

Cultural Diversity in Selected Australian Sports

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Author's Note – This is an adapted extract of a paper jointly authored with Richard Webber, visiting professor in the Department of Geography at University College London. A full version of the paper, titled 'A New Approach to Understanding Cultural Diversity in Australia', can be found at http://originsinfo.com.au/research.html#research_papers

Summary

In the sporting arena, Australia regularly out-performs countries with larger populations, and few would disagree that sport is a significant feature of Australian life. Against a background of increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in Australian society, this paper describes an innovative method that helps assess how far this diversity is reflected at elite levels of a selection of key sports.

This new approach to developing insight about the cultural origins of individual people, based only on the intelligent analysis of personal and family names, quantifies the cultural differences in elite-level participation between sports, and also between cultural groups.

The paper concludes by outlining some implications for sports administration, player recruitment, and community development, and suggests that considerable value can be generated through the profiling and targeting of consumers according to their cultural origins.

Cultural diversity and its use in marketing

Consumers born overseas or to recent migrants represent a significant proportion of the Australian population. At the time of the 2001 census, 29% of Australia's population was born overseas. Whilst the typical perception of most overseas observers is that Australia has a mainly British ancestry, this is increasingly less true. Over 27% of Australia's population does not identify with either an Australian ancestry or one related to the British Isles.

In Melbourne and Sydney, the 2001 census tells us that overseas-born people accounted for 36.3% and 40.5% respectively. In both those cities, almost 40% identify with an ancestry other than Australia or British Isles. These figures are likely to have increased in the 2006 census.

There is a growing body of research into the marketing opportunities (commercial and social) to meet the needs of distinct cultural groups. A forthcoming paper by Nancarrow, et al.¹ reports on the link between Scottish identity and the consumption of Scottish goods. Given the size and overall levels of consumption of these segments of the population in Australia, it is surprising that more attention has not been given to research, measurement, and market segmentation based on individual cultural diversity.

Government and publicly funded community organisations, such as schools, hospitals and the police, sometimes include ethnic origin as a question on the forms their clients need to complete – but to conform to privacy legislation and good practice, the purpose of collection needs to be transparent. Few organisations can anticipate all potential purposes for data collection and, as a result, information that could improve the effectiveness of service delivery is often not collected or available for use.

It is normal in many areas of government to evaluate the use of public services by minority groups, and increasingly, departments who view citizens as customers seek to use information about the cultural origin of people for the targeting of relevant messages. A recent example of the successful use of ethnicity for analysis and targeting in the UK includes a campaign to encourage South Asians to attend diabetes screening centres in Slough². In an Australian case, an anti-smoking campaign targeted Arabic-speaking males in Sydney's South West Area Health Service³.

In the private sector, ethnicity is a question more commonly asked of employees than customers - usually for the purpose of compliance with equal opportunity legislation. Cultural origin is rarely recorded on the customer relationship management (CRM) systems of banks, retailers, or utilities – often because of the need to comply with Australia's privacy principles.

In short, operational constraints often limit the ability to collect and use information about cultural origin as a basis for effective commercial and social marketing – and this is as true in sports management as it is in health administration or commercial banking.

This paper demonstrates that the use of an innovative name analysis solution to infer people's origins offers an easy opportunity for Australian organisations to overcome these barriers and test whether their products and services are addressing the requirements of all market segments.

Market segmentation and the use of names to infer cultural origin

Today, almost all large consumer facing organisations generate useful insight about their customers through the appending of census data, or value-added geodemographic classifications, such as Mosaic⁴, to their marketing databases.

Recent developments have focused on the ability of names to make predictive inferences about people's cultural origins. This is a logical development of the trend towards better segmentation and targeting, and perhaps the only surprising aspect of this line of research is that a robust development has not emerged earlier.

People from almost every culture have a name - usually comprising a personal (given) name and a family name. A person's name is perhaps the most fundamental piece of information on a customer database. And since the names given to children often reflect ancestral links, it is reasonable to assume that names on a database may provide good clues about the cultural origin of customers - in the same way that residential addresses provide insight into socio-economic standing.

The practical difficulty with cultural inference from names is that the world's population bears so many different names - certainly well over 1 million recognisably different family names and over 400,000 distinct personal names. These numbers increase substantially when non-Roman characters are considered. In many societies, names are very local and of low frequency. Researching and establishing the origin of each individual name presents a massive challenge.

There are several approaches to this problem⁵ but the best solutions reflect a combination of methods, incorporating specialist knowledge about single countries and cultures, with the international breadth required to cater for increasingly multicultural markets.

A software tool, based on a database comprising 672,000 family names and 241,000 personal names, and developed by Originsinfo Ltd in the UK, enables consumer facing organisations to code their customer files with one of almost 200 different onomastic (name-based) categories, called Origins types. The Origins classification has some similarities with the Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG) developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) but does not restrict itself to the use of geography as a key driver.

For practicality, the 'Origins' types are aggregated to form fifteen 'Origins' groups, listed in Table 1.

Table 1 – Group Classification

| 15 Origins Groups | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| – African | – Muslim |
| – Anglo-Saxon | – Nordic |
| – Celtic | – Oceania |
| – East/South East Asian | – Slavic |
| – Greek/Greek Cypriot | – South Asian |
| – Hispanic | – Western European |
| – Italian | – Unclassified |
| – Jewish/Armenian | |

Further details of the classification, the validation processes, and a discussion of its advantages compared with the use of the census, can be found elsewhere⁶. However, it is appropriate here to address briefly the natural question about the accuracy of a name-based cultural coding system.

In general, the evidence strongly supports macro-level validation of the Origins outputs. To the extent that comparison is possible, the Origins data is consistent with the census questions on ancestry and religion. Maps comparing areas of highest concentration for individual cultural communities are impressively similar between the census and the Origins system.

However, the reliability of allocations of cultural origin to the names of individual people will vary. The vast majority of names of Anglo-Celtic origin are correctly assigned, as are names from cultures with very distinctive names, such as Ethiopian, Basques, Greek, Italian, Hispanic, Slavic, Hindu Indian, Muslim, Japanese, Chinese, and Vietnamese.

People of Scandinavian, German, and French origin are slightly less easy to distinguish. This may be partly due to higher levels of inter-marriage, partly due to the linguistic similarity, and partly due to the greater tendency to adopt names from neighbouring European countries.

Names that are least likely to receive successful allocations are those from Black Caribbean, Indigenous Australian, and to a lesser extent, Jewish, where in all cases there is a tendency to adopt Anglo-Celtic names (eg Clive Lloyd, Cathy Freeman, and John Monash).

Some errors in coding also occur with ambiguous family names such as 'Lee' (Chinese and English), 'Gill' (Sikh and English), and 'Park' (Korean and English), where they may be misallocated, particularly in cases where the personal name may also be ambiguous (eg Jenny Lee, Sam Gill, and Jimmy Park).

Evidence from the early use of the Origins tool suggests that the process correctly assigns well over 90% of names in the Australian context. As it happens, the most culturally distinct minorities, such as those represented in Australia, bear the most distinctive names and consequently they are most likely to receive a high confidence score.

Different classifications suit different purposes, making it impossible for there to be a definitive standard for cultural classification. Measures of accuracy need evaluating in this context, but the Origins classification produces outcomes with high reliability.

Cultural Participation in Selected Australian Sports

The prowess and competitiveness of top Australian sportspeople is nowhere better demonstrated than in Australian Football League (AFL), cricket, both rugby codes, swimming and tennis. And now, after two successful seasons, the new A-League format has helped elevate football (soccer) to new heights of participation and support.

It is clear that many Australian sports administrators are keen to ensure that the country's cultural diversity is reflected in the profile of those who participate at all levels. Indeed, the efforts of the AFL were recently recognised when it won the top prize in the 2006 National Multicultural Marketing Awards⁷.

The stated goals of the AFL project included

- to introduce Australian Football as part of settlement and integration;
- to implement community capacity building in culturally and linguistically diverse communities; and,
- to influence community leagues and clubs to embrace multicultural diversity.

Successful outcomes were achieved through careful targeting of schools with high immigrant or refugee populations, and the delivery of a programme of lessons and visits from high profile players.

This current research uses a different approach to look at the range of cultural diversity at the elite level of representation in a selection of Australia's major sports. The sports chosen and the data sources used were as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2 – Data Sources for Selected Sports

| Selected Sport | Source of Names | Date Sourced | Number of Records |
|-----------------------|--|--------------|-------------------|
| AFL | Players listed on websites of individual clubs | Dec-06 | 554 |
| 'A' League | Players listed on websites of individual clubs | Dec-06 | 215 |
| Cricket (First Class) | Players listed on websites of individual clubs | Dec-06 | 174 |
| Swimming | National and Junior Rankings from www.swimming.org.au | Jan-07 | 628 |
| Tennis | National and Junior Rankings from www.tennis.com.au | Jan-07 | 3,924 |
| Total | | | 5,495 |

One way of using the Origins classification is to create a profile to compare the cultural mix of multiple files, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 - Summary Profiles for Selected Sports – Index Values

| Origins Group | Australian >18 Pop % | Target File | AFL | 'A' League | Cricket | Swimming | Tennis | All Sports |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | | Base File | Australia | Australia | Australia | Australia | Australia | Australia |
| ANGLO-SAXON | 52.7% | | 115 | 59 | 119 | 107 | 88 | 95 |
| CELTIC | 20.9% | | 130 | 85 | 113 | 108 | 96 | 100 |
| WESTERN EUROPEAN | 6.1% | | 101 | 161 | 142 | 162 | 118 | 120 |
| ITALIAN | 5.3% | | 65 | 228 | 32 | 66 | 111 | 97 |
| SLAVIC | 3.8% | | 29 | 408 | 46 | 51 | 235 | 181 |
| EAST/SOUTH EAST ASIAN | 3.4% | | 0 | 41 | 0 | 37 | 107 | 77 |
| GREEK/GREEK CYPRIOT | 2.1% | | 17 | 67 | 28 | 53 | 109 | 83 |
| MUSLIM | 1.9% | | 9 | 219 | 30 | 50 | 64 | 81 |
| HISPANIC | 1.3% | | 54 | 383 | 43 | 12 | 103 | 93 |
| NORDIC | 1.3% | | 14 | 36 | 0 | 87 | 109 | 86 |
| SOUTH ASIAN | 0.7% | | 0 | 69 | 0 | 24 | 122 | 121 |
| JEWISH/ARMENIAN | 0.4% | | 100 | 0 | 0 | 89 | 135 | 118 |
| OCEANIA | 0.1% | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 499 | 186 | 177 |
| AFRICAN | 0.1% | | 0 | 621 | 0 | 213 | 170 | 158 |
| NOT FOUND | 0.0% | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 360 | 239 |
| UNCLASSIFIED | 0.0% | | 0 | 1437 | 0 | 492 | 315 | 314 |
| Total | 100.0% | | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

The process for achieving this profile with the selected sports shown in Table 3 is quite simple.

1. Each sport represents a 'target' file. In Table 3, each target file represents the elite performers in each of the selected sports.

2. The names in the target file are coded using the Origins software. This allocates each record to the 'best fit' cultural code. The number in each Origins group is counted, and a percentage calculated.
3. A 'base' file is coded and counted in a similar fashion. The base file in this case represents the overall Australian population.
4. The total number and proportion of names assigned to each group in each target file is compared with the base file. This comparison is represented through an index value.

The Origins groups indexing above 150 are shaded in red. These cultural segments have a disproportionate appeal to each sport, compared with the cultural composition of Australia as a whole. Segments indexing between 125 and 150 are shaded in orange, and those with an index under 75 are shaded blue, indicating that they are less attracted to each sport compared with the Australian population.

Users in other contexts might want to create a profile at the detailed level of almost 200 categories. Of course, many of these categories contain too few records to meet rigorous standards of statistical significance, but the insight clearly suggests differential appeal for the selected sports.

Analysis by Sport

Despite the presence of high-profile players like Koutoufides and Akermanis (and, of course Demetriou, the chief executive of the AFL), an overwhelming 87.6% of AFL players have names that are Anglo-Saxon or Celtic. Greek AFL players are rare - only three of 554 having names of Greek origin.

A-League players, on the other hand, make for a startling contrast. Fewer than 50% are of Anglo-Saxon or Celtic origin with Slavic, Muslim, Italian, and Hispanic names coming much more to the fore. European names include several from Italy (Grella, Bresciano, Aloisi), Germany (Theissen, Schwarzer), Serbia (Sterjovski, Covic and Petkovic), and the Netherlands (Leijer and van Dommele).

Australian first-class cricketers currently have a profile that is remarkably similar to that of AFL players, with slightly more that are indicative of Western European – notably of German - origin (Lehmann, Langer, and Hilfenhaus). Theo Doropoulos, Moises Henriques, and Martin Paskal are the only three State-contracted cricketers outside the core Anglo-Celtic and West European groups.

Whilst not specifically the subject of this research, it is interesting to note that Australian first-class cricketers are slightly more Anglo-Celtic in origins (86.2%), than their counterparts from England and Wales (83.6%)! Perhaps not surprisingly, about 10.0% of first class cricketers in the English game are of Muslim or South Asian origin. What is noteworthy is that Australia's sub-continental and Muslim population (comprising 2.6% of the general population, based on name analysis) is not yet represented at the elite level of Australian cricket.

Australia has a strong history of swimming champions and, even with the retirement of Ian Thorpe, the national team is expected to do well in the forthcoming 2007 FINA World championships in Melbourne. Anglo-Celtic are names well represented,

although less so than that with AFL and cricket. The notable feature is the under-representation of Italians, Greeks, Hispanics, Slavs, Muslims, and Asians at the elite levels of Australian swimming.

Australian tennis is the stand-out in attracting the greatest range of culturally diverse Australians. Scores are somewhat above average in most cultural groups apart from weak representation in the Muslim community, and an under-representation of Anglo-Celtic names. Among all sports, tennis appears to be the most popular sporting choice for members of the Jewish and Armenian communities.

Analysis by Major Cultural Groups

Western European (includes French, Belgian, Dutch, and German) are, overall, the most active participants in the selected sports. Members of these communities are consistently over-represented across all sports, when compared with their presence in Australian society as a whole.

With the sole exception of A-League football, names of Italian, Muslim and Hispanic origin are considerably under-represented across the range of selected sports. Greeks and East/South East Asians are the least represented across the range of sports subject to this research, although tennis is clearly the most popular for members of these communities.

South Asians are also well represented in tennis but, as indicated above, they do not feature in Australian first class cricket and are under-represented in the other selected sports. Meanwhile, members of the Slavic communities are well represented in A-League football and tennis, but are otherwise poorly represented.

Finally, apart from in A-League football and tennis, Italians are under-represented in the other sports, while those of the numerically dominant Anglo-Celtic origins have a clear preference for AFL and Cricket, and a secondary interest in swimming.

Opportunity for Further Research and Action

The preceding analysis provides sufficient evidence to indicate variation in the appeal of different sports to different segments of the community. Similar analysis is possible for non-elite participants in the various sports so an assessment can be made about wider participation. Coding of junior files within the sports may provide pointers to likely directions in future cultural diversity. And for clubs with substantial memberships, profiling the supporter base provides invaluable market research about its cultural diversity.

The insight turns to real value when used to support the marketing or development objectives of sports administrators. Geographical targeting, in the form of events or letterbox distribution, for participant or supporter recruitment, optimises efficiency and effectiveness of marketing efforts. Mapping the residential locations of participants or the supporter base may assist in the location of new sporting facilities.

Within subscriber or other contact databases, selections based on cultural origin may increase the cost-effectiveness of cross-selling (eg to merchandise) or up-selling (eg to higher levels of support). In combination with geodemographics, the use of a names based segmentation makes it possible, for the first time, to undertake highly targeted communications with the most appropriate members of particular communities.

Much of the above simplifies the standard segmentation and targeting practice established over many years in Australian commercial organisations. Naturally, the most relevant applications in sport of name-based cultural segmentation will align with the strategic development goals of each – both in terms of commercial development and increased participation or support from all cultural communities.

The Author

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Notes

¹ Nancarrow, C., Tinson, J. and Webber, R., 2007 (forthcoming), "Roots marketing: the marketing research opportunity", International Journal of Market Research, Vol 49, No 1 pp 45-67

² Farr, M. and Evans, A., 2005, "Identifying 'unknown diabetics' using geodemographics and social marketing", Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice, Vol 7, No 1, pp 47-58

³ Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW, 21 November 2006, See http://www.crc.nsw.gov.au/press/2006/mma06_govt.htm

⁴ Mosaic is the market leading geodemographic classification, available from Pacific Micromarketing Pty Ltd

⁵ See Dove, M. and Webber, R., 2007, "A New Approach to Understanding Cultural Diversity in Australia", http://originsinfo.com.au/research.html#research_papers, , pp 4-6, and Webber, R., 2007 (forthcoming), "Using names to segment customers by cultural, ethnic or religious origin", Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice, Vol 7, No 3

⁶ See Dove, M. and Webber, R., 2007, "A New Approach to Understanding Cultural Diversity in Australia", http://originsinfo.com.au/research.html#research_papers, , pp 7-12

⁷ NSW Community Relations Commission, November 2006, Aussie Rules Kicks Serious Goals, see http://www.crc.nsw.gov.au/press/2006/aussie_rules.htm