Consumer multiculturation in multicultural marketplaces: Mexican immigrants' responses to the global consumer culture construction of Tex-Mex as Mexican food

Abstract

This study examines the consumer multiculturation of Mexican immigrants in the context of their food consumption practices in the UK multicultural marketplace. Adopting a qualitative methodology involving interviews and participant observation allows participants to share their responses to global consumer culture constructions that equate Tex-Mex with 'authentic' Mexican food culture. Focusing on situated, dynamic interactions among multiple cultural elements – consumers, brands, marketing ideology - within multicultural marketplaces our research contributes to the theoretical development of consumer multiculturation by: (1) broadening the concept to embrace the intercultural dynamics of production (specifically crafting); (2) conceptualising creolisation cooking practices as a contextually contingent creative, productive and tangible means through which immigrant consumers exercise agency during consumer multiculturation; and (3) identifying clarifying practices that translate immigrant consumers' home food culture for others, simultaneously problematising the cultural meanings of globalised foreign/ethnic food brands. We conclude the paper by discussing the implications for cultural branding strategy.

Keywords: clarifying practices, consumer multiculturation, craft consumption, creolisation cooking practices, global consumer culture, multicultural marketplaces

1 Introduction

The contemporary marketplace is increasingly multicultural (Cruz, Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2018; Demangeot, Broderick & Craig, 2015; Dey et al., 2019; Kipnis, Broderick & Demangeot, 2014; Kipnis, Demangeot, Pullig, & Broderick, 2019), a circumstance that invites questions regarding traditional theorisations of consumer acculturation. Not least of these relates to the increasingly widely challenged assumption that consumer acculturation can best be understood at the locus of only two cultures; host culture and immigrant culture (Askegaard, Arnould, & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Cappellini & Yen, 2013; Dey et al., 2019; Wamwara-Mbugua, Cornwell & Boller, 2008). In a detailed conceptual paper, Kipnis et al. (2014) argue for the need to extend acculturation theory so as to be able to take account of the increased complexity of cultural factors within multicultural marketplaces. They accomplish this by developing the concept of 'consumer multiculturation' to capture the notion that both native and immigrant consumers alike "may develop affiliations with one, two or multiple cultures resulting in various types of cultural identities" (2014, p.233). This paper seeks to contribute to the theoretical development of consumer multiculturation in the context of multicultural marketplaces by contributing an anti-essentialist cultural perspective in which contingency, heterogeneity, creativity and crafting foreground cultural adaptation. This is achieved through empirical analysis of the food consumption practices of Mexican immigrants as they have moved from their home country of Mexico to settle temporarily within a number of different multicultural societies including the UK. In so doing these immigrant consumers have navigated a range of multicultural marketplaces within which they encounter the common misconception, promulgated by global food brands, such as Old El Paso, that Tex-Mex branded food is 'authentically' Mexican.

Food is considered to be an appropriate focus for a study of consumer multiculturation in multicultural settings since it is an important daily consumption activity that is culture-bound (Cleveland et al., 2016), and charged with symbolism (Chytkova, 2011). Moreover the symbolic meanings of food may also be contingent on the cultural context in which it is consumed (Bardhi, Ostberg & Bengtsson, 2010). With the development of global consumer culture, ethnic food products and brands have emerged that may no longer be perceived as culturally specific brands (Guzmán & Paswan, 2009). At the same time, in the contemporary "global consumptionscape" some international cuisines "risk becoming caricatures of their original renditions" (Bardhi et al., 2010, p. 134), a circumstance that might well be the case for Tex-Mex (an abbreviation of Texas-Mexico) food products.

The origin of Tex-Mex as a social category can be traced to the geographical region of the American Southwest from Texas to California, an area historically colonised by Hispanic peoples of various kinds. Following the war between Mexico and America in the 19th century the area became part of the USA, and further immigration during the 20th century led to a wide range of disparate cultural influences in the region (Wheaton & Carroll, 2017). According to Wheaton and Carroll, Tex-Mex food is a distinctive type of food that originated in Hispanic culture and can be seen as a "continuation of Mexico's long tradition of mestizaje, mixing cultures" (2017, p. 153). As the name suggests Tex-Mex is a fusion of American and Mexican food cultures. However, deliberate strategies from global restaurant chains and Tex-Mex food brands available in supermarkets across the world have helped in the globalisation of Tex-Mex food, furthering what Pilcher (2009) has argued is a worldwide misconception of this specific creolized food type as being typically Mexican. That is to say, in the context of global consumer culture, and in countries such as the UK, many (non-Mexican) consumers believe that Tex-Mex is actually 'authentic Mexican food.' In this

study, we unfold the contingency and complexity of cultural meanings in multicultural marketplaces; as an example, for Mexican immigrant consumers in the UK the issue is not Tex-Mex cuisine as a regional variation of Mexican cuisine, but rather the marketing ideology underpinning Tex-Mex food brands outside of Mexico. They consider these brands to be at odds with both this specific regional cuisine as well as Mexican cuisine as a general concept. The heterogeneity underpinning the latter is temporarily 'reduced' by the Mexican participants in this study through reference to 'distinctive' regional dishes, such as the 'tamales' and the quintessential Mexican taco with soft 'tortillas', among others, which serve to represent typical Mexican food culture for many Mexican immigrant consumers regardless of the region in Mexico where they are from.

Informed by the theoretical work of Demangeot et al. (2015, p119), our study explores consumer multiculturation from the perspective of "situated, dynamic interactions" among multiple cultural elements – consumers, brands, marketing ideology - within multicultural marketplaces. In a comprehensive evaluation and critique of key articles in the consumer acculturation literature, Luedicke (2011) suggests that consumer researchers should consider not only "how and why migrant and local consumers adopt to changing cultural meanings and consumption practices but also how they mutually affect these meanings and practices under consideration of their specific cultural relations" (p.236). Taking heed of these arguments, in the present study we therefore concentrate analysis on the complex situated dynamic interactions, practices and meaning-making processes comprising the multiculturation of Mexican immigrants in the context of their food consumption practices in the UK multicultural marketplace, focusing in particular on their experiences of and responses to Tex-Mex food brands. In so doing we are guided by the following research questions; firstly, how do immigrant consumers affect cultural meanings and consumption

practices in relation to food and food brands within multicultural marketplaces? Secondly, what are the ramifications of this as far as the cultural heterogeneity of multicultural marketplaces? And thirdly, what are the implications for marketing practice in respect of cultural branding? As we shall see, our research shines a light on the complex intercultural dynamics which give rise to the plurality of cultural meanings animating local, foreign and global food cultures in multicultural marketplaces, through three different practices performed by immigrant consumers; (1) varied engagements with globalised branded versions of their home food culture, (2) resistance to and countering of these branding ideologies by creatively crafting their own foods and (3) (re-)education of others in respect of their home food culture. These findings are important for marketers because, as Demangeot et al. (2015, p133) suggest, "…the ability to sense intercultural dynamics and trends, may be a key component of market sensing."

The paper is organised as follows; the next section outlines briefly some of the key concepts and theoretical approaches to consumer acculturation, consumer multiculturation, and the complex cultural dynamics and meaning-making processes that together constitute the cultural heterogeneity of multicultural marketplaces, before describing the materials and methods underpinning the present study. The subsequent section presents and analyses the findings, and the final section discusses the theoretical contributions and practical implications of our research.

2 Extending consumer acculturation theory

Recent studies in the field of marketing and consumer behaviour (Cross & Gilly, 2014; Cruz et al., 2018; Demangeot et al., 2015; Dey et al., 2019; Kipnis et al., 2014) draw attention to

the increasing complexity of consumer acculturation in the context of multicultural societies. Whilst Dey et al. (2019) identify culturally diverse identities among ethnic consumer communities, Kipnis et al. (2014) note that mainstream consumers are subject to similarly varied cultural experiences, including multiple 'foreign cultures' as well as global consumer culture. Thus mainstream and immigrant consumers alike develop composite identities through 'consumer multiculturation', a process which describes "changes in the cultural identification and consumer behaviours of individuals that happen when the individual, social group and/or society as a whole come into continuous contact with multiple cultures" (Kipnis et al., 2014, p. 243). Taken together, this body of research challenges taken for granted assumptions regarding the acculturation of relatively homogenous immigrant consumers into relatively homogenous national (host) cultures (Askegaard et al., 2005; Berry et al., 1989; Berry 1992; Oswald, 1999; Peñaloza, 1994). Acknowledging the increasing complexity of the consumer acculturation process and the concomitant heterogeneity of multicultural marketplaces, in this study we adopt Kipnis et al.'s (2014) concept of consumer multiculturation to frame our analysis of the food consumption practices of twenty Mexican immigrants, from a number of different states albeit mostly in the central region of Mexico, ten of whom have also lived in a number of different countries (between one and four) prior to now living in the UK.

Consumer multiculturation requires that we consider not just the mix of cultures among consumers but other important elements which together comprise the 'multicultural marketplace' (Kipnis et al., 2014). Demangeot et al. (2015) expand on Kipnis et al.'s (2014) initial conceptualisation, redefining the multicultural marketplace as a context in which "marketers, consumers, brands, ideologies and institutions of multiple cultures converge at one point of current interaction, whilst also being potentially connected to multiple cultures in

other localities" (2015, p. 122). Within multicultural marketplaces consumers from a variety of different cultures, including natives, who themselves may be second or third generation immigrants, recent immigrants, temporary visitors such as students and tourists, interact with one another as well as with brands from a variety of cultures, including both local, foreign and global brands, which in the context of our study includes the marketing ideology surrounding the concept of Tex-Mex food products and brands.

Dey et al.'s (2019) study on 'multi-directional acculturation' among ethnic consumer communities in the UK highlights the complex interactions within which consumers experience a range of different cultures, brands and ideologies in the culturally heterogeneous setting of London. Focusing in particular on the context of food consumption practices, their research identifies four multi-directional acculturation strategies; namely 'resonance', 'rarefaction', 'refrainment' and 'rebellion', all of which exhibit cultural hybridity at some level. Their findings thus corroborate those of Peñaloza (1994), Oswald (1999) and Askegaard et al. (2005) in respect of the complexity of identity, and challenge Berry's (1992) earlier conceptualisations of complete 'assimilation' and 'separation'. In the context of the present study, Dey et al.'s (2019) research demonstrates the insights to be gained through detailed empirical analysis of the meanings and practices within which ethnic food cultures intersect with global food cultures and brands during the process of consumer multiculturation.

Whilst Dey et al. (2019) focus their research on first and second generation immigrants and temporary visitors, studies conducted by Cappellini and Yen (2013), and Bardhi et al. (2010) focus on food consumption practices among temporary visitors only; the former based on a longitudinal study of Chinese students studying for a period of one year in the UK, and the

latter on American tourists during a ten day stay in China. These two studies shine further light on the process of consumer multiculturation in respect of the complex interrelationships between the changing cultural identification of consumers (Kipnis et al., 2014) and the dynamic and contingent constructions of the meanings of food over time and in different locations. Bardhi et al. (2010) adopt a relational semiotic perspective in which 'non-Chinese food' - whether this is food such as Pizza associated with a specific foreign culture (Kipnis et al., 2014) or food from fast food chains associated with global consumer culture - is used as a symbolic resource to categorise the (tourist) self from the (foreign) exotic other. While their findings resonate with those of Cappellini and Yen (2013) in that they find that food consumption practices and meanings change over time, in their study, the American tourists tended to eat only certain kinds of Chinese foods; those conforming most closely to their experience of Chinese food back home in the USA. That is to say, "creolized and commoditized versions of foreign food" (2010, p. 152), here Americanized versions of Chinese food. This raises an interesting question regarding Chinese consumers' perspectives on Americanised versions of their native cuisine, and connects with Dey et al.'s (2019) findings regarding Bangladeshi consumers' responses to Anglicised versions of Bangladeshi food in the UK. We suggest that in terms of consumer multiculturation, there is scope to develop our knowledge and understanding of consumers' experiences of and responses to the global consumer culture commoditisation of cuisines; a subject which we aim to explore by analysing Mexican consumers' responses to Tex-Mex food products and brands.

Bardhi et al.'s (2010) findings indicate that after only a couple of days in their short-term visit to China the food consumption practices of American tourists change and, similar to the Chinese students in Cappellini and Yen's (2013) study, they begin to frequent global fast food restaurants. However, an important point worthy of note here is that the American

tourists in Bardhi et al.'s (2010) study would not ordinarily consume these products and brands back home; rather it is precisely because these food items are widely available in the USA that in the context of China, they are relationally constructed as non-Chinese food and as such serve as a reminder of home rather than the fact that they form part of the everyday food consumption practices at home. Thus, in the context of a temporary stay in a foreign location, global fast foods normally conceived as unhealthy food items back home are now contingently constructed by American tourists in an unfamiliar geographical and cultural location as 'comfort food.'

Finally, Cruz and Buchanan-Oliver's (2015) study responds to Luedicke's (2011) call for researchers to recognise the mutual meaning-making processes and practices among migrant and local consumers, achieved by focusing on the dynamic interactions between Southeast Asian and Western cultures, from the perspective of 'reverse acculturation'. The authors define reverse acculturation as "any instance of intercultural practice which enables alternative types of intercultural translation beyond the dominant flows from mainstream to migrant cultures or from Western to Eastern cultures" (p. 443). Their analysis identifies the concept of 'bridging practices' as the mechanism by means of which reverse acculturation occurs. Bridging practices comprise three aspects; first 'articulations' which pave the way for reverse acculturation by fostering knowledge and understanding of the cultural practices of Southeast Asia among locals in the Western cultural context of New Zealand. Second, 'performances' which provide "embodied enactments of social activities involving material artefacts" (2015, p. 450), which help to make immigrant cultural practices tangible, for example cooking traditional Southeast Asian food for local New Zealanders. Finally, 'contestations' which embrace the tensions and anxieties experienced by immigrants during the process of these embodied enactments. Their study is insightful for drawing attention to

the active role that immigrants play in cultural meaning-making processes and for shining a light on some of the specific means, through which we can begin to understand the dynamic interactions comprising cultural changes in practice.

3 Materials and Methods

Within this study we apply a constructionist ontology, adopting an existential-phenomenological paradigm (Thompson, Locander, & Pollio, 1989) to guide our understanding of the food related consumption experiences and practices of our participants, at the same time our analysis takes into account the wider 'context of context' of these lived experiences and practices (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011). The findings discussed in this paper are a smaller part of a larger study regarding the consumer multiculturation of Mexican immigrants living in the UK.

3.1 Participant recruitment and data collection

Mexican participants residing in the UK were recruited to take part in the study using a snowball sampling technique, with individuals being approached mainly via social media networks. Data collection comprised a mix of semi-structured interviews with twenty participants, and participant observations.

An initial in-depth interview was conducted to understand their food related consumption practices as they were growing up in Mexico, after which a series of follow-up interviews were conducted over a thirteen month period from January 2018 to January 2019, mainly through videoconferencing applications, such as Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp. The follow-up interviews allowed us to understand how some of our participants' experiences and practices developed through time; over the course of the study, three of the participants

moved from the UK to settle in different countries. All interviews were voice recorded and transcribed verbatim, and then translated from Spanish into English by the first author. In addition to the interviews, participant observations were conducted with participants who were agreeable (8 participants in total), and the visits feasible. Field notes and photographs were taken during these visits. The participant observations included accompanying participants while food shopping, observing them cooking, as well as eating with them and their families. In addition, some of our participants also sent text messages and photographs of dishes cooked and eaten at other times, commenting on the whole process from where they had found ingredients through to their emotional experiences. Pseudonyms are used throughout to ensure the anonymity of participants.

3.2 Data analysis

Data collection was guided by data saturation (Bowen, 2008; Fusch & Ness, 2015) and abductive logic (Bajc, 2012; Scott & Garner, 2013). Data analysis commenced immediately after the initial in-depth interviews and continued throughout the subsequent data collection phases comprising follow-up interviews and participant observations. Using Nvivo software, preliminary analysis focused on the everyday food related experiences and practices of Mexican immigrants before arriving to live in the UK, whilst living in the UK, and for those who moved from the UK to a new country during the time of data collection, in the new host country. An important theme emerging from this preliminary analysis revolved around Mexican immigrants' responses to the concept of Tex-Mex food in the UK. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Spiggle, 1994) based on an existential phenomenological paradigm (Thompson et al., 1989) and abduction between the data, and key concepts from the literature discussed in the previous section of the paper above, led to the development of codes and themes. This iterative process was repeated, comparing findings from interviews

with those obtained during participant observations, and applying this constant comparative method until data saturation was reached (Bowen, 2008; Fusch & Ness, 2015). This process led to the identification of the following three practices; 'Varied engagements with Tex-Mex', 'Creolisation cooking practices to produce 'authentic' Mexican food', and 'Clarifying practices which serve to introduce non-Mexicans to 'authentic' Mexican cuisine', which are discussed in the next section.

4 Analysis of findings

The circumstances surrounding the global movements of the Mexican immigrants taking part in this study are very different to those in previous studies (Peñaloza, 1994; Saegert, Hoover, & Hilger, 1985; Wallendorf & Reilly, 1983) in which Mexican immigrants were moving to live in the USA, a geographical region and marketplace which is more similar to Mexico than that of the UK, owing largely to geographical proximity. In addition, many Mexican immigrants living in the USA crossed the border illegally looking for work, whereas here in the UK, the distance travelled and the rigorous immigration regulations effectively leads to quite different socio-economic profiles of Mexican immigrants, generally speaking. Thus all of the participants in this study would be described as being middle-class consumers, coming from a number of different states, albeit mainly from the central region of Mexico, and, importantly, most are living in binational households.

4.1 Varied engagements with Tex-Mex

All of the participants prepare, purchase and consume a wide range of food items that can be described as coming from several different 'foreign cultures' (Kipnis et al. 2014); for example, Italian pasta dishes, traditional British Sunday roast dinners, and Indian 'take-away' curries. Nonetheless, all participants commented upon how important it is for them to also

find and prepare Mexican food. However, when discussing the limited availability of Mexican food in the UK, the majority raised the subject of Tex-Mex food, expressing varying levels of engagement with Tex-Mex brands as a substitute for Mexican food, primarily because these brands do not conform to their understanding of 'authentic' Mexican cuisine; that is, the food they experienced back home in Mexico. An example of this is provided by the participant, Jacey. Jacey was born in central Mexico, where she lived until she moved to Switzerland to study gastronomy. After finishing her studies in Switzerland, Jacey married a Venezuelan man, moving to the UK eight years previous to our first interview with her. Discussing her views on 'so-called' Mexican food in the UK, Jacey told us:

> *"Something that upsets me a lot…is to go out to eat and see all the burrito bars claiming that it is Mexican food. I hate it because how they prepare the burritos is not Mexican… Honestly, I mean, if they want to call it a Mexican restaurant, they must do something 100% Mexican"*

Jacey will not frequent these restaurants because for her the burrito is not in fact a typical Mexican dish. Several researchers on food history have analysed the phenomenon of Tex-Mex food commenting upon the contested origin of some of its distinctive dishes, such as the burrito. While Pilcher (2009, 2012) asserts that the burrito was created somewhere near the border between Mexico and the United States, Wheaton and Carroll (2017) suggest that it was created in California, and a tourist guide mentions it was created on the other side of the border, in the Mexican state of Chihuahua (Planet et al., 2010). Whatever the origins of the burrito, many Mexicans raised in the central region of Mexico, do not recognise the burrito as

a typical Mexican dish. Thus, Jacey actively avoids the burrito and other Tex-Mex products when cooking Mexican food for her binational family.

A contrasting level of engagement with Tex-Mex is provided by Parisa, who was born in the west-central region of Mexico where she lived until she married a British man, and moved to live in the UK twenty-five years ago. Parisa and her husband have two children, although their children have now left home. When discussing the availability of Mexican food sold in British supermarkets and Tex-Mex restaurants, Parisa indicated that she had previously tried some Tex-Mex food products:

> *"...but I don't like them, they don't taste the same. Because I'm used to the Mexican flavour, I know that they don't taste as they should do and so I never buy them now, no…My children used to tell me: "Mummy, buy those tacos…" from Taco Bell…Once I bought them and I realised that it was a very hard tortilla, with the shape of a taco, I said: "Oh, no, no". I didn't like it. Everything fell out, the tortilla breaks apart, I thought: "no, no, I better cook my own things".*

Parisa indicates that she tried Tex-Mex food products when she first arrived in the UK and as a result of pressure from her children when they were younger, but in both instances she had been left feeling disappointed. While she did engage at some level, i.e. by giving in to her children's requests to eat Tex-Mex, she was careful to make a distinction between Tex-Mex and what she conceives as being 'authentic' Mexican food. She recounted that "now that my

daughter is at university, she is cooking Mexican food and sharing it with her friends too… she sent me this picture: "look, I made guacamole, it was delicious!""

A final example is provided by Layla, who was born and raised in central Mexico, and like Parisa she also left Mexico after marrying a British man. Layla had been living in the UK for three years at the time of our first interview, when she mentioned;

> *"My husband likes quesadillas but with flour tortillas from "Old El Paso" and with cheddar cheese...and he feels Mexican but I say no, it's like eating 'burritos'".*

Here we see Layla equating her husband's so-called Mexican food choices and practices with the burrito. Whilst Layla avoids Tex-Mex brands herself, she is willing to tolerate her husband's consumption of Tex-Mex brands. This example, together with that of Parisa (albeit that for Parisa it was for her binational children), might be described as a particular instance of Cross and Gilly's (2014) cultural compensatory mechanism within binational households whereby "the native spouse is cognizant of the immigrant spouse's needs, preferences and yearnings and consciously aims to fill this gap" (p. 133) by tolerating food items that the immigrant spouse favours so as to ensure that the family is exposed to both cultures. However, in the context of multicultural households situated in multicultural marketplaces, what we are witnessing here is a more complex version, and indeed inversion, of the cultural compensatory mechanism whereby the immigrant spouse is seen to tolerate the native spouse's desire to consume a global consumer culture version of food which is 'wrongly' equated with her 'foreign' (to him), native (to her) home food culture (Bardhi et al., 2010; Kipnis et al., 2014). In both examples, while Parisa and Layla tolerate the consumption of

Tex-Mex food among family members they make it clear to them that Tex-Mex is not the same as Mexican cuisine.

4.2 Creolisation cooking practices to craft 'authentic' Mexican food

Whilst tolerating Tex-Mex food brands to varying degrees for the sake of their non-Mexican and/or bicultural family members, participants do want to consume what they consider to be 'authentic' Mexican food from time to time, that is to say, the Mexican food items and dishes they were familiar with whilst growing up back home in Mexico. One example of how Mexican immigrants subjectively conceptualise 'authentic' Mexican food is provided by Mara. Mara was born and raised in central Mexico, is married to a Mexican man, and moved to the UK to be with her Mexican husband while he studied in the UK. Our first interview with Mara was conducted just two weeks after her arrival in the UK. During our third interview, eight months later, she mentioned that she was currently working in a restaurant that specialised in cooking burritos. She recounted that the owners of this restaurant were keen to know more about Mexican food. She explained that the owners had asked her;

> *"Do you know if the beans are right?" [Mexican style] in the pressure cooker and I say: "Well, yes, but you don't put…" for example, I remember that my grandmother, when I lived with my grandmother, she cooked them [the beans] in an earthern pot and she added "epazote" [Mexican herb] and onion and…well, and here, they don't have an earthern pot and, no, I mean, the beans are good in the pressure cooker and I add salt and I try that they taste…like the [Mexican] style but it's not the*

same, it lacks the herb, the epazote, the taste of the earthern pot...

From the above extract, the notion of what our participants define as 'authentic' Mexican food is clearly associated with particular ingredients as well as cooking styles. However, when attempting to produce 'authentic' Mexican dishes in the UK, the participants engage at different levels in re-appropriating (Askegaard & Eckhardt, 2012) ingredients from a variety of foreign cultures (Kipnis et al., 2014) in order to create Mexican food dishes which they consider to be more authentic than Tex-Mex food brands. For example, when accompanying Parisa whilst she was food shopping, we went to a Hindu food store where she purchased some ingredients to cook Mexican "tinga" [A Mexican dish prepared with chicken and tomato]. Parisa tried to ask for a "Jicama" [Mexican bulb] showing an image of the bulb to the Hindu shopkeeper. Parisa explained that she often finds alternative ingredients to cook Mexican dishes by going to ethnic food stores such as this one, to purchase ingredients from other food cultures using them in place of Mexican ingredients which she is unable to find in the UK. When we arrived back at her house, Parisa proceeded to demonstrate how she cooks Mexican tinga with a variety of ingredients from the Hindu store, as well as a Polish seasoning powder (Appendix A, image A.1). Later we sit down to eat with Parisa, and her British husband and binational daughter, both of whom commented on how much they appreciate the Mexican food that Parisa cooks for them.

Another example of creolisation in the creation of an 'authentic' Mexican dish is provided by Lena. Lena was born and raised in central Mexico, and left Mexico to work on a cruise ship, where she met her husband who is from Scotland. We first interviewed Lena eleven months after she had moved to the UK with her husband, wherein she recounted her experience of

trying to find a special meat cut to cook "milanesas" [A Mexican dish prepared with flattened meat]. After trying unsuccessfully to find this cut of meat at various supermarkets, Lena tried to explain to several local butchers how to cut the meat to satisfy her requirements, but to no avail;

> *"Here, no matter how much I explained to the butcher, no matter that you search for the right terms on the Internet, in a dictionary, or wherever you can, the butcher didn't understand, you can see that they are used to certain types of meat cuts, and that is all."*

Lena explained how she had tried to befriend her local butcher, as is usual in Mexico, so as to obtain the special meat cut she wanted but that this had not been successful. In the end, she and her husband resorted to purchasing a little hammer (Appendix A, image A.2), knives and other artefacts, which they used to flatten the meat cuts that she had obtained from a delivery service that specialised in meat cuts for sportspeople. During our third interview, she recounted;

> *…the cut of the steak they sent us…is thick, but it has no nerves. So what I did was to cut it, to flatten it and then with the typical recipe, with flour with eggs, and with the breadcrumbs that he bought…seasoning - it is Polish and the granules are very thick…with this, it was more or less the same [as in Mexico], with the hammer.*

Here we can appreciate that creolisation involves not just re-appropriating ingredients, but also utensils, from different cultures in order to create a Mexican dish which is as close as possible to what Lena was accustomed to making back home in Mexico. Afterwards, Lena went on to say how frequently she and her Scottish husband now enjoy being able to eat Mexican milanesas.

It is interesting to compare these findings to those of Dey et al. (2019) who describe how a Bangladeshi participant engages in mixing ingredients associated with traditional Bangladeshi cooking recipes with those from the cuisines of other cultures, so as to create a new creole dish, which would not be recognised in the food cultures of these different cultures. Comparing this to our study, in our empirical findings we identify a process of creolisation that, ironically, leads to the creation of dishes conceived as being more 'authentically' Mexican than Tex-Mex food products and brands. The creation of 'authentic' Mexican food by mixing ingredients, procedures and artefacts from a diversity of cultures through a process we have termed creolisation cooking practices contrasts with Askegaard et al.'s (2005) concept of 'hyperculture' whereby "hyped commercial elements are consumed as emblems of authentic culture" (2005, p. 166). In our study, elements from a variety of different foreign cultures are re-appropriated (Askegaard & Eckhardt, 2012) so as to create a more 'authentic' Mexican food culture experience than that provided by the global consumer culture branding of Tex-Mex. We could perhaps argue that what we are seeing here is a variation on Dey et al.'s (2019) resonance acculturation strategy, whereby elements from other food cultures seem to 'resonate' with Mexican food cultures, however as indicated above these elements from various other cultures are subsequently creatively transformed in preparation and cooking practices which ultimately render the final dishes as definitively Mexican, in the specific context of the UK at least. A better explanation for these findings

may be developed by drawing on the concept of the craft consumer as theorised by Campbell (2005), and to consider craft consumption as a phenomenon in conjunction with consumer multiculturation. A craft consumer acquires a variety of items from the marketplace, and "employs these as the 'raw materials' for the creation of a 'new' product, one that is typically intended for self consumption" (Campbell, 2002, p28). As discussed above, Mexican immigrants like to embrace a variety of foreign food cultures and cuisines, including global brands of foods, within their day to day consumption repertoires, thus happily "crossing boundaries" (Bardhi et al., 2010) to learn and engage with a variety of food cultures, including global consumer culture foods. By contrast creolisation cooking practices involve the creative production of the participants' own Mexican dishes. Campbell informs us that a craft consumer exercises "personal control" in terms of the creative production process, and as such "invests his or her personality or self into the object produced" (2005, p 27). This helps us to understand how and why the dishes produced through creolisation cooking practices are conceived as being 'authentically' Mexican; that is to say, through the "skill, knowledge, judgement, love and passion" (Campbell, 2005, p.27) that Mexican immigrant consumers invest in these creolisation cooking practices.

4.3 Clarifying practices to introduce non-Mexicans to 'authentic' Mexican cuisine

Some Mexican immigrants also introduce people outside of their families towards an appreciation of more 'authentic' Mexican food culture via processes, which we argue are akin to Cruz and Buchanan-Oliver's (2015) conception of 'reverse acculturation.' We will recall that reverse acculturation comprises; "any instance of intercultural practice which enables alternative types of intercultural translation beyond the dominant flows from mainstream to migrant cultures or from Western to Eastern cultures" (2015, p. 443). Acknowledging that Cruz and Buchanan-Oliver's (2015) focus is at the broadest level of culture in general still we

draw on their ideas to focus in particular on intercultural practices in relation to food culture. Contextualising the concept of reverse acculturation to focus specifically on food culture, and with the imperative of carving out a distinction between Mexican and Tex-Mex food culture, we label our contextualised form of reverse acculturation 'clarifying practices'. An example of this clarifying practice is provided by Isabella. Isabella was born in central Mexico where she lived until she married a German man, after which she moved to live first in Belgium, then France, then China, then Germany living several years in each country before moving to the UK where she has been living for five years. During a visit in which we observed her whilst she was cooking, we noticed that Isabella used many Mexican artefacts, such as a "tortillera" [a Mexican bowl for serving warm tortillas] (Appendix A, image A.3). During the course of our conversation, Isabella recounted how she had organised a "taquiza" [a Mexican party where only tacos are eaten] to celebrate the birthday of her daughter; she recalled;

> *"…I told them:[the party guests] 'put some beans and then you add either picadillo [mincemeat cooked Mexican style] or tinga [chicken cooked Mexican style], but not both [she laughed]; then you can add what you want, as side dish, lettuce, sour cream, cheese, whatever, and sauce'…they gobbled it up! … Since then, they can't stop talking about the Mexican night. My daughter told me: 'Mummy, they love you! Now they love you!' I accept the love."*

Isabella went on to say that, *"I told them: if you are expecting Tex-Mex, you are wrong!"*

Here we see Isabella employing articulations and performances (Cruz & Buchanan-Oliver, 2015) so as to translate Mexican food culture and practices for her daughter's non-Mexican friends. That is to say, she provides them with the opportunity to try out 'authentic' Mexican food, articulating Mexican food culture by way of explaining the different ingredients that make up a particular Mexican dish and how these items should be combined and eaten. We can appreciate the "embodied enactments" (Cruz & Buchanan-Oliver, 2015, p. 450) of the shared social practice of eating Mexican food on that particular day via the way in which Isabella demonstrated to us, through physical hand gestures in the air, how she had performed the process of combining the appropriate ingredients in front of her daughter's friends in order to show them by example how they should eat the food. Finally, we see evidence of Isabella's "mental and emotional engagements in the articulations and performances" (2015, p. 452) of clarifying practices, that is to say contestations, by virtue of her final exclamation regarding Tex-Mex food. The party guests have been introduced to and have acquired new knowledge that allows them to begin to appreciate the differences between Tex-Mex and 'authentic' Mexican food.

When Mexican immigrants have the opportunity, they not only seek to re-educate consumers from other cultures regarding their perceptions of Mexican food, they also try to convert their preferences towards eating more 'authentic' Mexican dishes thereby stimulating a wider interest in Mexican culture. In this regard, Macy, who was born and raised in central Mexico and has been living for four years in the UK with her Dominican Republic husband and a French man, whom she refers to as her flatmate, recounted;

> *"Yes, with my flatmate it was funny because, when we began to live together, he didn't eat anything Mexican… I sometimes*

cooked for the three of us [referring to her, her husband and the flatmate]…I began to introduce chilli from time to time…and other herbs, to which he was not used to, he began to like it as well, he began to add Valentina [Mexican brand of chilli sauce] to his dishes and so [she laughed]…now he likes it…the "Mexicanisation" was so intense that this is the second time he travels to Mexico, since we live together…now he even has a Mexican girlfriend! The process of becoming Mexican was successful"! [She laughed].

Using creolisation cooking practices to produce and then share 'authentic' Mexican food with others demonstrates how Mexican immigrants use clarifying practices as a means of rendering Mexican food culture "into that which is familiar and tangible" (Cruz & Buchanan-Oliver, 2015, p. 453) at the same time as also rendering the differences between Mexican and Tex-Mex food cultures tangible for non-Mexican consumers.

5 Discussion

This study examines the situated, dynamic interactions and complex meaning-making processes comprising the consumer multiculturation of Mexican immigrants in the context of their food consumption practices in the UK multicultural marketplace. This multicultural marketplace is infused with a global consumer culture construction that equates Tex-Mex food products and brands with typical Mexican food culture, a circumstance that many Mexican immigrants to the UK find intolerable. Empirical research suggests that Mexican immigrant consumers respond to this global marketing and branding ideology by employing a number of food related consumption practices in order to remedy this situation both for

themselves, their invariably multicultural families and for other non-Mexican consumers they come into contact with. In the first instance, Mexican immigrant consumers engage with Tex-Mex products and restaurants in various ways; whilst actively avoiding Tex-Mex food items themselves, they are often willing to tolerate the consumption of these foods among their family members so long as they are able to make the distinction between Tex-Mex food products and brands and typical Mexican food. Since typical Mexican food is difficult to find in the UK, Mexican immigrant consumers engage in creolisation cooking practices. These contextually contingent practices involve re-appropriating elements (Askegaard & Eckhardt, 2012) from a variety of other food cultures (local and foreign) to creatively produce their own 'authentic' versions of Mexican cuisine by investing something of themselves (skills, knowledge, judgement, love, passion) into the crafting (Campbell, 2005) of Mexican food for themselves and their families. Finally, Mexican immigrant consumers engage in a contextualised form of reverse acculturation (Cruz & Buchanan-Oliver, 2015) that we term 'clarifying practices', which facilitate a degree of familiarity with 'authentic' Mexican cuisine crafted by means of creolisation cooking practices, among family members and non-Mexican consumers alike. At the same time as facilitating familiarity with authentic Mexican cuisine, creolisation cooking practices operate to challenge global consumer culture constructions that equate Tex-Mex food brands with Mexican food. Thus, Mexican immigrant consumers engage in educating and even converting some family members and some non-Mexican consumers towards a preference for 'authentic' Mexican cuisine, as well as laying the foundations for them to begin to question the cultural meanings of Tex-Mex.

We began this research by asking how immigrant consumers affect cultural meanings and consumption practices in multicultural marketplaces and the ramifications of this as far as the cultural heterogeneity of these marketplaces. As outlined above, our findings illuminate the

active role of immigrant consumers in dynamic intercultural meaning-making processes both inside and outside of family settings, nested within the wider multicultural marketplace within which a plurality of cultural meanings can be seen to animate local, foreign and global foods, and food brands. Related to this, we introduce the notion of creolisation cooking practices as a contextually contingent, creative, productive and tangible means through which immigrant consumers, dissatisfied with the limited availability of 'typical' food items from their home food culture, exercise agency in the process of consumer multiculturation in multicultural marketplaces. Here, as Luedicke (2011) theorises, immigrant consumers are not simply adapting to the multicultural marketplace, rather by creatively crafting their own more 'authentic' home culture cuisine, these immigrant consumers expand the multicultural marketplace with tangible – material – cultural alternatives. Our research therefore contributes to the theoretical development of consumer multiculturation by demonstrating the need to broaden the concept beyond the intercultural dynamics of consumption and the contingent construction of symbolic meanings to *also* embrace the intercultural dynamics of production (specifically crafting) and the contingent construction of tangible material foreign culture. The tangible outcomes of creolisation cooking practices serve not just as symbolic but also as literal reminders of the security and comfort of home for immigrant consumers. They also add to the cultural heterogeneity of the UK multicultural marketplace by providing 'authentic' foreign culture alternatives to the globalised brand versions of foreign food, for those consumers 'in the know'. We also identify clarifying practices that simultateously operate to translate immigrant consumers' home food culture for others at the same time as creating a chink between these 'authentic' versions and globalised branded versions, thus problematising the cultural meanings of globalised foreign food products and brands; Tex-Mex in this context.

Our final research question leads us to consider the implications of our research for marketing practice, with regard to cultural branding strategies. Our analysis raises concerns in terms of the contemporary brand meanings associated with global food brands such as Tex-Mex. Wheaton and Carroll (2017) have identified how the meaning of Tex-Mex food has evolved from its distinctively creolised origins through to current global consumer culture constructions that equate Tex-Mex with authentic Mexican food in many countries of the world. Our research indicates the possibility of a growing resistance to this contemporary branding ideology among Mexican immigrant consumers – most definitely - but also potentially among members of their families and friends. The creolisation cooking practices and clarifying practices identified in this study, suggest that the time is ripe for the entrance of more 'typical' Mexican food products and brands into the UK multicultural marketplace to satisfy the needs of increasing numbers of Mexican immigrant consumers as well as discerning non-Mexican consumers alike. If consumers within multicultural marketplaces are becoming increasingly cosmopolitan in their consumption practices, as Dey et al. (2019) suggest, then we are likely to see increasing levels of cultural awareness in respect of foreign food cultures and a greater interest in foods perceived as being 'authentic' in the context of specific ethnic food cultures. Whilst we appreciate the difficulties surrounding the elusive concept of authenticity, nonetheless it is important for marketers to keep abreast of intercultural dynamics and trends so as to monitor consumers' changing perceptions of authenticity in relation to ethnic food cultures in multicultural marketplaces.

Practical implications of such market sensing for the marketing of Tex-Mex products and brands could lead to repositioning these brands as specifically Tex-Mex. That is to say, by reclaiming the creolised identity of this cuisine it would be possible to differentiate these brands from Mexican brands within an increasingly competitive and heterogeneous

multicultural marketplace, so as to maintain brand loyalty among their current target markets, which comprise a cultural mix of consumers, often with young families, without alienating those consumers who are also seeking an authentic Mexican food cultural experience.

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Appendix A. Images of elements from different food cultures

Image A.1. Polish seasoning powder used by Parisa to prepare Mexican tinga

Image A.2. Hammer used by Lena to prepare Mexican milanesas

Image A.3 Mexican ‘tortillera’ belonging to Isabella