Obviously, this has

direct application to the acculturation of many people today, regardless of their ethnic or racial affiliation.

Moving to a new geographic location will automatically dictate new consumption and shopping behaviors. For example, there may be different foods, different housing infrastructure, different architecture, different shopping areas and stores, etc (Kelvyn A. Moore, Bruce D. Weinberg, Paul D. Berger 2012). However, as more new members come into a city, area or region, old values and buying behaviors can be mitigated along a continuum from what once was to what currently is the normal behavior. This may lend itself to the growth and opportunity for new products and new product ideas.

To understand an acculturating individual's consumption experience researchers take both a consumer socialization perspective and a perspective based on the struggle between change and continuity of the individual's self-identity.

Acculturation implies, as noted above, changes, so do consumer (behavior) acculturation. Several authors have noted that such changes can be stressful (Padilla, 1980, Furnham and Bochner, 1986). Changes are associated with efforts and may require new skills in order to be completed. In borrowing from the literature on strategy (e.g., Porter, 1980), individuals can be conceived as confronted with various barriers in making acculturation changes (Zaltman and Wallendorf, 1983, p. 508), just as are firms when trying to enter new markets. When the individual enters a new culture she/he may be confronted with barriers due to lack of knowledge and skills, which may hamper consumer acculturation. There may as well exist factors that help immigrants in resisting acculturation. Type and "height" of these barriers, whatever they are, have implications for which aspects of the consumer behavior that will be changed, in what order, and the speed of these changes taking place when entering a new culture.

The understanding of barriers faced by the consumer is thus of importance to grasp the phenomenon of consumer acculturation and so is also the identification of incentives for acculturation, as they will indicate under which conditions consumer acculturation takes place. Thus, the enumeration of the factors influencing this process is necessary.

Literature indeed focuses very much on the factors influencing the consumer behavior acculturation process. Laroche et al. (1997) argued in one of the first studies that acculturation thus consists of three dimensions: media exposure, social interaction and participation, and (in the U.S.) the English language use with family members. But in general, five major factors are often mentioned: social factors, individual or personal factors, marketing induced factors, environmental factors and the nature of the product.

There may be various reasons for changing consumption behavior when acculturation is involved, social factors being the most obvious ones. To be accepted in a new cultural environment for instance often requires adaptive behavior. This is closely linked to the importance of developing social relations in the new environment. Not only does consumer behavior lead to opportunities to be accepted more quickly as a member of society, these social relations are also an important factor in getting more immersed in a culture and being familiar with a specific product/service environment and social institutions, as well as having social relationships. Social relations are in fact important as information on life style and habits and norms are transmitted and learned through such relationships (*Kjell Gronhaug, Mary Gilly, and Lisa Penazola (1993)*). To establish social relationships takes time and requires social skills. For the individual, social relationships are important and they are of great personal value. According to Coleman (1988), such relationships can be conceived as "social capital", and they represent an important part of the human capital as well. Crossing cultural borders implies that new social settings must be learned, and new social relationships created.

The various barriers and incentives to consumer acculturation can always be related to two cultures, i.e., the culture of origin and the new culture encountered . Based on the above discussion the following perspective can be introduced. A variety of factors related to the culture of origin and the new culture encountered can be perceived as barriers and incentives for the individual in her or his consumer acculturation process, influencing the amount, aspects and speed of acculturation of consumption activities. Characteristics of the contact itself with the new culture, such as length, intensity and quality may modify the effect of the level of acculturation (Maldonado and Tansuhaj, 1999).

Even though the market place is of crucial importance for consumption, or more correctly for the acquisition of goods and services, "consuming" activities may take place in other settings, e.g., at home, alone, together with family, friends, colleagues, bosses and clients. Expectations to own consumption activities vary across these different social arenas, so many incentives exist to change such activities.

That is why previously O'Guinn, Faber and Meyer (1984) have previously proposed an alternative conceptualization of acculturation utilizing role theory in which individuals may be at different levels of acculturation for the different roles they assume in their lives. Individuals are cast into a variety of different roles in the course of their daily lives. Each role may bring into play a different level of acculturation or ethnicity. For example, an individual may behave in accord with his or her ethnic norms when at home with other family members. For this

individual, these ethnic values are what is expected in the parental or child role. However, this same individual may have learned and even adopted the cultural norms and behaviors of the host society in other roles e.g., work or school). In order to understand this individual's attitudes or behaviors in a given situation, we must recognize the level of acculturation being brought to that situation specific role. This more complex perspective of acculturation is necessary to more accurately understand and predict human behavior (Ching-Hsu, Huang, and Ken Smith, 2009). Thus although people might be very "acculturated" in some settings, they might not be in others and it might not signify that they have lost their cultural identity. Hernandez, Cohen and Garcia (2011) pretend that the strength of ethnic identity, which is normally seen as a barrier to acculturation, is not always directly related to acculturation consumption patterns. In other words, a strong consumer acculturation is not an indicator of loss of cultural identity.

This brings us to a second important influencing factor, namely personal factors. Studies over the years have been conducted to discover the human personality, to answer the questions like why humans behave in different ways when confronted with identical stimuli and why some of us are more open to the unknown than others. These studies show amongst others which personal factors lead to different consumer behavior outcomes. In this section we will only refer to the studies indicating personal factors influencing the acculturation process in consumer behavior.

Several studies exist that have tried to develop measures of acculturation, based on the factors influencing the process. Most of this research is marketing oriented. The most important of these is the study by Cleveland and Laroche (2007) that has been tested on different products (Carpenter et al., 2012) and for situations of acculturation in different countries (Cleveland, Laroche and Papadopoulos, 2009). The authors have tried to find different factors influencing the gradual evolution from "individual customers" to "global consumers", who by definition have become better acculturated. These factors are: cosmopolitanism, exposure to the use of languages, specifically the English language, the extent of social interactions experienced by the migrant by travel and contact with still other foreigners, openness to other cultures and interest in world matters, exposure to mass media and exposure to other marketing activities. The first four of these are clearly personal factors proper to the individual who is migrating and his/her life style, the others are marketing induced ones. Recently these authors have investigated whether factors such as religion also play a role (Cleveland and Laroche, 2013).

Sekhon and Szmigin (2009) investigated in this sense the “bicultural value system” of migrants going through the process of acculturation. They thus refer to the struggle between adaptation and retention of proper values. They found that the longer one resides in the host country, the less strong the identity is and the more the peer group has been “assimilated”, the more acculturation takes place, specifically for types of behavior that must be considered as carrying positive cultural and utilitarian values for them. If on the other hand, negative values are attached to some behavior the influence of these factors is lower. These authors particularly refer to the “influence and importance of the peer group” and to the influence of increased cross-cultural communication due to globalization effects (see later).

Not only increased and better communication means (see later) will play a role in this process. Travel also does. Since an individual’s acculturation varies from one person to another due to a various number of factors influencing the individuals mindset, such as age, ethnicity and life cycle, and how these factors influence the consumer behavior. Wu-Chung Wu, and Tzung-Cheng Huan (2010) propose in this respect a new concept that justifies some of the consumers buying behaviors and their causality. A consumer goes through five stages in the decision-making process, including motivation, needs or problem recognition, information search, alternative evaluations, and final purchase (Engel et al., 1993). During this decision-making process, consumers use rational thinking. However, there can be factors, such as time and the encouragement of peers that cause consumers to abbreviate the decision-making process to make purchase decisions and therefore exhibit irrational consumption behavior, called “impulse buying” (Mowen and Minor, 1998). This behavior is more prevalent when consumers are traveling. When tourists visit some attractions, they not only appreciate the local culture and experience the traditions, but also are drawn to the merchandise that is representative and characteristic of the local culture. The decision-making is brief under the influence of being in a foreign place and the encouragement of companions during the trip. Without planning, tourists often make unneeded purchases or ones exceeding their budgets. According to Welles (1986), 90 percent of consumers admit to impulse buying. Contributing factors include consumer personality traits, such as self-control (Hoch and Loewenstein, 1991), demographic variables (Richins and Dawson, 1992; Dittmar et al., 1995; Rindfleisch et al., 1997; Wood, 1998; Kollat, 1969), situational factors, such as time-inconsistency preference (Hoch and Loewenstein, 1991), and conformity effect (Wilkie, 1994; Luo, 2005; Peck and Childers, 2006). Consumers may perceive that peers, who are likely to reward spontaneity and to pursue immediate, hedonic goals, consider impulsive purchasing to be desirable. (Wu-Chung Wu, and Tzung-Cheng Huan 2010).

“Cultural identity” also plays an important role within this “peer group”. Cultural identity—a person’s aspect of self that is derived from membership in a group with its own values, beliefs, and knowledge—is a robust predictor of culture-consistent behaviors whereby people are more persuaded by same-culture sources (Torres and Briggs 2007) and prefer culture-consistent offerings (Schumann, Davidson, and Satinover 2009) to other-culture sources and offerings, particularly when cultural membership is made salient or distinctive (Stayman and Deshpandé 1989). Cultural knowledge shared by group members provides information regarding what specific behaviors are consistent with group norms, beliefs, and values (Brumbaugh 2002). The degree to which members are motivated to comply with and behave in accordance with these norms, beliefs, and values derives from their level of identification with the group (Williams and Qualls 1989). People high in the diversity-seeking trait, as we have conceptualized it, behave in ways that are inconsistent with these processes. These are younger people with more exposure to foreign language, who travel more and are more open to other cultures (Brumbaugh and Grier, 2013). They become what the authors call “agents of change”. These results confirm the previously mentioned influencing factors (Cleveland and Laroche, 2007). The later in this paragraph mentioned factors leading to a more “global mindset”, such as travel are part of this process (Hsu, Ken and Smith, 2009).

It may be that younger people are thus better “agents of change”, but Moschis (1987) also indicated that some studies that utilized the effects of age and life-cycle position on consumer behavior provided adequate evidence to support the contention that consumer socialization is an ongoing process occurring through the adult years. Adults who change their consumer behaviors or consumption patterns might be associated with changes in the need structure due to changes taking place in their individual lives. For example, the first McDonald’s restaurant opened in Taiwan in 1984, and the company has since become the biggest restaurant in the fast food market. Ho (1994) demonstrated that McDonald’s in Taiwan constructed new emotive and symbolic contents for family consumption of food away from home. This last example also indicates that marketing-induced factors and external factors are at play in the consumer acculturation process. We will investigate them in the next paragraphs.

The studies of Cleveland and Laroche (2007,2009) also refer to the influence of marketing induced elements on the consumer behavior acculturation process. They state amongst others exposure to mass media and exposure to other marketing activities. Most research centers on marketing communication in this respect.

In recent years there has been a renewed interest in the use of communication variables in developing acculturation measures. While recognition of the importance of communication variables dates back to at least the 1930's (Sapir 1931), most research ignored communication

variables in favor of demographic characteristics in composing simplistic measures of acculturation. Communication variables should be highly related to acculturation since the process of becoming acculturated is by definition accomplished through communication. Interpersonal communication with members of the host society allows immigrants to experience and learn the behavioral norms of the new culture. Media presentations can also convey the values and norms of the society which created them (Lasswell 1948). Gerson (1966), for example, has shown this to work in regard to learning dating behaviors from television. Thus by using the mass media of the dominant culture, the minority group member can learn culturally appropriate norms and behaviors. Efforts to relate communication variables to acculturation have been reasonably successful. Kim (1977), for example, found both interpersonal and mass media variables to be related to understanding the difference between ethnic and host society values and norms.

Due to increased contact with Western culture, people, and the consumed products through mass media (mainly TV) and marketing campaigns by multinational companies, many young consumers in transition economies have more favorable attitudes towards western products and things and a higher appreciation especially for global brands than their others in their families. However, product attributes could mean different things in different cultures.(Jung-Wan Lee, Simon Tai 2006). Barbosa and Villareal (2008) thus indicate that from a marketing point of view many communication efforts should not be language centered only, but culture centered and allow for either different cultural values to be better expressed if one wants to target a specific culture only or more globally oriented if the inverse holds.

The fourth factor of influence on consumer acculturation processes are external factors. Globalization is the most important one to be mentioned. In one study for(Gregory R. Guy and Karen V. Beaman 1999) , discuss that the encounters with the “others”, including strangers, foreigners, and speakers of other languages, are an ancient feature of the social and psychological reality of human beings ,but the march of time and technology has greatly accelerated the rate at which we have such experiences .The set of social, commercial, and communicative phenomena that is subsumed under the term globalization constitutes a qualitative change in the human environment. There now exists a growing population of people who live, work, converse and interact in multiple cultures, countries, continents and communicative contexts. They travel internationally, live outside their home countries for extended periods, speak more than one language and function within multiple cultural settings. Of course such experiences vary tremendously from individual to individual, in terms of duration, intensity, the countries and languages involved, and so on... This entails varying levels of acculturation, accommodation, and assimilation.

(Ching-Hsu Huang, and Ken Smith 2009). The authors also discuss the effect of globalization and its reflection on the increasing economic integration with the growth in international trade, the geographic expansion of enterprises and the international mobility of workers. In the socio-cultural sphere, one encounters globalizing trends in culture, film, music, etc. ...

Simultaneously, the vigorous growth of the internet ignores national borders, bringing people from far-flung parts of the world in close contact with one another. Increased internationalization is also visible at the physical level (Ching-Hsu Huang, Ken Smith 2009) as well, in terms of growth in international population movements (refugees, tourism, and labour mobility). "Culture is no longer tied to a place or a body of people" because more people than ever have access to a global network of information (Holt et al., 2004). Through a vast number of sources – such as the media, technology, internet, advertising, and travel – people discover what it means to be a global citizen. Being a global citizen has many connotations, but in this context, it is a person who lives in this world of converging cultures. People worldwide are connecting with other people as well as with other foreign cultures through this global connectivity, which as a result has shaped global culture (Van Gelder, 2005). Communication is what has created and evolved cultures over time (Asgary, 2002). It is a source for conveying cultural values that in modern times has been revolutionized by technology – forever changing the process of communication (Byrnes, 2007).

Emerging countries often experience strong tension between opening and closing themselves to external forces; and are trying to protect their cultural diversity from melting in the consumer culture (Burity, 2008). The emergence of a global culture might move national cultures towards a certain degree of obsolescence (Bird and Stevens 2003) or even going extinct. Bird and Stevens give explanations for this perceived threat. First, if the national cultures' worldview is not adequate anymore for solving the fundamental problems (and that is one core definition of culture) the national culture should either adjust or will collapse. Second, the tension between the members and non-members of the global culture is increasing, nonmembers are not well informed thus might develop a sense of isolation and might feel threat from the outer influences. Third, there is a notion that global culture is overwhelming national cultures, pushing them towards the periphery and insignificance. In some views those cultures that maintain their adaptive competence can be described as more likely to be successful than cultures that cannot adapt. This is one of the dangers of globalization, closely linked to the consequences of increased acculturation resulting from it (Malota, 2012).

The term **Global mindset** explains how individuals' reactions to an international experience are formulated through their worldview, a set of beliefs and orientations that we refer to as the "mindset" of an individual. It is a basic aspect of human individuation that each individual sees the world from his or her personal perspective. It is from this perspective that we perceive and interpret the things happening around us. Peter Senge (1990) defines mindset as those "deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or ... images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action. An influential early approach was developed by Perlmutter (1969) whose topology defined three basic "mental models: ethnocentrism, polycentrism and geocentrism. In essence, an "ethnocentric" orientation bases attitudinal evaluations on the home country as the single point of reference, to the point of assuming national superiority. A "polycentric" (Ching-Hsu Huang, Ken Smith 2009) orientation entails accommodation or assimilation with the contact culture – the attitude, reflected in the aphorism "when in Rome, do as the Romans." A "geocentric" orientation downplays the extent of national/cultural diversity and the valorization of particular national characteristics, assuming, instead, a universal set of values that govern human interaction. (Ching-Hsu Huang and Ken Smith 2009). With a global mindset is meant that more people than ever before have become influenced by "geocentric" traits.

The fifth and last factor of influence on consumer acculturation is the nature of the product or service that consumers want to buy. Several studies on Hispanic migrants in the USA point to this (Hernandez, Cohen and Garcia, 2011). The attitudes of customers of ethnic diversity towards national and global products diverges considerably from product to product (Josiasen, 2011; Steenkamp et.al., 2010). Kjell Grønhaug and Alladi Venkatesh, 1986 claim that social class is a major influence on purchasing attitudes and acculturation, especially regarding technology-type appliances such as computers, cars and other relative articles. (Ching-Hsu Huang, Ken Smith 2009). Other studies point to the rise of a global youth market linked to a global mindset | the young generation towards products through which they express their "young" identity such as music, cell-phones and so on... (Kjelgaard and Askegaard, 2006), just as a global "feminity" will determine the identity of young women as well in many cultures (Kehily and Nayak, 2008).

Thus the level of acculturation in consumer behavior will certainly differ from individual to individual. While (Gregory R. Guy and Karen V. Beaman, 1999) discussed that the degree of acculturation goes back to the global mindset of the individual and how globalization participates in making the process of acculturation faster. (Thomas C. O'Guinn and Ronald J. Faber 1985), approach it from a different point view, as they claim that there exists no standardized method by which to define or assign a level of acculturation to a person. Many theorists have treated acculturation as the polar opposite of ethnicity.

Immigrants have typically been viewed as either ethnically bound or acculturated with nothing in-between. Occasionally, authors have recognized the inadequacy of this viewpoint and have included a third "bicultural" category (Chang 1972). Kim (1979) however, has cogently pointed out the fallacy of these limited perspectives and has instead proposed viewing ethnicity and acculturation as anchor points along a continuum. An individual may then be perceived as being more or less acculturated at any given point in time.

Yet, scientifically speaking this acculturation level is very difficult to measure. Researchers have generally used just a single variable, or occasionally a few variables in a rather arbitrary manner when it comes to classifying someone as either more or less acculturated. These measures have usually stressed demographic variables such as urbanization, age, religious affiliation, language ability or preference, national origin, number of generations in the host country, and education (Murguia 1975; Lennon 1976). Research in this area has been predominantly the work of sociologists. Buyer behaviorists have yet to explore the area to any significant degree.(Ching-Hsu Huang,Ken Smith 2009) The actual use of formalized acculturation scales has been even more rare. Only a few researchers have tried to determine the component dimensions of acculturation or to combine items presumed to be related to acculturation into a single scale. One recent attempt at scale construction came from Lennon (1976). Building upon the work of Campisi (1940) and Trutza (1956), Lennon constructed a single index of acculturation based upon sixteen traits and attitudes of Puerto Ricans living in the Chicago area. Each of these items was assigned a weight by an expert panel of fifty sociologists at Loyola University. Respondents' scores were then weighted and summed to yield a single index. This index was then shown to be related to several attitudinal and structural variables (Ching-Hsu Huang,Ken Smith 2009).

The measurement scale of Cleveland and Laroche (2007) has become more used in recent times. It is a multidimensional scale, measuring via different statements each of the seven factors of acculturation, determined by these authors. To recapitulate them, they are: cosmopolitanism, exposure to the use of languages, specifically the English language, the extent of social interactions experienced by the migrant by travel and contact with still other foreigners, openness to other cultures and interest in world matters, exposure to mass media and exposure to other marketing activities.

Chapter 3 Acculturation and brands

In this chapter we will first shortly define most of the important marketing concepts related to brands, such as branding, brand image, brand identity, brand personality, brand equity and brand loyalty. We do this since one of the strategies used by companies to facilitate acculturation of migrated customers is the creation of global brands with nearly identical behavioral and emotive connotations. In this way customers can in their new environment easily recognize brands, products and what they signify and they will acculturate easily with regard to the consumer behavior part of the well known international brands.

3.1. Brand related definitions and concepts.

3.1.1. Brands

In marketing terms, the focal point for a company or an organization is to satisfy the needs and wants of customers. In that sense, a product is considered to be a bundle of benefits offered to customers and capable of alleviating their needs and wants. Products may be tangible or intangible, it may be people or lifeless products, this does not alter anything about their marketing ultimate marketing goal and the fact that their attributes must be considered as one set. However, many competing products exist in many markets that want to cover for the same needs and wants of the same customers. Although companies could choose to name their products according to the generic word depicting a certain type of product or service, this does not necessarily come in handy when customers compare products among one another. So, just as human beings are called with the particular name they get when being born, products and services are "christened" in a certain way by being branded and thus become more easily recognizable from competing products having different brand names.

A brand is a "Name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers" (Kotler, 2009, p....)

The brand finally becomes a designation for the product, its characteristics or attributes and thus also the beliefs customers carry with them about the products or services on the basis of personal experiences or word-of-mouth of peer group members. Thus brands also have a cultural connotation. Brands offer a connection to the companies' customers and somehow thus develop a defense mechanism against competitor's offerings (Jobber, 2007, p. 145).

3.1.2. Branding

Consumer research has shown that powerful brands create meaningful images in the minds of customers. Marketers invest in branding because brand image and reputation enhance their differentiation and may positively influence buying behavior, as consumers choose among competing offers (Susan Mudambi, 2002). This author also argues that a product offer consists of three levels: the basic product consists of the tangible features; the augmented product adds other features and services and the potential product emphasizes the intangible features and benefits to customers. It is this potential level that captures the idea of the real and untapped

potential of branding. So branding is powerful because it is associated with benefits to consumers, not just to marketers. Consumers perceive brands to have functional, emotional, and self-expressive benefits.

(Aaker) also identified three key aspects of branding that are important to marketers: general name awareness, or how well known the brand is; the general reputation of the brand; and purchase loyalty, measured as the number of prior purchases of the brand.

3.1.3. Brand Image and identity

In contrast, Keller defines brand equity in terms of brand knowledge and unique brand associations. Branding indeed permits customers to develop an association between characteristics of themselves or that they would like to possess or not (their own identity and wanted personality) and the characteristics marketers portray as being the essence of the brand or associate with the users or consumers of the brand (positioning). This refers to the image of the brand in the minds of customers and the identity the brand portrays to them.

Brand image thus refers to the “brand associations held in consumer memory” (Keller, 1993 p.3) derived from decoding and interpreting the brand's positioning messages. Positivity of brand associations stems from functional and self-congruence,(Hafedh Ibrahim, Faouzi Najjar, 2008)

Brand identity entails the strategic efforts of firms to assign a brand with unique characteristics in a bid to achieve positive perceptions by target consumers (Nandan, 2005). Functional congruence stems from perceptions of the extent to which a brand's performance attributes (e.g., taste, quality, durability) match expectations from an ideal product in a given category (Sirgy & Johar, 1999). Self-congruence encompasses the extent to which perceived symbolic meanings associated with a brand's image match one's perception of self (Belk, 1988). When decoding the symbolic meanings of brands, a consumer assesses whether a given brand “is me”, “is what I want to be” or “is not me”. Consumers utilize these meanings to create or engage with imagined worlds or communities (Cayla & Arnould, 2008).

3.1.4. Brand Personality

After discussing brand image and brand identity it is safe to assume that brands have personalities or human characteristics, as is the idea that brand personality is a vehicle of consumer self-expression and can be instrumental in helping a consumer express different aspects of his or her self (Aaker 1997; Belk 1988; Escalas and Bettman 2005; Johar, Sengupta, and Aaker 2005). Humanizing a brand empowers it to play a more central role in the consumer's life, potentially enabling the consumer to project an aspect of his or her self that might be desirable for relationships he or she seeks (Aaker 1997; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988).

3.1.5. Brand equity

Yoo and Donthu (2001) defined brand equity as consumers' different response between a focal brand and an unbranded product when both have the same level of marketing stimuli and product attributes. They also argued that the difference in consumer response may be attributed to the brand name and demonstrates the effects of the long-term marketing efforts invested into the brand.

Past research studies did not agree on what brand equity is and how it should be measured even though several studies have examined brand equity. The main focus of this research was not to develop a brand equity measure. Thus currently, researchers use ad hoc measures such as price premium (Aaker, 1991), conjoint analyzed value of the brand name (Rangaswamy et al., 1993 and Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995) composite multi attribute weighted scores of the brand name (Park and Srinivasan, 1994), a collection of consumer-based measures (Agarwal and Rao, 1996), and a scanner data-based measure (Kamakura and Russell, 1993). Other ad hoc measures include financial values of a brand, such as future earnings (Aaker, 1991), incremental cash flow (Simon and Sullivan, 1993), equalization price (Swait et al., 1993), and momentum accounting-based value (Farquhar et al., 1991). However, these measures were developed without rigorous psychometric tests, and they were not parsimonious enough to manage. The consequence is that a lot of confusion exists about brand equity, certainly when brands are compared with one another and over different sectors of industry.

3.1.6. Brand loyalty

Sheth and Park (1974) defined brand loyalty as a positively biased emotive, evaluative and/ or behavioral response tendency toward a branded, labeled or graded alternative or choice by an individual in his capacity as the user, the choice maker, and/or the purchasing agent.

They also discussed that brand loyalty has several dimensions: a behavioral dimension, a behavioral-evaluative dimension, a behavioral-emotive dimension and a behavioral-evaluative-emotive dimension. In the following paragraph we try to shortly define each of these dimensions.

The behavioral brand loyalty dimension refers to the activities of the customer as a customer and whether repeat purchases are happening , how frequently that is and whether this behavior shows loyalty to one or more products within the same product category. It thus does not talk about evaluative or emotive components in customer behavior.

The behavioral-evaluative brand loyalty dimension is bi-dimensional. It represents not only a systematic biased response towards a brand but concomitantly also the consistent cognitive structure underlying the customer's positively or negatively biased behavior towards the brand.

This represents the classical manifestation of attitude-behavior theories in social psychology in which attitudes are determined by the instrumental or utilitarian evaluation of the brand (Katz 1960; McGuire 1969).

The behavioral-emotive brand loyalty dimension is also bi-dimensional. It represents the systematic and biased response tendencies towards the brand and concomitantly the consumer's emotive tendencies towards the brand.

Finally, the behavioral-evaluative-emotive brand loyalty dimension relates three dimensions with each other. This is the most complex type of brand loyalty. It is analogous to what Day (1969) calls "intentional" brand loyalty. Also, it meets all the six necessary and collectively sufficient conditions, which Jacoby (1971) has specified as part of his definition of brand loyalty.

The stronger the loyalty or dislike towards a brand of a customer, the more he/she will (not) identify and in his/her behavior easily (not) repeat the previously learned actions again, also in a new environment. A strong brand loyalty will help migrants in a new environment to recognize brands, to know what they stand for and to accept or reject them nearly immediately in their acculturation process.

3.2. Global branding and the creation of global brands.

3.2.1. Global branding

Every company has four options with its brands when venturing on the international market. They are depicted by Douglas, Craig and Nijssen (1999). It is depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Several global strategies with regards to brands.

	Identical positioning	Different Positioning
Identical brand	Global brands	"Glocal" brands with fundamentally different appeal ← Often when starting on some new markets
Different brand	Local brands Co-branding Often after take-over	Local brands, sometimes family brand names

Source: Douglas, Craig and Nijssen (1999), p. 101.

The figure clearly indicates that there are four options, based on two criteria: the way a product or brand is positioned on a market and the fact whether companies choose for identical products to create new names or not on international markets (Alashban et. al., 2002) The authors are convinced that there is a tendency towards more global brands, based on the fact that consumption patterns all over the world become more unified due to a number of factors, namely the increased mobility of many customers, the globalization of media, more specifically social media in recent years, and the internationalization tendency in the retailing world (Holt, Quelch and Taylor, 2004).

The figure also addresses the paradox of whether to standardize your product globally, or adapt it to the local tastes. It already indicates that a semi-global marketing strategy in which different strategies in all kinds of markets are merged into a coherent one might be the best one for multinational companies (MNC's), something which the same authors (Douglas and Craig, 2011) contend to be the best strategy to be successful. According to the authors, a global marketing strategy could be seen as an evolutionally process. Companies traditionally target the developed countries and go through three phases of internationalization to expand in them. A fourth phase is added especially for the expansion in less developed markets. The process goes as follows:

1. The initial entry phase: the company selects the country and entry mode. The focus is on realizing potential economies of scale.
2. Local market expansion: the company starts the adaptation process to specific customer demand characteristics on the local market. The focus thus shifts to the development of economies of scope and the spreading of shared costs across multiple product lines.
3. Global market rationalization: the company tries to find synergies and achieve scale efficiencies in production and marketing across different countries and brands.
4. Expansion to less developed countries: in this fourth phase of global marketing strategy, the company tries to offset the saturation of the market in developed countries by spreading its efforts to less developed countries. It is thus a very important stage or phase to continue growing.

With regard to the last two stages, several authors report animosity towards brands coming from certain countries, a fact that would certainly hamper the ease with which expansion of the global brand introduction could be achieved (Batra et al., 2000; Schulz et al., 2002; Jimenez and San Martin, 2010). International marketing managers have several ways to offset consumer animosity toward global companies and their countries of origin that may otherwise harm attitudes toward global brands. Brands that provide consumers with functional (quality and value for money), social, and hedonic-experiential aspects of value are likely to reduce the impact of any negative attitudes toward global companies held by consumers in the local

market (Alden et al., 2013). However, although promotional strategies serve an important role in communicating such brand value, managers should continually find new ways to infuse real utilitarian brand value. Another strategy for large companies is to have a portfolio of both global and local brands in many markets instead of overemphasizing global brands in some of the local markets (Steenkamp, Batra and Alden, 2003). The creation of such a global brand thus is neither a simple nor a clear-cut undertaking.

3.2.2. How to build a global brand?

Stealing Share, a global brand company consultant, states that building brand loyalty is based on trust mainly. In an international environment, there are four layers or levels of trust that need to be created and nurtured when building the foundation of a global brand positioning. The levels of trust are corresponding to different layers of brand positioning:

1. The deepest level of trust is the human (as opposed to the local or geographical or culturally specific) motivation that can be addressed by the product or offering.
2. The second of the four layers of trust a global brand positioning inspires or appeals to is the strategic product benefit that contributes most to the strategic customer benefit when consuming the product.
3. The third of the four layers of a global brand positioning trust is the actual functional technology that makes the strategic product benefit possible, and may be called the strategic product support.
4. The last of the four layers of a global brand positioning trust is the attribute that is most uniquely compelling, and supports the three deeper layers in a way that is unique to the brand.

These four layers of the global brand positioning and trust work in a combined way, but their effects will be different from one country to another. The trust inspired by the positioning will moreover not be inconsistent anywhere, either vertically in terms of causality, or horizontally, in terms of the specific kinds of products being offered and consumed in each country.

Building global brands does not only refer to inspiring trust by positioning a product or an offering, it also refers to the tactical decisions taken in international marketing strategy. This means that the level of standardization of the marketing strategy supporting the brand positioning is an important element marketers have to manage when building global brands.
(By: Jain, S. C.)

Chapter 4 Research Proposition and Methodology

In this chapter we will define the proposition of this dissertation based on the conclusions mentioned in the different paragraphs of the theoretical chapters, we will indicate how we tried to find an answer to the question whether these propositions are valid or not (research methodology) and we mention who belongs to our research sample.

4.1 Research propositions

As mentioned in our theoretical chapters, acculturation models (Portes and Rumbaut, 2005, 2006) look at the way in which people after a period have adapted or not to the culture of the area they moved to and consider this to be an end status. Moreover they indicate that the process towards this end status for an individual is a linear indeed. People start from a beginning point in which there is no acculturation at all and move in that direction to a certain point. We believe that this is not always the case. People may start from a point of zero integration in the host culture and move along a line of acculturation, but the process is in our eyes more complicated. That is why we want to investigate the acculturation of people over time.

Moreover, as mentioned previously most research on acculturation also ignored communication variables in favor of demographic characteristics by composing simplistic measures of acculturation (O'Guinn and Faber, 1985). However communication is very essential to the acculturation process. Some efforts have been made to relate communication variables to acculturation. O'Guinn and Faber, 1985) found both interpersonal and mass media variables to be related to understanding the difference between ethnic and host society values and norms. In addition to that, most acculturation measures did not take in consideration all elements and roles in a minority group member's life, and how the speed of the acculturation process differs from one individual to another, even if they share the same ethnic group. Having a quantitative measure for consumer acculturation might be too general indeed, but we intend to partially fill this and the previously mentioned gap in literature.

As such, our propositions are that:

P1: Acculturation in a dynamic process over time that is not linear. This means that the acculturation process does not evolve only from a status of zero integration to an end status.

Consequences are that:

P1a: The process will have ups and downs.

P1b: The so called end status is never an end status.

P2: These dynamic effects can be measured by looking at the origin of the stated acculturation processes, more specifically the effects of the communication within a minority group of people involved.

Moreover socioeconomic and demographics characteristics, and personality traits play, as indicated in the chapter on acculturation, an important role in the acculturation process. Next to other key factors that also affect the process of adapting to the culture and the local buying behavior, we took them into consideration in our interviews. The other factors include the length of stay in Belgium, the shops' opening and closing times, shopping convenience and price. With regard to these influencing factors we want to look at the following propositions:

P3: Personality traits affect the speed of the acculturation process.

P4: Socioeconomic and demographic characteristics affect behavioral tendencies of international students in the host country.

P5: Personality traits affect behavioral tendencies towards buying products and brands in the host country.

P6: Socioeconomic and demographic characteristics affect behavioral tendencies towards buying products and brands.

4.1.1 Research approach and sample

Filling the gap about minority group communication in research by studying the process of acculturation among individuals who live away from their families and are completely disconnected from anything that reminds them of their traditions and habits in the origin country. That's why we have interviewed international students from different countries and different regions.

Our initial goal was to study a group of one nationality students only because we believed that variables like initial differences in knowledge of and adaptation to the host culture, in this case the Belgian one, could better be controlled. We wanted therefore to study Jordanian students only. This would have been easier since the author of the dissertation is Jordanian and could have easily interpreted some of the sayings of the students belonging to the sample. We had however to abandon the plan however as the influence of these students on one another is so large that no differences at all could be observed anymore. We thus had to change the originally intended composition of our sample.

We decided to change the sample into a group of international students on an exchange stay in Belgium and coming from different countries, not only Jordan. Group influences are still there, but less outspoken. These individuals had never lived before in Belgium, but some had been in the country for a short holiday stay. Thus they were still somewhat comparable in their knowledge of the country and culture they had to acculturate in. Most of them are EU citizens, thus the original cultural factor will only have a very small influence on our study results. We have however also kept the two most relevant interviews with Jordanian students from our first

attempt as they can still be somewhat compared with the EU students as the way they have to live in Belgium is pretty similar.

Our sample thus consisted of eight international students, who come from the five different countries: Germany, Jordan, Spain, Hungary, and Brazil. The differences in the countries and the regions that the students came from made it more interesting to study their process of acculturation and also made it easier to discover very important elements that effects the process of acculturation for the student who share approximately the same age group that varies from 20-26 years old, although the group differs in their educational background, as the younger ones are on a bachelor level and the older ones are on a masters level, they all have a strong educational background.

The details about the background of the participants are as follows. They are eight students; four females and four males. Their ages vary from the age of 20-26 years old and they all have marketing/ management background either from their bachelor's or from their master's degree. Some of them are exchange students for the bachelor courses and the others are exchange student on a master's level at the University of Hasselt. As for their geographical background; we interviewed three students (two males and a female) from Germany, two students from Spain (a male and a female: comes originally from Brazil), one student from Hungry (Female), and two students from Jordan (A male and a female).

4.2 Methodology

The research methodology we opted for is thus a multiple-case study research in which each student can be considered to constitute one case. As our research questions are mainly qualitative and descriptive in nature, we believe that this is the best way to proceed. Using cases will enable us to investigate real-life situations. Since individual people are our unit of analysis, each case will depict the acculturation process of one individual only.

Since we wanted to investigate the process of acculturation over time, we have studied these individuals at different intervals over a period of six months during their stay in Belgium. We focused specifically on the period shortly after their arrival in Belgium and a period just before leaving Belgium. It was not possible to interview them at the very last moment however any more since our dissertation had to be finished before that. We have thus done two rounds of in depth interviews with the sample students. The first one of them was when the students first arrived in Belgium and the second one was after 3 to 5 months after their arrival for the students who are only coming for six months. For the ones who stayed for a year (the students from Jordan) we did the second round of interviews 8 months after their arrival.

The interviews were quite extensive and collected information regarding many aspects of buyer behavior, in addition to several questions specifically asked to indirectly assess the level of acculturation. Among these were demographic measures, such as the national origin of the respondents, religion, age, and gender.

The interviews included questions that assess their feelings and behavior towards Belgian lifestyle, shopping, culture, and brands. Other questions assessed their opinions and knowledge about the Belgian culture, and the people. And some questions were asked to find out if the students were influenced by the experiences of other students who lived the experience before them and the degree of their influence. There were also standard demographic questions (age, gender...) and awareness questions (yes/no). The interviews were done individually and each interview took about 20-30 minutes. The respondents were asked and answered in English.

4.2.1 Interview measures

As mentioned previously that we will study the consumer acculturation in depth. And as we also mentioned that because consumer acculturation is very relative and differs from one person to another, the process of acculturation over a period of time should be studied, in order for the changes that the students go through becomes visible, and therefore these are the major research questions in the first chapter. We tried to cover them all in our interviews and believe they are good measures to test the propositions in the first paragraph of this chapter.

These questions are:

1. How does acculturation develop?
2. Does the speed of acculturation differ from one person to another, although they belong to the same social group?
3. What are the stages people are going through during the process of acculturation?
4. Do people show periods of higher and lower acculturation during this process? In other words: Is this process erratic in nature?
5. Do people who become acculturated to the host country draw back in time and go back to the origin country behavior's, values, and practices?
6. Which factors help in explaining the changes in the acculturation process over time of individuals?

Our interviews consisted of three parts.

The first part of the interview dealt with the basic data about the students like their educational background, work experience, general knowledge and attitudes towards the Belgian culture, people, and Belgian cuisine. We opted for this last element as a major part of the interview talked about grocery shopping, which for students mostly includes food products.

The second part is about behavior and experience, we assess their shopping behavior and experience for grocery and fashion items, since they arrived to Belgium. What are the factors that affected their shopping behavior and experience and pushed to change in one direction or the other and why?

The third part of the interview covered their social and cultural experience, their knowledge about the Belgian culture, how do they perceive Belgian people, and whether was it was easy for them to make friends in general, and make Belgian friends in particular. What were the obstacles that they faced through the process of making friends and why they did they face those obstacles?

We sometimes deviated from this strict scheme as some of the answers the students provided to one question or another were not always as expected and covered parts of other elements foreseen later in the interview. The interviews were taped and the short contents can be found in annex.

4.2.2 Interview guide

1. For how long have you been here in Belgium?
2. Is this your first visit to Belgium?
3. Have you ever been in any other European country before?
4. Do you go for clothing shopping here?
5. How frequent do you go clothing shopping?
6. What times usually do you go(Morning/afternoon)
7. Which days?
8. Where do you go grocery shopping?
9. How frequent do you go grocery shopping?
10. What times usually do you go(Morning/afternoon)
11. Which days?
12. How many different stores did you try?
13. Do you buy from only one store or you visit more than one?
14. What are the habits that you had before coming to Belgium and did it change while staying in Belgium, and why?
15. What do you think about the opening and closing times for shopping centers here?
16. Do you think your shopping behavior changed due to these differences in opening and closing times?
17. Which is better in your opinion, the opening and closing times in your country or here in Belgium?
18. What do you think of the products in terms of quality and packaging?
19. What do you think of the clothing items in terms of quality and style?
20. In your opinion are you influenced by other students experiences before you?
21. What are the barriers that you faced here in your opinion?
22. How do you feel about the shopping experience here in general?
23. Which do you enjoy more grocery shopping or shopping for clothes?
24. What is your perception about Belgian people?
25. Did you make any Belgian friends?
26. How long did it take to make Belgian friends, and was it hard or easy to make them?
27. Did you know anything about shopping, transportation, the Belgian lifestyle before coming here?
28. Did you have students from previous years helping you out, to find your way here?
29. What are the things that you asked others students about?
30. What are the brands did you get to know here in Belgium that you did not know before?
31. What are the brands that you used to buy back home and you kept on buying in Belgium?

32. What are the new brands that you discovered in Belgium and you started buying them regularly?

33. What are the new brands that you started buying in Belgium and you would go back home and look for them to buy them again?

34. Name

35. Age

36. School

37. City

38. Religion

39. Gender

40. Social status

41. Would you like to add anything else?

Chapter 5 Findings

In this study we have tried to use a framework that looks at acculturation on the basis of reported experiences of international students. Several categories of experiences were reported to us based on the recognized similarities and differences between living in their country of origin and in Belgium by the case students. They have interconnected components such as why they came to Belgium, how different they experienced the situation, which friends they made, how they went about in their grocery and fashion shopping and what they think about Belgium and Belgians in general and which Belgian brands they got to know.

This was always related to what they previously knew about the country and whether changes occurred in their buying behavior. In addition to the obstacles that slowed down the participants' acculturation and the factors that helped in speeding up their acculturation, the influence of these differences on the international students' buying behavior were recorded at best.

Knowing and recognizing the similarities and differences that the participants learned between their country of origin and Belgium has a very large influence on how they will adjust to the new cultural environment. Perceiving these similarities and differences in particular is essential in order to adapt successfully to the new culture and to effectively interact with the members of the new culture. Some of the perceived differences appear to be resolved through the acquisition of new relationships and skills, in addition to insight into personal and social issues. These differences usually participate in adaptive changes in attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs that may or may not be aligned with traditional or cultural values. On the other hand other differences might remain unresolved, and these appear to create significant stress in the lives of the international students, that might prevent them from attaining personal, educational, and professional goals.

Through studying our participants' experiences in depth we were able to find evidence of some key factors that influenced their acculturation and buying behavior. These factors will be related to the influencing factors mentioned in the theoretical framework as much as possible. Twelve fundamental elements were observed. In this chapter we will treat them in the following order:

1. Not related to the theoretical framework:
 - a. Language acquisition and proficiency.
 - b. Previous knowledge about Belgium and Belgian culture
2. Factors mentioned in the theoretical framework
 - a. Social influences
 - i. Culture of origin and difference with Belgian culture
 - ii. Peer groups

- b. Personal factors
 - i. Individual growth
 - ii. Length of stay in Belgium
 - iii. Personal situation
 - iv. Impact of convenience and price
- c. Marketing induced factors
 - i. Image of Belgium and known Belgian products
 - ii. Opening and closing times of stores
 - iii. Exposure to Belgian brands
- d. External factors
 - i. Globalisation of brands

At the end of the chapter, we shortly look at the changes for each of the students separately in the hope of observing some dynamic changes over time.

5.1 Factors playing an obvious role in the acculturation process, but not necessarily mentioned in the literature review.

Among those factors we would like to mention the knowledge and proficiency acquired over time by the different students in our cases of the Dutch language and previous knowledge about Belgium and Belgian culture.

With regards to the Dutch language, we observed that it was definitely a huge barrier for most students to adopt to the Belgian way of life. Six of the eight students did not know anything about Dutch and didn't try either to study the language, which hampered their possibility of knowing more about Belgium and Belgian culture. But the same problem was also raised by the two students who took some Dutch classes. They had more ease to understand Belgian culture a bit, but not much. Moreover, most of our case students were not really motivated to learn Dutch since most Belgian people with whom they came into contact in the consumer behavior processes tried to understand English, the language the students were studying in.

Previous knowledge about Belgium and Belgian culture was also an essential factor in the observed acculturation processes in consumer behavior. For the students who did not know anything about Belgium and the local culture obviously their exploratory phase took longer than for the ones who visited Belgium before, even when this was only for a short holiday.

People who had visited Belgium on holidays had some idea about the Belgian cuisine, the language (couple of words), and so on... But they also knew some brands of chocolates and beer as well. This made it easier for them to adapt since they at least had the feeling that their acculturation did not start from point zero. This is true for grocery shopping, but not for fashion shopping, where globalization of brands and chains plays a larger role, something we will mention in the next paragraph.

The students who did not have any knowledge about the Belgian culture were more resistant to changes and differences, The female Jordanian student for example had a difficult time adapting to the Belgian culture and she hardly ever did any efforts any more in the last couple of months. The Hungarian student found it very difficult to adapt to the transportation system in Belgium, which affected her social life negatively in the beginning.

5.2 Influencing factors of acculturation in consumption behavior

Several influencing factors mentioned in the literature review can be observed in the cases we have researched into. In the theoretical part we talked about social factors, personal factors, marketing induced factors, external factors and the nature of the product or service. All of them could be observed in our interviews.

5.2.1 Social Factors

This is for instance the case with the social factors influencing acculturation, such as the social relations the respondents were capable of building over time with people from the host culture and the difference between their culture and the host culture. Specifically for students coming from collectivist cultures such as the Brazilian, Hungarian and Jordanian students, the fact that they did not have a kind of “safety net” of people supporting them constituted an initial problem. It took them time and effort to get acquainted with how things work in Belgium. Specific examples are for instance the difficulties the Hungarian student experienced in finding shops and suitable transportation opportunities. The problem was probably a little bit less stringent for the Brazilian student because she has been living in Spain for a while, a culture closer to Belgium than her own one and for the Jordanians as they live in a group of more students of the same origin. This leads to a slower process of acculturation in their consumption pattern. It took a very long time before they were willing to accept new products at all, new ways of doing things and differences in general.

On the other hand, the interview with the female Jordanian student also leads to the potential conclusion that living in a larger peer group diminishes the need to adapt and leads to reflections whether any adaptation whatsoever is only temporary and thus not very useful at all, even for fashion shopping.

Peer groups also seem to play a role. The students who all belong to the group of exchange students live closely together. It is thus quite normal that they influence each other in their consumption pattern. The Spanish male student for instance was greatly influenced by his German friends in the sense that he explicitly indicated to have become more organized in his shopping (by making to buy lists and going at specific times for shopping) and lives more healthily (by eating for instance less meat, more vegetables and darker bread). Both Jordanian students became more punctual in their own recall of the facts.

This is also obvious with regards to the fun they are making together and the way they are going out at night. It is not surprising most students mention that they know the foreign students in Diepenbeek better than Belgian students. Living in the same situation leads to

closer ties and moreover Belgians seem not to be so open and outgoing than some foreigners. This led some students, for instance the Hungarian student and two of the German students to gradually become more outgoing. Since they do not all live in student homes very often contacts are limited to work and study and once work is done or classes over, Belgian students go home again. Most students had difficulties getting into closer contact with Belgian friends, but in the end did so. Maybe it just takes more time to befriend with people who do belong to a not so close peer group. Most students also changed their idea about the friendliness of Belgians in general, but still find them rather reserved.

5.2.2 Personal factors

Many personal factors seem to play a role in the acculturation of consumer behavioral patterns. Among them we observed personal growth of the students, the length of stay in Belgium, the personal situation and the role convenience and price play as needs in the shopping process.

The individual growth of the observed students was quite different. The level of personal growth that the students had, differed from one student to another due many personal traits and external factors. Personal independence varied as well among the students. Personality growth and independence affected the process of acculturation greatly. For example the students who were more independent and had traveled more and lived alone previously, spent less time adapting to the new life and conditions in Belgium and they were also less influenced by other students or friends in their decision making. This was true with regards to shopping, traveling.

On the other hand the students who were less independent or lived in a collectivist society were more influenced by other students especially if they shared the same nationality. One example are the Jordanian students. Both students were influenced by other Jordanian students on different levels, both were definitely influenced when it comes to their grocery shopping experience, but the female student was more influenced by others in many other aspects as well including fashion styles, where to go shopping, which cities to visit, which friends to have, and where to live.

The length of stay in Belgium also plays an important role in this category of influencing factors. As we mentioned previously, we conducted two rounds of in depth interviews with the students during a period of six months for six of the them. Two of them stayed for a longer period and the second interview with them was conducted after 8 and 12 months after their arrival in Belgium. The length of period spent in Belgium has a definite effect on the students acculturation and buying behavior. The ones for example who stayed longer are more accepting of Belgian people and their culture. Obviously they know more Belgians on the social side. As for the shopping, the students who stayed longer are more organized in their shopping behavior, they are consistent from where to buy and the products they buy, as well as they were able to develop a weekly shopping routine that they followed every week. As for those who stayed only for six months they had just recently began developing this routine in their

shopping behavior but since they are leaving not much effort or interest was given to the matter due to the short period of spent in the country.

In the cases of a longer length of stay, relapses also occurred in the consumption behavior, this is true for the drinking behavior of the male Jordanian student and the use of different clothing styles by the female Jordanian student changed back to the original one more at the end of the stay. Maybe our observation period should have been longer for all students to witness this more. But it clearly indicates that acculturation is not a process that start at one point and evolves to a certain pint, but can also go back to a lower level of acculturation later.

The personal situation of the observed person also plays a role. In our group one student, the male Jordanian student also got a job in Brussels. This fact profoundly influenced his view on how Belgians live. Although he adapted to going to his work by train every day, he thinks it is a very stressful and depressing situation if people have to endure this over a longer period of time. Life in Belgium might be good, but not as good as what he was used to in the Jordan and the USA as a student. He learned to be more punctual and to appreciate the punctuality of Belgian trains (something Belgians don't see that way) His job at an NGO also gave him the conviction that unbranded products are really good for the planet, qualitatively comparable to branded products and not as expensive. We have put this paragraph here, but we could as well have indicated that the peer group of Hamzeh changed during his stay: he did not only or mainly come into contact with students anymore.

Finally convenience and price seem to play the most important role in grocery shopping for this group of observed students and influence the acculturation process enormously. Convenience was from these two the most influential factor in shaping the students buying behavior, all the students experimented with different grocery stores during the whole period, but they all were consistent in doing their grocery shopping from the stores that are closest to their residence. Prices also played a big role in students shopping choices.

All of the students shopped from Aldi or Lidl and they did not care for brands because they were looking only for commodity products at the cheapest prices. For students who do not have income and money is always limited this seems to be an obvious choice. They had to go for the cheapest choice and give up brands. In this respect the male Jordanian student explicitly stated starting to buy "unbranded products", although also personal conviction that marketing is not always the right way, based on his job experience, played a role in this.

5.3 Marketing induced factors

Marketing induced elements are another point in case. Since years the image of Belgium abroad has been linked intensely by all responsible authorities to beer, chocolate and French fries. It is thus not very surprising that of all the typical Belgian products mentioned these were constantly evoked. It are also the products of which the brands (specifically beers) were est retained by most students. Only over time some other local products like speculoos (by a Gemran and the Spanish student), a sausage sandwich (by the Brazilian student) and full bread (by the Spanish student) were specifically evoked in the interviews by some of the students as well as some brand names of marmalade and honey (by one German student).

Among the marketing induced factors the opening and closing times of shops also play an important role. The difference in closing and opening times for shops in Belgium and the country of origin of the students played an essential role in shaping their shopping behavior of the students. Since the period that the shops are open in Belgium is relatively shorter than in any of the students' countries, they were pushed towards adapting and changing their acquired and normal shopping pattern. Three of the students used to shop for groceries every day, but when they came to Belgium they changed their routine into shopping one to two times a week.

Not many brands get to be known during a short stay in Belgium finally. This is partially due to the fact that students for reasons of convenience and price started shopping from Aldi and Lidl and got used to "unbranded products". But it probably also due to the fact that due to language barriers (thus less television exposure to ads) and the short stay the real marketing efforts of companies selling branded products in Belgium seem to be useless. Only the brands Materne, Meli, the product speculoos (no brand mentioned), Pasha coffe and some brands of beer like Leffe or Grimbergen were mentioned once or twice in the case of the beers.

In that sense our research was less successful in observing real changes in behavior. Maybe the most significant of these changes was mentioned by a German student who started buying from Carrefour, not known to him in Germany and says it was a good experience. The other German student did as well, but knew Carrefour since he lived closer to the French border and Carrefour is a French brand.

5.3.1 External factors

It is also the case for external factors. In the literature review we specifically mentioned globalization as the most important of these factors. This might be a factor intensifying the knowledge about Belgian beers and chocolate, but it certainly so in the fashion shopping experience of the students. Most of them mention the brand names of global stores like H&M that are present in most cities of the world. The Hungarian student specifically said that lack of local shops in a small city like Hasselt (compared to the capital of her country) was disappointing as a shopping experience and the female Jordanian student mentioned that all these chain brands were also available at home, but maybe with a style which was a little bit older than in Belgium. It made the fashion shopping for her however very recognizable indeed. Thus for fashion shopping even those students who did not know anything about Belgium were not fully at a loss. Their knowledge of stores in Belgium was based on globalization trends. Moreover, the general idea that life in Belgium, even for Europeans, is expensive plays a role in

the fashion shopping experience. All eight students came with the idea that the prices for clothes in Belgium are really expensive. It took a while for the students to go to the shops looking for clothes thinking that it was too expensive (and for those staying a shorter period also less relevant), but eventually when they went there some of them discovered products were not as expensive as they thought they would be. The student from Hungary, the one from Spain and the female student from Jordan all mentioned this and changed behavior accordingly. They started buying some clothes from Belgium and think the prices are affordable. The others did not change their minds about it.

5.3.2 Nature of the product or service

That the nature of the product or service does play a role is obvious if we compare the grocery and the fashion shopping. Not only is the way people organize different (and changes are more obvious for grocery shopping since they are bought more often), but the perception of prices and adaptation to it is different. Our observations are however too small to be able to draw more conclusions.

5.4 Recall of the changes observed

It was our stated objective to see which dynamism develops in the acculturation process and whether over time relapses occur. We might in the short period of observation not have been very successful in this respect however. The table below indicates the observed changes. They all point in the direction of gradual acculturation over time. Only two elements of relapse occurred with the students that stayed longer in Belgium (Suha with regard to fashion styles and Hamzeh with regard to drinking habits). It might be that our observation period for the others was too short indeed. But from these two small facts we cannot draw the conclusion that the process of acculturation is a dynamic with ups and downs.

Dynamics in acculturation could be observed, but it all supports the previous research efforts indicating that you start at a certain point and go on with acculturation until a certain level, that fits you well, is reached.

Most of the students show this very clearly with regard to grocery shopping. They start adapting to stores and products indeed and look for what is convenient, has the right price and is close to where they live. After the initial search however, they do not change much anymore in this shopping pattern.

Table ... Observed changes in consumption patterns of the eight students

Names of student	Changes observed over time
Suha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suha became more punctual. - Suha was unable to develop relationships with any new brands, due to language barrier. - Suha became less influenced by her Jordanian friends in the last couple of months. - Suha says she did not use different fashion styles any more at the end of the period.
Vevien	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vivien developed more friendships - Vivien went to more parties in the last couple of months. - Vivien did more fashion shopping in the last couple of months.
Iban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Iban developed a healthy diet, including more vegetables. - Iban drank more premium beers than in Spain. - Iban became more punctual and systematic. - Iban developed a weekly grocery shopping routine, and started to write a list for the groceries that he needs.
Hamzeh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hamzeh started buying unbranded products. - Hamzeh started drinking more beer at the beginning, and it got less by time. - Hamzeh became more punctual.
Sinja	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sinja change her working style at school. - Sinja shopped more at Carrefour less at Aldi.
Lukas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lukas adopted a more relaxed life style (Less studying, less going to the gym, more partying and travelling)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lukas developed relationships with couple of beer (Leffe, Grimbergen), and other food brands like Speculoos, Meli.
Luzia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Luzia likes and eats more Belgian food over time. - Luzia did less fashion shopping in Belgium. - Luzia developed a relationship with one brands (Speculoos). - Luzia developed friendships with more Belgians over time.
Philip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Philip bought less branded products over time. - Philip adapted a more relaxed life style, more parties less studying. - Philip started shopping at Carrefour that does not exists in Germany.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

The study was set out to explore the process of acculturation by foreign students in Belgium over time. We wanted to investigate how the speed of acculturation affects their shopping behavior and brand loyalty and how any brand relationship could be build since they arrived in Belgium. Moreover as mentioned in the methodology chapter we wanted to fill the gap about minority group communication in research by studying the process of acculturation that these foreign students go through, without being affected by their families or traditions, and without being connected to their country of origin.

6.1 Verification of the propositions

In the chapter on methodology we have put forward six propositions we tried to verify in our study. Based on the data gathered in the findings section, we can draw the following table about the validation of those propositions.

Table Verification of the propositions.

Propositions	Data validation
<p>P1: Acculturation is a dynamic process</p> <p>P1a: The process will have ups and downs. P1b: The so called end status is never an end status.</p>	<p>Some dynamism was observed, starting from a certain point and ending at a certain point. Only two cases of changes in the backward direction were observed. In most cases the end status seems to be an end status indeed. <u>This proposition was not validated.</u></p>
<p>P2: These dynamic effects can be measured by looking at the origin of the stated acculturation processes, more specifically the effects of the communication within a minority group of people involved</p>	<p>Peer group influences were indeed observed in many cases with most students. Some of them had an influence on the status of the acculturation process in terms of social life (going out) or in terms of the consumption process.</p>
<p>P3: Personality traits affect the speed of the acculturation process.</p>	<p>Individual growth and the independence of the student, the length of stay, the personal situation (student, working or not) were found to play a role in the acculturation process.</p>
<p>P4: Socioeconomic and demographic characteristics affect behavioral tendencies of international students in the host country.</p>	<p>We have only an idea about the budget students want to spend. Their real economic</p>

<p>P5: Personality traits affect behavioral tendencies towards buying products and brands in the host country.</p> <p>P6: Socioeconomic and demographic characteristics affect behavioral tendencies towards buying products and brands.</p>	<p>situation and demographic characteristics were only <u>partially observed</u> (gender and age), but did not seem to play a very important role. The socioeconomic situation as a student was more important.</p> <p>Personal organization and the way people adapt to that seem for instance to generate a certain regular shopping pattern adapting to the opening and closing times of shops in Belgium.</p> <p>All students attach importance to convenience and price in grocery shopping as they have a small budget to spend. For fashion shopping comparison with the prices in the home country and how well they are doing are also taken into consideration. The demographic characteristics were not really very influential, the socioeconomic situation as a student played a much larger role.</p>
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Specifically proposition P1, the most important one of the study, could not be validated and the effect of the socioeconomic and demographic variables on the acculturation process was more difficult to observe. Both elements are in our view linked to the limitations of the study, mentioned in the next paragraph.

6.2 Limitations of the study

The findings of the study were worthwhile although our study did not generate the wealth of data we expected to find. We must ask ourselves why this lack of data we expected to collect; specifically with regard to the dynamics of the acculturation process is so obvious.

The most simple conclusion is to say that the data do not show as the phenomena we expected to see do not exist at all. This would mean that the actual studies on acculturation stating that it is a straightforward process are all correct and complete as they state that one starts at a point zero and acculturates to a certain point and nothing much more happens. This in itself is a worthwhile conclusion of this study.

We are however not sure that this is the case. Although we only observed two instances in which the observed students acculturated more at first and then fell back to a lower level (the fashion worn by the female Jordanian student and the drinking habit of the male Jordanian student), we are not sure that they are exceptions to the general rule of acculturation being a process going on to a certain level only.

The fact that we only observed two of those “ups and downs” in the dynamism of acculturation, may indeed be due to a number of other factors inhibiting us from observing more identical instances. These factors may be:

1. Difficulties in communication of our observed students;
2. The fact that we only studied students over a relatively short period of time;
3. The fact that our focus group was limited to international exchange students on masters and bachelors level, who stay only shortly in Belgium as well;
4. The fact that we were only able to conduct two interviews with the students, one when the students arrived to Belgium and the other before they were leaving and did not have an intermediary conversation and did not perform any participative observation at all; and
5. The fact that Belgian students were somewhat closed to making friendships with these international students.

We will elaborate each of these five elements in more detail below.

As mentioned in the methodology and findings chapter, language was one of the barriers that the students faced. Their lack of knowledge of the Dutch language made it extremely difficult for the students to build relationships with local products and brands, except for the much known and before arrival expected brands of chocolate and beer. Moreover language also built an obstacle when it came to building relationships with Belgian students. If our students would have had the opportunity of knowing Belgian students better, this could have played a big role in the acculturation process. Students are indeed a particular group of people. Nobody knows young people’s habits better than young people. Gaining insight to the Belgian youth culture was a thing that the students could not experience because of this language barrier.

We further only studied the students for a short period of time. Acculturation being a very dynamic process, it may well be very uneven across domains of behavior and social life (Berry, 1990) and over time. Our study covered the acculturation behavior of the students over only six months to a year (in only two out of the eight cases). We strongly believe this period was not long enough to notice the dynamics of the process of acculturation and its ups and downs. It is very interesting that in that respect the two observations made came from the two cases covering the longest period of stay in Belgium. For the other students the period of time was certainly too short to change much about their habits and buying behavior. Moreover, due to this short period students did not feel enough stability to develop a remarkable fixed routine to their buying behavior or to change some of their habits and adopt new ones. Some stability developed indeed but it was always in a sense that in their back of the minds of the students realized they would be going back home soon. Since we did not track the student’s personality traits in a systematic and scientific way, their effect on acculturation was also largely uncovered and the short period of time did not offer us the opportunity to trace it back by other means.

Our focus group was further limited to international exchange students on a masters or bachelors level. This is the origin of the short period of stay problem mentioned in the previous paragraph. Our sample selection did not really help in that respect. In hindsight selecting as a sample a group of international PhD students at the university of Hasselt, who stay for four years could have yielded other and more significant results. Moreover this would not only have solved the problem of the short stay in Belgium, it would also have had the advantage of observing a group with a stable work situation in Belgium and a greater probability of getting to know Belgian colleagues and friends as well. Since our students found Belgians to be very reserved (after classes or work, they just go home), they had little chance of developing these friendship relations. This might have created a situation in which more dynamics in the process of acculturation could have been observed.

Furthermore, we were able to conduct only two interviews with the students, one when the students arrived to Belgium and the other before they were leaving. Making only two rounds of interviews definitely disabled us from seeing small details and slight differences that the students overcame, but maybe did not even realize. Nevertheless these details may be a good indicator of their level of acceptance of new situations, challenges and changes. This also brings us to the fact that we only had interviews. Maybe real observations of their shopping behavior when it took place could have yielded better results as well.

Finally, Belgian students are somewhat closed to making friendships with international students. We mentioned this already. Almost all students agreed on the fact that the Belgian students were not as welcoming or open to new people from different cultures as they thought they would be. That factor discouraged the students we observed to interact much with them or make efforts to get to know their “Belgian” culture. Our Jordanian male student Hamzeh who has a work experience and got involved more with the culture perceived Belgians in general as nice polite people but not welcoming to other cultures. He might be the best placed person to have an opinion on it. The exchange students without work experience do form a very tight group indeed and thus do have less need to get to know Belgians as well.

6.3 Research implications of this study

This study has some implications for future research. The main fact is that future attempts at defining acculturation in more detail and depicting really dynamic processes in it in depth should not fall into some of the traps we fell into and that might explain our relatively poor results.

They are threefold:

1. Future research should examine the acculturation process over a longer period of time by taking a group of people to observe who will definitely stay longer in Belgium and need more contact with Belgians. Ideally these people should have a work contract of several years at least, such as the PhD students working at the University of Hasselt that

we previously already mentioned. They will certainly have a stay of more than two or three years and have a closer working relationship with Belgian colleagues.

2. The personality traits of the observed people should be studied more deeply and with scientific rigor (with regards to definitions of traits and methods of measuring them) to be able to depict their effect on the acculturation process and brand loyalty adaption. The same goes for the deeper observation of the people they are in regular contact with.
3. The study should have interviews with the observed people at regular intervals and more often than just at the start or the end of a short stay. At best it should be accompanied by real life observations of those people when they are shopping.

6.4 Final Remark

We would like to end this dissertation with one final remark. We noticed that international exchange students, although forming a very tight group, are all somewhat disappointed in the fact that they met great difficulties in making Belgian friends. This is anyway one of the expectations they have when coming to Belgium and it is in their eyes a missed opportunity. It is also a missed opportunity for the Belgian students because they have the possibility of befriending with many nationalities, yet only a few of them do. And those who do are the ones already having had their own exchange or summer school experience (to a limited degree). We wonder whether the university could not be somewhat more active in realizing this missed potential.

Suggestions for the University of Hasselt and their different academic departments in the different faculties would include:

1. Organize more cultural activities for the international students, that would introduce them to a large portion of the Belgian society. Specifically the introductory week (in effect only three days) is mostly devoted to administrative issues. But it is a unique opportunity to do somewhat more and get students to know each other and Belgian students better, as well as Belgian culture.
2. Encourage Belgian students to organize activities with international friends in order to build friendships. We know that this is difficult as the work schedule is hectic and crowded with assignments and work, but the fun factor, that really exists, rarely involves many international students, in spite of the efforts done by AES.
3. Involve the staff more in the process of getting international students to know Belgium better.

We might be dreaming at this moment, but missed opportunities never come back.

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Appendix

Interviews

Interview Hamzeh:
Part one and two

Hamzeh 1

The first interview was with a student coming from Jordan (Middle East) . His name is Hamzeh Obeid. He came to Belgium to finish his Masters in International Marketing managers. His bachelors' degree is one in Computer Engineering at Arizona State University in the United states of America. He is staying in Belgium for a year and arrived in Hasselt on September 13, 2012 .

According to the interview, Hamzeh had a hard time finding his way around the city of Hasselt "which was something normal to any new visitor as he said" . Finding grocery stores is something very essential when someone first moves into a new place. He considers himself lucky because he had a grocery store called Spar that was only three minutes walking away from his place. For the first month he did all his grocery shopping there out of convenience reasons. The Hamzeh discovered that there is an Aldi store right around the corner at only 10 minutes of walking distance to his place. Aldi proved to be much cheaper than Spar. Hamzeh did not know any of those two stores, they do not exist in his home country Jordan. He also discovered that the quality of the products at Aldi is lower than the ones at Spar, but he usually makes his weekly shopping at Aldi anyway due to the cheaper prices.

Beer however is an exception for Hamzeh; His favorite beer is Leffe and Spar then is his first choice as shop. Hamzeh explained how he got into the beer culture here Belgium. Compared to Jordan, this is something quite different; parties in Jordan normally include hard liquor. Young people in Jordan prefer to buy Vodka over a six-pack of beer. Hamzeh thinks this is mainly due to economic reasons as the tax levied on alcoholic beverages is very high. Parties in Belgium however include beer. Hamzeh discovered that beer is an essential element of Belgian culture and going out. This became obvious when he found out that some bars offer a beer menu with over a couple of hundred "speciality beers". There seem to be 2000 in total. Walking into these bars and hearing the stories about beer and the history beer brewing from Belgian people also gave Hamzeh a spuch to venture into beers instead of hard liquors, as he would do in Jordan.

Finally Hamzeh said that when he first came here, he really got into the beer culture as it was very new to him and it helped him to get to know the people and it provided him with an

insight into the Belgian culture. But after awhile he went back to his old habits. Whenever he felt like drinking something he would go and buy liquor just as he used to do back home in Jordan with his friends.

Hamzeh 2

Hamzeh has been in Belgium for 14 months now. Hamzeh said that it is hard for him to detect changes that happened to him during the year, because during the first 8 months he had a student life and then he started doing a full time internship in an international company in Brussels, which made his life more organized and structured. Hamzeh said that even though this company is international, he got to know the work culture in Belgium which is quite different from the one in Jordan. Since he also worked for a while in Jordan he is able to compare. He thinks the Belgian work culture is more professional, which is something he liked. In addition to that he got to live the life of a Belgian employee for six months which introduced him to the lifestyle of Belgian people. Hamzeh said: "I take the train every morning to Brussels and come back with the train every evening. Being restricted to the train's timetable is stressful, and I see the same people going with me in the morning and coming back in the evening. This is how they are probably going to live on for the next 20 years maybe which is something I am not willing to do". Hamzeh thus described the Belgian life style as very stressful and fixed, specifically for working people. On working days people don't have time to do relaxing things for themselves. Belgian people sometimes waste three hours of their day on train rides just to go to work and come back. He would rather spend those three hours on the gym or learning a language course or perhaps cooking. Although Hamzeh describes himself as coming from a relaxed culture with no time perception and as a relaxed person who is more comfortable with his culture and its lifestyle, he said he adapted to the train trips every day and missed the train only once which made him more punctual in general.

Hamzeh's social life got better since he started his internship. He made friends with the staff but they are all international. Hamzeh said the only Belgian person he knows is the neighbor he used to have when he lived in Hasselt for a while. This is a very nice person and very helpful but he is not a representative for Belgian people. One of the reasons is that because his neighbor is a fervent socialist, he likes to help people and doing good things for everyone. Moreover this person traveled a lot around the world which made him more accepting of other cultures. Hamzeh thinks Belgian people on average travel a lot because of their work conditions, have better lives and on average a higher income than people in other countries. Belgian people are in his eyes more accepting than to go to different places and see other cultures, but they are not open to people from other cultures when they come and visit them. He thinks of Belgian people as polite and nice on the surface. They always stay nice to you even if they think negatively of you, but deep down they are not very accepting and open to strangers, which is not encouraging to build friendships with them.

When Hamzeh was asked about grocery shopping, he said that he still buys his groceries from Aldi. But he also visited Delhaize and Lidl out of curiosity. He still does his shopping from Aldi

because he is a big fan of Aldi. He likes the idea of selling "unbranded" products or unpopular products. He does not like to buy Kraft foods or Procter and Gamble products because they are everywhere and invading the whole world. He loves the idea that Aldi gives a local alternative to consumers that is just as good as products from well-known brands. He said that it was very easy for him to get used to buying unpopular brands that don't have a nice packaging or an advertisement on television. He replaced Nutella (the chocolate spread) for example for a similar one at Aldi. Hamzeh does not know the name of the brands nor does he care about them. Products are for him just commodities and he likes the simplicity that Aldi offers him.

Hamzeh said in the previous interview that he started to drink a lot of beer and that he liked the beer culture but his interest in beer soon faded away. He went back to his drinking habits in his home country. Hamzeh mentioned several reasons that made him stop drinking beer. One of them is that beer gave him bad hangovers which was not pleasant and he did not understand why people keep drinking a lot of beer as it is uncomfortable because it fills your stomach fast. After a while he understood the beer culture better and how people like and drink beer for the taste and not for the effect of it, which is a different way of drinking than the one popular in his country. He now likes darker beers and thinks that he would never have known anything about it without being here in Belgium. He would buy a beer once in a while if he goes back to Jordan, but not more.

When it comes to fashion shopping, Hamzeh said he is not a fan of going shopping for clothes. All the new clothes that he bought from Belgium were bought for him by his wife so he has no experience in fashion shopping and he is not interested in it.

Interview Iban:
Part one and two

Iban 1

Iban is a 23 year old Spanish student, who wants to obtain a major in business administration and business management. He wants to achieve this goal because he is interested in establishing his own company or business. He came to Belgium for studying in the hope of learning new ideas about business management and finding inspiration for the activities of his own business dream. He is actively looking for business ideas and models that do not yet exist in his home country Spain. At the moment he thinks that opening a typical Belgian “French fries shop” might be an idea that would work in Spain. He chose to study in Belgium because it was the only country in which there were universities he could found with a sufficient and interesting international program.

Before coming to Belgium, Iban thought that there would be no difference between Belgium and Spain in terms of culture, way of living, products and prices, but upon arrival here he noticed that people in Belgium are more serious and difficult to approach than Spanish people. Unlike Spanish people they are less open and friendly. One example is for instance in social encounters. Spanish people smile more often to strangers and are more open to speak and have a friendly conversation with strangers than Belgian people. Iban mentioned that he noticed that young people in Belgium are less nice than older people. He thinks this is due to the work stress young people experience more. Moreover people in Belgium always seem to run out of time, probably because shops close so early in the evening (at 18.00 hours). One other thing he noticed that Belgian people are always in a hurry when they eat or have lunch. He even noticed people having their lunch while they walking in the street. This would be unthinkable of in Spain where people are much more relaxed, have plenty of time to sit down, chat and have lunch, and where the stores over close at 8 or 9 pm so that there is always plenty of time to do your grocery shopping, which allows you to enjoy other things during the day.

Iban also noticed that the restaurants in Belgium are quite different as well. He said for instance that he considers Panos to offer a “junk food” in a “junk food place” where you cannot order anything as a customer and just sit there to eat. You just have to take your food and go, unlike in Spain where all restaurants always have an area where you can sit and eat, and then leave.

Iban has been in Belgium for a period of a month now and he does his grocery shopping at Lidl most of the time. The reason is that it is cheap and the store is very close to where he lives. He always goes for his grocery shopping with his flat mates. Most of the time this is an everyday activity. Iban does his grocery shopping with his friends and together they decide what to eat and they cook it at home. The decision what to eat is often taken in the Lidl shop. He also tried to shop at Carrefour, but he does not like the shop as much as Lidl because it is a little bit far from where he lives. Carrefour and Lidl are the only two stores that he has tried out so far.

Iban likes Lidl because it is cheap and because they have everything he is normally looking for in the same store so that he does not have to go to different places to get different products. Iban noticed that the meat at Lidl is however really expensive. Since he came to Belgium he thus adapted by starting to eat less meat, even though in Spain meat used to be his main food consumption.

When Iban was asked about the brands here in Belgium, he said that he found it very difficult to find a familiar brand for him. He thus started to buy “white brands”, and take the products of any type with the cheapest price. He found one soup brand “Knorr” that he also used to know in Spain. He never bought the brand in Spain but since it rang a familiar bell with him, he started buying it in Belgium. He might try other soup brands in the future, but for the time being he is very comfortable with buying Knorr because he knows the brand and feels that it represents a good quality. He is not that excited to try other brands.

The story is very typical for Iban. It is but one example of the fact that he says he started buying familiar brands in Belgium because it was easier, even when the brands were more expensive than other ones. Yet at the moment Iban says that “the advantage of living with a lot of people from different cultures is that it makes you attentive to different things and to try different products. For example he never tried soy sauce before and loves it now because of one of the flat mates learned him to try and like it. Iban thinks that Belgian food is not something that is hard to adapt to. French fries and meat are something familiar to nearly everyone.

When Iban was asked about shopping for clothes he said that Belgium is much more expensive than Spain especially in the case of Zara. This might be justifiable because Zara is originally Spanish, but also other fashion stores seem to be in his eyes much more expensive as well. Iban also noticed a difference in the design of the clothes in Belgium compared to Spain. He noticed for example that jackets offered in Belgium have a long neck, which is not the case in Spain and is probably due to the weather difference. In general, Iban said that he is buying less clothes in Belgium mainly because of the prices. As he described it: “ In Spain anytime I could go out and buy a T-shirt, but here I don’t see myself doing the same because of the prices...”

Iban finally noticed that in Belgium whole stores exist in which only chocolates are sold. This does not exist in Spain and he finds it “really nice”. Belgium also has better and more types of beers. Iban mentioned that beers like Leffe are more expensive in Spain. In Spain he used to drink the beer only on special occasions, but in Belgium he drinks it anytime he goes out with friends because he likes the taste and it is less expensive. He also thinks he has started drinking more beer since he arrived in Belgium and is trying different kinds of beer.

Iban 2

Iban has been in Belgium for three months and feels that a lot of things have changed since he moved to Belgium. He thinks that he has become more open minded and adopted a lot of things from other cultures. Moreover he is more organized now.

Iban said that a lot has changed in his shopping behavior when it comes to grocery shopping. Although he did not change the supermarket from which he buys (he still does his grocery shopping at Lidl because it is the closest to his place) his shopping habits have. Iban mentioned that he used to shop nearly every day that is whenever he needed something he used to go to the store and buy it. Now he has developed a weekly routine. He goes once a week to the super market. Another thing he added was that he is now writing a list of all the things he needs, whereas previously he did not decide what he needed or wanted to buy before going to the store. He used to go to the store and buy what was appealing to him, but now he checks what he needs, writes a list and then goes shopping.

Iban said that being with people from different cultures added a lot of value to his life. For example he learned how to be organized from his German friends and how to live more healthily as well, he said: "In Spain we eat a lot of meat and not much vegetables, but seeing my German friends eating vegetables all the time, made me try it. It tastes good, so I started buying broccoli, I added it to my diet and expenses list" He also added soy sauce to his shopping list, which he never tried before and now wants to have it all the time. It is something he is going to keep on buying for sure when he returns to Spain.

When Iban was asked about particular brands that he liked in Belgium, he said no particular brand really caught his attention but he changed some of the types of products he used to use in Spain to Belgian ones. One example is the bread, Iban said: "I always used to eat baguette, but now I eat whole grain sliced bread which is healthier and more like what the Belgians eat". As for fashion shopping, Iban has shopped for clothes a couple of times since he arrived. He thought that the prices were less expensive than he thought and the quality is the same as in Spain. He likes the items that are in the shops, but it was too short a period for him to get to know local Belgian stores. He thus shopped from the ones that existed in Spain, like H&M for example.

As for Iban's social life, he said he still knows the same people. His friends are international and he did make a couple of Belgian friends as well, but not much. He explained that maybe he did not make many Belgian friends because he found them boring, for example when they are in a party they don't dance they just stand talking to each other and stay serious until they are drunk. He also finds that Belgian guys hunt after girls in a rude and disrespectful to girls, which is not the case in Spain, the guys in Spain don't insist too much when the girl say no and they are more polite in the way they approach girls.

Another thing that did not enable him to become friends with Belgian people is that he felt that they were not really inviting. Belgians do initiate a conversation by saying hello but they don't seem very interested in knowing foreign students or their cultures. This is not very encouraging for Iban. He also added that he thinks that Belgians from the French speaking part of the country are a little rude and that the ones from the Flanders are more polite.

In general, Iban said that his experience in Belgium made him healthier because he eats healthier food now and he will keep doing so when returning to Spain and that he became more organized and structured in his way of living and is very happy with this positive impact the experience had on him.

Interview Luzia:
Part one and two

Luzia 1

Luzia is a 26 year old Brazilian student who already lives in Spain for 11 years. So far, she has been in Belgium for a month and will be here for six month as an exchange student. She visited Belgium once before on a school trip and still remembers little things about Brussels. Luzia would like to stay in Belgium more than six months because she likes it here so far.

When Luzia was asked about her preparation for coming to Belgium she said that she did not plan much, except that she looked online for the nearest places to buy her grocery products and how to use transportation. She also mentioned that when she arrived and started to do her grocery shopping in Belgium, she did not have any problems with finding what she wanted in the supermarket. She thinks that is also due to her travelling a lot in the past. She thinks she adapts easily in any country she visits amongst others because she does not have any specific expectations before going to any place. She works with what she finds there.

Luzia does her grocery shopping in Belgium at Lidl and Aldi almost every day. She said that she used to shop from both of them in Spain and they are not different in both countries. She doesn't pay attention to the brands in general as she only looks for the products with the cheapest prices, with some exceptions. For example if she is looking for buying a brand of breakfast cereals, she always buys Kellogg's. The same is true for Gliss hair products. These are both international brands that she can find them everywhere.

The only new thing that she knew about Belgium and tried out here was the beer. Luzia mentioned however that she is not a big fan of regular beer. When she came to Belgium she tried Kriek and Hoegaarden Rosé and she likes them very much. So she started to drink these beers only in Belgium. Another thing she tried out in Belgium during this month and liked after a while was a Belgian special sandwich stuffed with a sausage that she had never tried before. She likes it very much and she eats a lot of these sandwiches since she arrived. In addition to that she also started eating more French fries since she came to Belgium and she did not taste before the different flavors of the sauces that they offer here with the fries. She really likes the Samurai sauce and keeps ordering it every time. In general, Luzia really likes the Belgian food. It was a new taste for her and she enjoyed trying new Belgian dishes.

When Luzia was asked about fashion shopping, she said that she went shopping for clothes in Liege. She went specifically for a store called Primark which she knows in Spain and where she always uses to shop. Every time she wants something she will go to that store in Liege because it is affordable and she knows the store and its range of fashion from Spain. She said that the store in Belgium and the one in Spain are very similar and they have the same prices, same quality, and she really likes that. In addition to that Luzia said that she would not try other stores because she is used to this one and the other stores she visited are expensive.

When Luzia was asked about making friends, she said it was very easy for her to make friends because she has a lot of flat mates who come from Spain, Brazil and Italy and it was very easy to relate to them. She says that the Belgian students are nice to talk to, but she does not have contact with them that often because they choose not to hang out in the common area where all the international students get together. She does not understand why they don't come and hang out with the other international students. She thinks this is strange because in that way they don't even try to get to know other cultures. She noticed that they always tend to separate themselves from the others. Luzia said that even though she tried to go and talk to them and introduced herself and they weren't really interested in talking to her, it does not bother her that much because she likes the people that she is friends with and that she has so much fun with them. She also added that she did not come to Belgium to only know Belgian people: she wanted to know a lot of people from many different cultures and backgrounds.

Luzia 2

We interviewed Luzia for the second time three and a half months after arriving in Belgium. During the second interview Luzia seemed much more enthusiastic about Belgium and about the whole experience to be an exchange student in general.

When Luzia was asked about what had changed in general since she arrived, she answered that she had more Belgian friends than before and as she spent more time with them, she discovered that they are nicer than she initially thought they would be. She also thinks that maybe it just needs more time than she is herself used to, to become friends with Belgians. She also mentioned that during the three months she noticed some differences between the Belgians who live in Wallonia and the ones who live in Flanders. She mentioned that the people from Wallonia are in her eyes less friendly than people from Flanders and that it is easier for her to communicate and understand people who live in Flanders.

When Luzia was asked about grocery shopping she said: ' I am a very fixed person I don't change much. I started shopping at Lidl because it is close to me and I still do it till this moment. I still don't care about brands: I will buy the cheapest product I can find.' There is one exception however. Luzia started buying speculoos cake from grocery stores. She got to know it via her friends and she tried it and loves it. As for food, Luzia says that she is "in love" with Belgian food. She always buys French fries for dinner and a sausage sandwich. She says sometimes she feels pretty Belgian because she really loves to eat Belgian food all the time.

With regards to fashion shopping Luzia said that since she got to Belgium she had many opportunities to travel and visited many places in Europe. She discovered that Belgium is relatively more expensive than other countries and the comparison of the prices did not encourage her to buy any clothes from Belgium. In addition to that, Luzia also said that the street markets in Belgium are very expensive, contrary to Spain where she would be able to buy an item for a euro or two, whereas in Belgium fashion products on street markets they are sometimes more expensive than in some stores.

Interview Lukas:
Part one and two

Lukas 1

Lukas is a German master student who came to Belgium within an exchange program for a period of six months only. Lukas had the choice between studying in Ireland, England or Belgium within the framework of this exchange program and finally choose for Belgium because he thought the country to be culturally closer to Germany. It is also geographically closer to home.

Lukas did know something about Belgium however. He had visited the country twice before and had a very good idea about the Belgian cuisine as well as about the Belgian beer culture and the different cultures in the country.

This beer culture comes in his eyes close to the strong German and Czech beer culture, that he both knows pretty well. He has indeed lived in both countries: he is living now in Germany and used to live in the Czech Republic for about 10 years when he was much younger. During those visits to Belgium, he really started liking beer in Belgium because he found a great number of beer types that he did not know about or found in Germany.

Lukas mentioned that he is a very independent person who likes diversity and learning different languages and knowing and understanding different cultures. Lukas was thus also interested in the people here in Belgium. He thought it was interesting for him to learn more about how the country has two parts (the French speaking Walloon and the Dutch speaking Flanders part) and functions. He described this as a nice mix and thinks it is very cool that most people speak two languages and can understand each other while at the same time they live in one state.

When Lukas was asked about the first thing that crosses his mind when he thinks about Belgium he answered that he thinks about the European Union and to the issues that is related to the economy that they try to solve most of the time. This is of course related to his educational background (economics), but he also thinks directly about the Belgian chocolate, waffles and fries when it comes to food, next to of course the already mentioned beer culture.

Lukas has been in Belgium for a month now, and he feels it's very close to Germany and he doesn't feel much has changed since he moved here. Except for the fact that the people are a little different in Belgium from Germany, he doesn't feel as if he would not be at home. He said he noticed that Belgians don't like to move out from their villages and they are little bit more closed than people in Germany, but he said he understands it and respects it, although he wouldn't want to do likewise himself. He said however that making friends was very easy for him whether they were Belgians or other international students.

In addition, he mentioned he already had Belgian friends before coming to Belgium, he said that he found Belgium people very friendly and it was so easy to be friends with them.

Lukas experience with grocery shopping in Belgium is a story in itself. Lukas started to do his grocery shopping in Belgium at Carrefour and Aldi. He goes twice a week to the shops for grocery shopping.

He buys the basic things from Aldi, like spaghetti, cheese and salami and does not know any of the brands because they are anyway unknown at Aldi. He does not really care for the brand name if he is buying at Aldi. He would not do so in Germany either. However he noticed that the milk product at Aldi Belgium is different from the one they sell in Germany, but it is hard for him to name and remind unpopular brands. Aldi brands are never appealing, take for instance River Cola: this does not sound identical in value to the original Coca Cola. Lukas buys fruits and vegetables from Carrefour because they are of better quality. When we asked Lukas about the brands at Carrefour, he answered that he mainly buys the “Carrefour” brand and he thinks it’s a good brand as somewhat less expensive. He also knows Knorr, Coca Cola and good beer brands like Leffe, Duvel, Cristal, and Jupiler .

Lukas has a different shopping pattern as in Germany. Even though Lukas knows Aldi since it is a German supermarket chain, but he did not really shop there while in Germany. At home, he always tried to go to better supermarkets with higher quality products. But since it is close to his house in Belgium, he anyway goes shopping there now. Lukas also tried to find other stores than Aldi and Carrefour, like Delhaize but he found them situated far away and expensive. So he didn’t go there again after a first visit. One other store he tried somewhat more is Spar which he liked because they had typical German bread. But unfortunately it is also far from his house. Thus he only goes there whenever he feels like having a typical German bread, which is not that often.

After one month, Lukas is still at the point of experimenting with brands. He is still comparing prices and the quality of the brands. Each time he goes for grocery shopping to one of the mentioned shops he tries to buy something new to figure out the things he really likes before developing a “fixed system” and before starting to write lists for his grocery shopping.

Lukas experience with fashion shopping was not big. He only visited a sportsware store in Hasselt and he thought it was very expensive compared to Germany. He did not buy anything and he is not planning to go there again.

And when he was asked about the closing and opening times for the stores in general he said it was all the same as in Germany. Thus this factor did not really affect his shopping pattern or his daily routine at all.

Lukas 2

Lukas has been in Belgium for 3 months now and as he mentioned in the first interview he had quit a good idea about the country since it is not his first visit.

When Lukas was asked about the social and the student life in Belgium, he said Belgian people are so friendly he was able to make Belgian friends and international friends as well in no time. Lukas added that it was great having Belgian friend because they helped him in many things. They helped him for example in finding out how to travel the cheapest way and they recommended very nice places for him to visit, and he was very happy with that. Since Lukas came to Belgium life has become a bit more relaxed to him as he attended more parties and travelled more, but on the other hand he visited the gym and studied less.

As for his grocery shopping, nothing much has changed since the first interview for grocery Lukas. He still shops at Aldi and Carrefour, usually twice a week. Lukas said that even though he tried many other grocery stores since the past interview but he stuck to Aldi and Carrefour in the end. In addition to that he thinks that the closing and opening time in Belgium are somewhat shorter than in Germany, which changed his shopping pattern slightly. For example when he has classes late and cannot go that day to the grocery shop because there is not enough time left for shopping after school, he will plan to shop either during the weekend or at a day that he does not have any classes.

When it comes to brands, Lukas was introduced to a number of brands that he did not know in Germany like Lotus Speculoos, Meli, Grimbergen, Materne and Pasha coffee. He started buying those products as soon as he tried them. When we asked him what brands he would go back to buy and use in Germany he said that most probably it would be the beers brands. He is going to go back and keep buying Grimbergen or Leffe.

When Lukas was asked about fashion shopping, he said that he never went shopping for clothes in Belgium, because he is staying only a short period of time and he took everything he needed with him from home. Consequently he never noticed the differences in fashion shopping between Germany and Belgium, but in his mind it is going to be quite similar because he did not notice such big differences between the two countries in general.

Interview Philip:
Part one and two

Philip 1

Philip is a 20 year old exchange student from Germany and it is the first time he is in Belgium. The reason he chose Belgium was because his university offered this exchange program in Belgium. Philip said that he did not know much about the country before coming here, except that he knew it was famous for its chocolate and beer.

Only upon arrival, he started realizing that there are not so many cultural differences between the Belgian and the German people. After living a month in Belgium and going to university here, Philip noticed that student life in Belgium however is different from the one in Germany. He mentioned during the interview that there are more student clubs in Hasselt and that the proposed events are more organized than at home, something he really liked. Philip thinks this is due to the difference in students numbers between his university in Germany and the university of Hasselt. He said that because in Hasselt everything is smaller, all the students know each other better and they are closer to one another, which enables them to be better organized and to work in harmony when planning and organizing good events and activities for the students. Philip also thinks people in Belgian are more loyal to their community as most of the students in Hasselt come from Hasselt, while in Germany students are coming from everywhere, which makes it harder to work smoothly together. For those reason Philip is having a more active student life in Belgium: he goes to more parties and he participates in more student activities because it is nicer and more fun in Belgium. Philip said it was quite easy to make friends here in Belgium. He thinks Belgian people are super friendly and Belgian students are not complicated to deal with and become friends with.

Philip said that his daily routine did not change much since he came to Belgium even though the environment is different because he used to live in a big city in Bavaria and Hasselt is only a small town. In his city there are more shopping options than in Hasselt. He does his grocery shopping at Aldi in Belgium because it is nearby where he lives and products are cheap. Philip does his grocery shopping daily as everyday he decides what he wants to eat or cook, and then he goes to the Aldi shop and buys there what he needs that day. Philip said that he started to buy instant coffee here in Belgium because he does not have a coffee machine which he had in Germany but he did not like the taste of the coffee that much. So he switched to tea since he arrived to Belgium.

Philip did not like to go shopping at Aldi in Germany because the shop does not offer any popular brands. At home he always went to big supermarkets where he could find the well known brands like Coca Cola for example. The situation for him is different here in Belgium: Aldi is closest to his home and offer a very cheap price for most products. So he shops there and does not care about popular brands much anymore.

The reason is that he will only stay in Belgium for six months, which is only a short period and trying out new brands and buying them is thus not a priority. His actual situation is temporary. One thing Philip found strange is that there are not many bookstores in Belgium, certainly not compared to Germany and moreover he thinks the variety of the books they sell is rather limited as well. Since he likes reading very much it was somewhat frustrating that he couldn't buy new books in Belgium and thus can read less here.

Philip 2:

Philip has been in Belgium for two months and twenty days, and as he has mentioned before this was his first time that he visits Belgium.

When Philip was asked about grocery shopping he said that he still shops at Aldi, even though he tried Carrefour as well. This grocery store is new to him because there is no Carrefour in Germany. He also started shopping at Aldi when only when he arrived to Belgium. Some of the factors he mentioned that kept him shopping at Aldi are that offer competitive prices and it is very close to his place. And he said shopping in a place like Aldi is new to him because usually in Germany he always looks for a big chain store to buy from since they are the ones that offer all the popular brands that he needs.

When Philip was asked if he was introduced to new brands in Belgium he said: "Axe & Sony are the only ones that come to my mind. As far as I buy mainly food that is mostly distributed under other brand names here". He does not think that he is not going to take some Belgium shopping habits back home to Germany and buy the same things as here since his grocery shopping experience here was not brand oriented at all.

Philip said that in Germany closing and opening times are more convenient. You can go shopping at later hours, but since he likes to shop in the morning the difference in opening and closing times did not really affect him during holidays, but much more during his stay here as since he shops almost every day. He found it a little bit inconvenient that on Sunday the stores are closed and also having classes all day does not give much time for shopping because the shops are closed by the time he is done with his classes. This where he felt the difference between living in a big city and a small town as Hasselt.

When Philip was asked for the second time about fashion shopping he said that he never tried going out to buy clothes from Belgium, since he shops for clothes only three to four times a year. As he is staying for only six months in Belgium he never needed to go on a fashion shopping tour because he brought everything he needed with him. In addition to that he is able to go back to Germany on occasions. So if he really needs something he is going to get it from home.

When Philip was asked if he changed any habits since he arrived to Belgium he said: “ It didn’t change a lot. I don’t have the mass of shopping possibilities here that I’m used to at home, so I spend less time by looking through shops and supplies. The daily routine is except from that quite similar. The basic change is the lack of shopping possibilities”. When Philip was asked about how he feels about the shopping experience in general in Belgium he said: “Quite normal and what I’m used to. A remarkable exception is these “draw a number and wait”-systems that I only know from administrative offices and the train service counters”.

Philip’s social life here in Belgium is quite acceptable. it was quite easy to make Belgian and international friends from the first few days onwards. He mentioned that the university made it easier for him to get to know people because they organize a lot of events for foreign students who come for the exchange program, which made his experience very nice and it was very easy for him to visit other cities and travel around because his Belgian friends helped a lot in that matter.

Interview Sinja

This interview was with a German girl, called Sinja. Sinja completed her bachelor degree in International Business in Germany and decided to finish her Masters in something related to BtB, sales and logistics. Coming to Belgium to finish her Masters wasn't actually her first choice as she applied for a university in Sweden first, but didn't get accepted. After this, she found a Master of Management program at Hasselt University. The program was not very appealing to her as it was in management, but when she found out that she could specialize in marketing and that the duration of the program was only one year, she decided to go for it anyway.

Sinja experienced a couple of disappointments since arriving in Belgium for Masters program. Her first disappointment was that the program was not exactly what she expected it to be like. As I mentioned earlier she was interested in B2B sales and logistics, but the program barely focused on those topics, which made her think that the program was not really situated at Masters' level and not really serious. But her dissatisfaction did not only situate at the level of the program or the professors, it were the students as well. In Sinja's opinion, the students did not really make the best out of this program or out of the assignments they had to do. They just did what was expected from them, nothing more. In Sinja's eyes, this is due to the variety of people inscribed in the program and to the fact that they are not all because on the same bachelor level. According to her it is easier to get a bachelor degree in some countries than others. Her colleagues, as she mentioned, came from different backgrounds and cultures, which meant that they had different working styles to the one she had, and because of that she was really frustrated first, because she had to work in groups and thought that the only right way to work and get good results was her way. After a while she learned to tolerate and work with others and lowered her standards partially.

Sinja thinks Belgium is not really different from German. She experienced problems finding a room in Belgium before arriving because nobody replied to her emails and few people spoke English on the phone. In the end it worked out for her and she found a place to stay. Knowing to get her way around in Belgium however was something easy for her as she was familiar with how most things go in the country as she didn't really perceive many differences with Germany. She mentioned that when being in an to her unknown city in Germany, not knowing where the bus would go would be an as anxious experience as in Belgium. She explained that she likes exploring a lot by travel and by living abroad for a couple of years in different countries and that this previous experience made it easier for her to adapt to living in new places faster.

Due to the small difference she observed between Belgium and Germany, Sinja stressed that her shopping behavior did not really change much in Belgium. The environment around her

offered the same stores and products as at home. She mentioned however that she does her grocery shopping at Carrefour and Aldi only because these were closest to her living place and because she did not want to try any new supermarkets other than those two.

Sinja described her shock when she walked into the Aldi store here in Belgium. She explained the differences between a German Aldi in the South and North of the country, mentioning that the one in the South is better. But even the Aldi in the North of Germany is much better than the one in Belgium. Aldi stores in Germany are more organized, the quality of the products is better and there are more brands to be found. So her shopping in a Belgian Aldi became quite different from the shopping behaviour in Germany: she walks in, does not look at the brands anymore and simply grabs what she wants and pays. Sinja also pointed out that she could not find everything she wanted in the Aldi shop here; She explicitly mentioned that for that reason, she also went shopping in Carrefour. She said buying the necessary basic products at Aldi and the more well-known brands at Carrefour, such as Coca Cola.

As she talked about her shopping experience in Carrefour, she described it as ‘completely different, it is something else, i love it “. She explained how she loves the French supermarkets because they have more products than the German ones, in addition to that sinja preference for the French supermarket might be influenced by the fact that she lived in Germany close to the French border and her living in France for a year and also speaking the French language. Specifically the big number of cheese types which brings her closer to the French culture is appealing to her, next to the variety of products that Carrefour offer, starting from food, paper to presents. She loves shopping at Carrefour because she can buy everything there.

Finally Sinja mention not to have experienced any trouble getting used to Belgian food since it was not very different the food she is used to back home. Tastes were not very different; everything was pretty much familiar to her.

Interview Suha:
Part one and two

Suha1

Suha is a Jordanian student doing her masters in MIS at UHasselt and has a background in engineering. Suha comes from a Christian religious background. She mentioned she had a Christian upbringing and went to a Christian school that is considered as one of the schools with a very good reputation in Jordan. Suha's school introduced her to an international exposure at a young age already since she her teachers were coming from England. Suha described her family as the above average family in Fordan in terms of openness of mind. One example she mentioned that she is totally comfortable with being in a relationship and be open about it with her close family, but not the extended family, unlike many of her friends that would not do that at all.

This stay was her first in Belgium, but she has visited other European countries before. Moreover she has traveled both alone and with her family on several holidays. We interviewed her about a month and a half after her arrival in Belgium and a month before her departure back to Jordan, about ten months later.

In the first interview, some aspects of acculturation were mentioned:

Why did Suha choose to come to Belgium? Suha had no background knowledge about the country. She choose Belgium because there is an agreement between her university in Jordan and the university of Hasselt. Suha did not like the country the first two weeks after she arrived. She really felt homesick, but after a short period of time she got gradually used to it. At the moment of the first interview, it is going her much better.

Suha asked some of her colleagues who visited Belgium earlier and were at UHasselt the year before about transportation and grocery shopping. The advice she got was to go do her shopping in Lidl and Aldi. So Suha initially went shopping from both of these grocery stores. Suha was not familiar with any Belgian brand at all and most of the things she bought during the first couple of weeks were microwavable food. Then she switched to making her own food at home as her excitement about trying new foods gradually faded away.

When I asked Suha if she tried other stores than the ones her friends recommended for her, she answered that she tried Carrefour only once and didn't go back again because most products were more expensive and the store was situated far away from where she lived

When Suha first walked into Aldi she really liked the place. It was convenient and cheap, but she said that for her it was a real obstacle that the ingredients were all indicated in Dutch on the packaging and that she was not familiar with any of the brands there at all. Suha decided to try Lidl, which she liked very much as well. She liked the layout of the store, the products and brands that they have were more familiar to her, and she said she could find anything she wanted there.

Suha compared the two stores and when asked whether she would make a change, she answered that she would alter the whole store organization and environment in Aldi, but she wouldn't change a thing about Lidl. Suha for the the time being (at the moment of the first interview) thus decided to do all of her shopping at Lidl even though it is further away than Aldi. She is willing to compromise efforts and efficiency (short distance) for better quality.

When suha was asked about Belgian brands, she said that she was not familiar with the names of the brands. She buys a product and if she likes it, she keeps going back for the same product with the same packaging every time. She is convinced that the language is a barrier for her to remember any name. An example she cited was that she liked one specific type of salami that she always buys, but she couldn't remember the brand name at all. Thus Suha doesn't care much for the brand anme, because she gets it by remembering the packaging of the salami and the colors of the packaging.

When suha was asked about her opinion of Belgian people and Belgian culture, she answered; that she heard from her Jordanian friends that Belgians are "cold" and very different than people from the Middle East culture Suha belongs to. They are closed in terms of making new friends or helping foreigners. After two months, she found that Belgian people are nice, she got help by Belgian people in a couple of incidents, but she didn't make any Belgian friends because she did not spend enough time in the country yet.

After spending two months in Belgium, Suha states that she learned to be more punctual and has changed few habits, like starting to go out for a bike ride or doing some gym instead of just sitting home. She was very encouraged when she saw other people doing sports, and she learned how to maintain it.

At the moment of the second interview, Suha has been in Belgium for 8 months. This interview brought the following aspects to light.

Suha 2

As mentioned before in the first interview this was Suha's first time in Belgium, but before that she had visited three other European countries for short periods. Suha had made sure before arriving in Belgium to ask her Jordanian student colleagues who came to Belgium before about all the details she needed to know, like where to go for grocery shopping and where to rent a student home.

We asked Suha whether she was influenced by the advice her Jordanian friends had given her and to what degree she was influenced by them she answered: " I remember my friends saying don't ever go to Carrefour. It is for rich people, and I never went there". Suha decided to follow their advice and to go to Aldi and Lidl.

As mentioned in the first interview, Suha tried Aldi because it has affordable products, but she could not find everything she wanted. Especially with regards to detergents she found Clorix in Lidl but not in Aldi. Thus Suha likes Lidl more than Aldi, but at the time being she shops from Aldi because it is closer to her place.

When Suha compared the grocery shopping experience in Jordan and Belgium, she said : " The grocery shopping experience in Jordan is more familiar to me. The brands are known. In Belgium everything is written in Dutch on the products and the names of the brands are in Dutch. This is a big barrier to know the brands and memorize the names". She also mentioned that she recognized one brand of chocolate chip cookies that she used to buy in Jordan, and she kept on buying it here as well. In general Suha said that when it comes to brands the language was the barrier that kept her away from remembering any brand names.

As for Suha's shopping pattern, she did not mind the difference in opening times of the stores between Belgium and Jordan. She said: "I am a morning person so I prefer doing my shopping in the morning." But she did mention that her younger brother is coming to Belgium and that he is not a morning person. He is going to have problems adapting to the time difference in shopping hours. In addition to that on sundays everything is closed in Belgium. This was something that was very inconvenient for Suha as well, as she usually shopped twice a week and she would like to shop during weekends.

Suha said that first couple of months in Belgium she was extremely influenced by other Jordanian friends in terms of where to live, where to shop, and where to go out, but the last three to four months she started her exploratory phase and she decided that she wanted to discover things on her own.

When Suha was asked why she was influenced by her Jordanian friends and whether this was because of the need to fit into the group or a feeling of belonging she said: “It happened naturally because we all lived close to each other, but when I first came here I was not planning to be friends with the Jordanians because I wanted to have a full European experience, but again language was a barrier for me. Moreover, it is easier to become friends with people that share your language and culture, for instance it is much easier to make jokes and have a laugh with the Jordanians than with other people”. Suha did not get along with Belgian people very well, and when she tried to communicate with them she felt that they were not really interested in her culture, but she really liked people from Eastern Europe and she became good friends with some students that came from East European countries because she felt their culture is closer to ours.

In the second interview we also asked some questions about fashion shopping:

Suha liked fashion shopping in Belgium more than in Jordan. She said: “The stores here have better collections and better quality than the same stores in Jordan”, Suha also mentioned that it is hard to shop from fashion stores in Belgium and wear these clothes in Jordan because the European life style is very different than the Jordanian one. She would not be able to use the clothes in Jordan.

But in general Suha liked the shopping experience in Belgium because it is an outdoor experience and does not take place in shopping malls like in Jordan, which made it more fun to shop here in Belgium.

When Suha was asked what advice she would give to her brother to start his experience in Belgium, she said: “I want to teach him the technical stuff like bank transfers, shopping, and paying the rent, but other than that I would tell him to go out and explore things by himself and to meet new people, without following others like I did”

Interview Vivien:
Part one and two

Vivien 1:

Vivien is a 23 year old student from Hungary doing her Majoring in Economics. She came to Belgium for six months as an exchange Masters student and has been here in Belgium for a month now.

This is the second time Vivien visits Belgium. She has been in Belgium before when she was at high school for a period of 5 days only but she still remembers the chocolate and the beer from her first visit. They are much better than the ones in Hungary. Vivien said that even though beer in Belgium is much more expensive than beer in Hungary, she started drinking more beer here because it tastes much better. Vivien mentioned that she got to know new Belgian beer brands, that she likes very much. Her favorite beer brands are Leffe, Kowak, and La Chouffe. Each time she goes out she will certainly order one of those three. Vivien added that she really likes the Belgian chocolate as well. She keeps trying many chocolate brands. She likes Cote d'Or and Leonidas most.

Vivien said that she always cooks her meals and eats at home because she does not like the taste of Belgian food because it is really different from the taste of Hungarian food: she always tries to look in the supermarkets for ingredients that will make the dishes she cooks closer to the Hungarian food. She said it is not exactly the same as in Hungary when she cook here, but it is close enough. Moreover she finds it very strange that Belgian people eat a lot of French fries and that it is very special for them. It exists in Hungary as well and it is not considered special at all. In Hungary people barely eat it at all. So she does not understand why it is a national dish in Belgium.

Vivien does her grocery shopping at Carrefour and Aldi, but she likes Carrefour more because it has everything. Moreover she knows Carrefour as a supermarket well as it exists in Hungary as well. As she described her preference for Carrefour: "I like Carrefour because it has all the normal known brands". Vivien likes the Carrefour brand and she thinks it has a good quality and it is cheaper. She also said that she found different brands at Carrefour in Belgium than the brands at Carrefour in Hungary. One of the brands that she started buying in Belgium is Barilla for pasta and Danao for milk and pudding that she did not find in Hungary. Vivien does not really like the shopping experience at Aldi because it is smaller and it is uncomfortable to shop and because they don't have popular brands. Anyway, occasionally she does some shopping at Aldi, namely when she wants to spend little money on grocery shopping. But most of the time she goes to Carrefour because the environment is much nicer to shop and it is big which makes it more fun for her to shop there. Vivien usually goes for grocery shopping twice a week, because during the weekends the shops are closed.

When Vivien was asked about her experience with fashion shopping in Belgium she said: “I personally don’t really like shopping that much and I brought everything that I need with me so I am not planning to shop for clothes in Belgium”. She also added that it is expensive here to buy clothes and she does not think that she can afford buying clothes from here, unlike in Hungary where she is able to buy at least one item a month if she needs too. In addition to that Vivien lived in Budapest which is the capital city and there exist a lot of shopping malls which are more comfortable for her to shop, than walking in a street and shopping outdoors. So it was not encouraging either for her to shop in Belgium.

Vivien found it very difficult to adapt to living in a small town like Hasselt. She said the transportation is a problem for her: she could not go to parties and stay late outside because she would never find a means of transportation to go back home. So she started to go less and less to parties and staying late outside, unlike in Budapest where she used to stay up till 3 in the morning and then take the streetcar or the night buses to go home. Moreover there is one thing that she does not like in Belgium is the bike: she hates riding a bike and since she came to Belgium she had to use it to go to some places and she is really having a difficulty adapting to it.

Vivien described the Belgian people as not exactly friendly to strangers, but she thinks they are nice and helpful when you ask, but unlike Hungarian people they complain about everything. Vivien mostly made friends with people from Brazil and East European countries. It was so easy for her to get to know them and be friends with them because they were closer to her culture, and she got to spend a lot of time with them because she took an intensive Dutch course with them when she first arrived to Belgium, which gave her the opportunity to meet international students and become friends with them.

Vivien 2

Vivien has been here in Belgium for three months now. In the second interview, Vivien seemed more excited and positive about her Belgian experience. She said: "I feel much happier now and more comfortable than I was when I first arrived to Belgium. I had trouble adapting to living in the country side and getting used to a small town since I used to live in a really big city like Budapest".

Vivien said that she thinks she is having a good time here in Belgium because she was able to make a lot of friends. That took her a while in the beginning. In addition to that Vivien said that she is more accepting now for the grocery shopping. She used to think that there were many strange products in the shops that she did not know and she did not feel comfortable trying out. Now she feels she is more open to other options. She also started to know her way around and knows more where she wants to go and how to get there easily. The transportation became less and less of an obstacle for her to move around.

Vivien said grocery shopping did not change much in the three month period. She is still shopping at Aldi and Carrefour, as she used to. The price of the products and the distance to the grocery store played a role in her choice as she mentioned. Her shopping behavior did not really change. She still buys the same chocolate she used to buy since she arrived and she goes shopping at the same times she used to go before.

When Vivien was asked about her fashion shopping, she said at some point she needed clothes and she had to go shopping for clothes in Belgium. She went to the city center in Hasselt and she was surprised that the prices are not as expensive as she had thought before. This was previously a factor that kept her away from visiting the shops for a while. But then again she had to go shopping and visited stores different stores. One of them was H&M and there were also some other local stores but she did not memorize their names. In general Vivien said that her fashion shopping experience was really positive and she added that comparing a small town like Hasselt in Belgium to Budapest in Hungary offers two major differences: some of the shops they have in Hasselt are not to be found in Hungary, but in a city like Budapest there are more shopping possibilities. Vivien added that one of the factors that made her shop more in Hasselt is that she noticed that the people their shop more. There are always people in the market buying things and after that they sit in a restaurant or have a drink, whether in the weekend or during the week. This was very encouraging to her to go and shop because it is for her not only the buying of the clothes that counts, but also the fun activity fashion shopping is to do.

When Vivien was asked about Belgian food, she said that she still does not like Belgian food in spite of trying a lot and many times at restaurants. It is not her taste. She also mentioned that there are other factors that play a role in this. The food is for instance so expensive if you want to get it from a restaurant and it's not worth what you pay for it. In Hungary she can get a better meal at a cheaper price. But cooking at home is also more convenient for Vivien because it is cheaper and it also tastes better than Belgian food.

When it comes her social life, Vivien said that she was able to make a lot of friends, as she also mentioned in the first interview. Most of her friends are international students because she thinks they are more open to others. She made only one real Belgian friend who comes from the French speaking part and is very friendly. The Belgians from Flanders however she worked with in group works are not her friends. Vivien tried to have good contacts with them but she said that as soon as the course is over and the work is done, they stop contacting you anymore. Vivien said that the reason why international students become friends more easily with each other than with the Belgians is because they have more in common. They all face the same barriers like language for example and they all share the same situation in which they all live abroad from their families and share the same excitement of being in a new place. This is something the Belgians don't have since it is their home country they are living in.

Vivien now goes to more parties. She says: "Having more friends made it easier for me to go to parties. This is unlike when I first came here and I was never excited to go anywhere because I did not know anyone. Moreover the transportation problem she mentioned before has vanished now. Knowing friends who have cars was more convenient for the international students to go and visit places and enabled staying up at night without worrying about how to go back home.

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