

I. Introduction

Why a book on Asian Pacific American Marketing?

THE ANSWER IS SIMPLE. Before, there was none. Now there is one. This is the first current resource that provides up-to-date information and insight on one of the most interesting and dynamic sectors of America's multi-ethnic market.

While a number of marketing texts, specifically several multicultural marketing books, explore the Asian Pacific American (APA) market as part of a broader explanation of minority markets in the U.S., there is currently no single book-length treatment of the APA market and the range of marketing opportunities it contains.

One result is that while many companies have African American and/or Hispanic American marketing programs, relatively few have marketing programs directed specifically at Asian Pacific Americans. Yet, for many marketers, these vibrant and affluent markets represent major opportunities – for the combined buying power of Asian Pacific Americans (an estimated \$500 million)¹ rivals that of these two larger groups, despite being significantly smaller than either in terms of population.

For many marketers, Asian Pacific Americans represent a key opportunity. Both demographically and geographically, Asian Pacific America is a dream target: young, upscale, extraordinarily well-educated and, in general, geographically concentrated. But though the demographics may be clear, this target market is far less well-understood psychographically – a shortcoming this book intends to remedy.

A Different Approach/A Different Result

For a variety of reasons, few marketers in the U.S. have much real knowledge about the Asian Pacific American market. In a few cases, this is due to lack of data, but in the main, it is lack of insight.

This is particularly true when marketers are exposed to table after table of demographics that offer little or no interpretation as to what those numbers really mean. As we move through this book, we hope to provide you with a different perspective – one that provides useful insights that will help you get to that common goal of all companies – an improved ROI.

What will make this book different from other currently available texts is a combination of what the book is and what it is not.

A Book for Marketers

First and foremost, this is a book for marketers. It is not a book on social services, civil rights or politics. While some of these issues will be brought up to illustrate points or help explain why the APA market reacts as it does, we do not take a stance on issues such as political representation, immigration, hate crimes or bilingualism. The arguments we'd make on social issues are not necessarily in line with good marketing principles, nor are they our area of expertise.

Second, this is a book to help marketers develop strategies – not just tactics. In our experience, many texts designed to help explain minority markets provide plenty of demographic tables but few cultural cues. They do not address how to *think* about the marketplace, but rather take a “How-to” book approach.

For example, we've seen one book that lists “dos and don'ts” for the market that cite stereotypical generalities as gospel (e.g. “Koreans are hard workers²,” “ When advertising and promoting to Filipinos, it's a good idea to incorporate humor³,” “the color red is good luck⁴”). They also offer as insight obvious statements that are true in any category such as “word of mouth is important⁵.”

Actionable Insights

One of the key stumbling blocks in allowing more marketers to reach out to the APA target has been a lack of both qualitative *and* quantitative data. The insights we provide are all based on both types of data, in a combination of both primary and secondary research, done within and outside of the target sphere. In helping you develop actionable insights, we focus well beyond demographic segmentation and discuss cultural clustering, perceptual mapping and profiling, as well as other tools to provide a comprehensive meta-analysis of the APA market, giving a holistic description. Our goal is to allow for an understanding of the primary drivers that explain marketing behaviors and how these behaviors play out in the American context, along with practical, efficient means to implement your marketing plans.

An American Perspective

This is a book on Asian Pacific *American* marketing, not *Asian* marketing. To some, this may not seem like much of a distinction, but the change in emphasis defines the target in immigrant terms with immigrant issues. Worse yet, it overemphasizes marketing influences related to what's going on on the Asian continent, rather than here in America.

Moreover, it ignores the very different situation of long-term Americans, particularly those of Chinese, Filipino and Japanese ancestry whose families may have been in the U.S. for over five generations.



Author's family – 19th Century.



Author's family – 21st Century.

This misuse is pervasive. At an APA marketing conference we attended in Chicago, presenters were interchangeably using APA with Asian while focusing predominantly on recent immigrant topics. You will find that even though this group represents a wide range of heritages, they are – at their heart – very American. For one of the authors, heritage aside, home is not Hiroshima, Japan, but the North Shore of Chicago.

What's more, as you will see, a common set of strategies is having a continual positive impact on this market – one that grows with each generation.

Multi-Cultural? Not Exactly

This is not a book on multi-cultural marketing. While both of the authors have considerable experience with African American and Hispanic American markets, we are not experts in those fields, nor is multi-culturalism the focus of the book. We may use corollaries from other marketers in these areas to illustrate points, but not comment on how they are accepted in other target markets.

For some marketers wishing to enter ethnic markets, this will make the process slightly more difficult, as the conventional wisdom and common practice is to lump all ethnic markets under on banner of “Multi-cultural,” treat them the same (with exceptions for language and skin color) and allocate marketing support based on population size. Our goal is not to take away support for any particular target, but rather to shine a light on overlooked opportunities.

A True Mass Market

That said, this is not a book for separatists. Within the APA market, the usual rhetoric is that the market is too complex for anyone but “experts” who are ethnically born to the market to understand (“It takes a Chinese person to understand Chinese people,” etc.). Taken

to the logical extreme, this means all marketing programs must be segmented beyond all massification into discrete sub-units, and, as a result, only local level programs are efficient. “To this, we politely say, ‘Bunk!’”

Under this reasoning, no person who is not of Hispanic heritage can ever hope to become a Hispanic marketing expert, there is no such thing as a Gay/Lesbian market, and only New Yorkers are interested in the Yankees.

Along the way, we hope to eliminate some of these marketing myths. While we make no claim that the APA market is completely homogeneous, you will see that there are sufficient commonalities to examine the target as a *true mass market*, and one deserving the attention of many companies.

Some Brief Bits of Biography

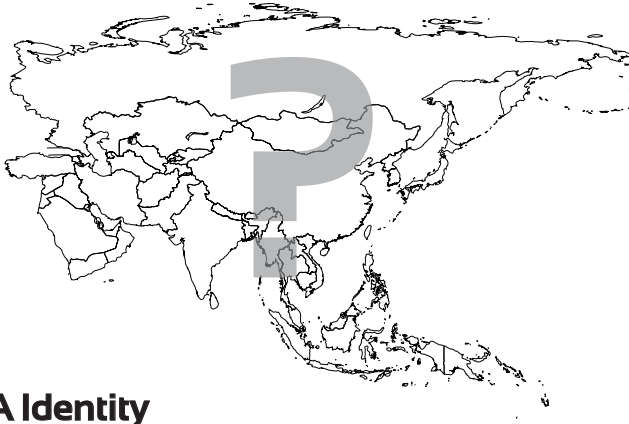
Perhaps our perspective is shaped by our personal background. You can read our business biographies later, but we think it’s appropriate to note that the authors represent a unique combination of professional, academic, community and ethnic background:

- over 25 years of both general market and APA market experience
- experience as a marketing practitioner and social scientist
- experience as a marketing practitioner and APA activist
- APA, not Asian, ethnic heritage

We believe it is a range of background and experience unique in the field and will result in a uniquely useful perspective.

A Brief Bit of Philosophy

Race makes people do crazy things – sometimes with the best of intentions. Ethnic targeting does not erase the need for good marketing principles. Rather, it is one more tool in a smart marketer’s skill set.



The APA Identity

Who are Asian Pacific Americans?

If we are to truly understand this group in *marketing* terms, which is the purpose of this book, we must think in terms of mass target marketing. Proponents of online or social media may flinch at this statement, but we'll address that later. While there are probably goods and services out there with a target market of a few hundred e.g. the latest Bentley Continental Flying Spur, most marketers must look at numbers as large as possible in order to maximize their sales potential and to get efficiencies of scale in their programs.

That said, just as marketers have created an Hispanic Marketplace that combines those of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Chilean and other backgrounds, so can marketers think in terms of a combined Asian Pacific American target.

In the following chapters, we will define APAs as anyone having origins on any part of the Asian landmass including the Indian subcontinent and Pacific Islands, but excluding the former Soviet Union and far western Asian countries such as Iran, which are more closely associated with the Middle East.

APA = Over Two Dozen Distinct Groups

If this is still too vague, the U.S. Census offers some clarity. They account for over two dozen different Asian and Pacific Islander groups.⁶

Asian Indian	Filipino	Malaysian
Bangladeshi	Hmong	Okinawan
Burmese	Indonesian	Pakistani
Cambodian	Japanese	Sri Lankan
Korean	Thai	Chinese
Laotian	Vietnamese	Fijian
Guamanian	Hawaiian	Palauan
Tahitian	Samoan	Tongan
Tibetan	Nepalese	Northern Mariana Islander

A few of these groups are quite small and, no surprise in a multi-ethnic place like America, many have a combination of Asian and other ethnic heritages – including the sister of the current President of the United States.



The US Census accounts for over two dozen different Asian and Pacific Islander groups.

Note: The 2000 Census was the first time that individuals could self-identify as more than one race or ethnicity. This presents a difficult situation in that we need to avoid double- or triple-counting multiracial individuals. However, for the purposes of this book, we will gladly include anyone who self-identifies as even part APA, with none of the social judgments of being “one of us” or not being “APA enough.”

There will be a major update when 2010 Census data becomes available – we predict some fairly dramatic and interesting results.

APA – Why use the term?

When immigrants from any country have come to the United States, they identified themselves as part of their country of origin e.g. Irish, Japanese, Russian, Brazilian etc. and not part of a larger group, at least until they became citizens. Thereafter they were proud to be American as apple pie, sometimes even denouncing their national heritage. Or, in the case of German and Japanese Americans, literally going to war. As the Civil Rights Movements of the 20th century grew, members of different ethnic/gender/religious groups saw the advantages of working together, or at least claiming to work together, as a mass group in order to effect social change through political or economic power.

As with African Americans and Hispanic Americans, so too, has a mass label been given to persons of Asian ancestry. In this text, we will use the term Asian Pacific American or the APA acronym for all references to this group. This term is distinctive in several ways:

- It clearly separates persons of Asian ancestry living in the United States from those who are “just visiting,” such as students and Asian business executives. That is, an Asian vs. an Asian American. One of the authors, born and bred in Chicago is an Asian Pacific American. His friend from Nippon Steel, here on a three-year work visa is an Asian living in America.

- It provides an inclusive term for all persons of Asian or Pacific Islander heritage, while excluding Western Asians e.g. Iranians etc., as described above.
- It recognizes other unique Pacific ethnic heritages. For the first time in 2000, the U.S. Census allowed people to identify themselves as Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (NHPI) separately from Asian Americans. The justification for this was that many of those claiming NHPI background had a dramatically different socio-economic experience from the rest of Asian Americans. However, for the purposes of this book, APA was chosen to be as inclusive as possible.
- It avoids the also inclusive term “Oriental” that is at once antiquated, racist, ethnocentric, non-specific, without an appropriate counterpart, and used more for inanimate objects. Terms and cultural values evolve – today, this term is, quite frankly, distasteful to a great many APAs.
- APA is “acceptable” to all. While not universally embraced, neither is it shunned by any particular group to any great degree. Just as some Hispanic Americans may prefer Latino and those of African ancestry may prefer Black or Afro-American. Hispanic and African American seem to be acceptable to the vast majority of Americans. So too, will we use APA as the accepted description.

Finally, it just takes too darn long to write Asian Pacific American every time we use it. From now on, APA.

Understanding the APA Opportunity

By offering new insights into the APA population, we hope to help you understand the APA opportunity with an eye to entering or expanding the marketplace for your company.

Here are some of the things we will provide in the following chapters:

- the most complete demographic and psychographic profile on APAs created to date, most from readily available secondary data sources
- a view of why your company probably does not have an APA-targeted marketing program in place, and a quick exercise on what you might be missing
- a short U.S. history lesson on APAs and the impact of sociopolitical movements on the APA population
- a short treatise on ethnic marketing in general and why marketers cannot take a cookie cutter approach to developing APA marketing plans
- a unique approach to understanding and sorting your way through APA subcultures
- a new paradigm for thinking about the APA marketplace that simplifies the complexities and offers a clear, concise approach to address the target
- an understanding of the huge non-APA crossover opportunity
- a fresh approach to reaching APAs via mass media, events, and organizations

Cultural Considerations

Throughout this book we will offer “Cultural Considerations” – short essays, lists and ruminations on the state of APA culture, some of the forces that affect it, and how it’s manifested in the marketplace. We think they’re both entertaining and instructive.

Cultural Considerations: A conversation with an APA

A conversation between an average APA and an “American.”

American: *Your English is so good! Where did you learn to speak so well?*

APA: *Right here.*

American: *Where are you originally from?*

APA: *Chicago.*

American: *No, I mean where are your parents from?*

APA: *Southern California.*

American: *No, I mean where were they born?*

APA: *Southern California.*

The "American" walks away thinking the APA is a jerk who's just being difficult. In actuality, what's difficult is the inescapable feeling by the APA that he or she is not being taken seriously as an American, not just as an American citizen, but as an American.

Is this any different and should it not provoke the same outrage as when someone says of a Black person, "He speaks so well"?

Comedian Chris Rock riffs:

"Colin Powell could never have been president. The best thing white people could ever say about him was, 'He speaks so well. He is so well spoken.'

'Speaks well' is not a compliment. Why would people say that to Colin Powell? Did he have a stroke? He's a f@#\$ing educated man. What did people expect him to sound like?"

A Simple Idea

This book has been built upon a simple idea. The idea is that every successful marketing plan or program, whether targeted towards an ethnic group or not, is based upon some universal marketing principles. There is nothing new to this.

What is new is how we will strip away extraneous noise and misinformation to help companies see this multi-faceted segment with the kind of clarity marketers need to identify opportunities and make good decisions.

With that in mind, you are about to embark upon an exciting marketing journey – one that takes you into the heart of 14 million⁸ hard-working Americans with money to invest and spend.

It will be simultaneously familiar and brand new, as you discover solid gold nuggets of opportunity scattered across the American landscape.

Chapter by chapter, we'll show you where they are, how they got

there and, with the addition of your own insight and marketing skill, how to make the most of this powerful market – Asian Pacific Americans. APA.