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Is Marketing In Spanish Still Relevant To Hispanics?

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By now, we know all about the dangers of “fake news,” but there’s another form of false information, the concept of “fake trends,” that marketers should be aware of since these can have a negative impact on business strategies. We are witnessing one of them right now when it comes to Hispanic marketing.

The “fake trend” goes like this: Since the Hispanic population growth in the U.S. has been shifting from immigration-based to U.S.-born-based, the need to reach out to this segment from a marketing standpoint should also shift, and young Hispanic Millennials and Gen Zers would tend to culturally assimilate to the broader general market target. As a result, brands may not need to create culturally driven and Spanish-language campaigns to connect with Hispanics any longer. So one strategy, one message, one language would fit all. False.

On the surface, the above narrative makes sense, since we know Hispanic immigration has indeed slowed down, and we all have seen several data points demonstrating that more young Hispanics are speaking more English and consuming media in English. At a time where CMOs are under significant pressure to cut their budgets and find efficiencies, the idea of limiting or simply

eliminating Multicultural Marketing efforts in favor of one single Total Market, a one-size-fits-all approach is tempting.

But is it true? Is it better for business?

First, let's tackle the idea that there are fewer Spanish speakers in the U.S. than a few years or decades ago. This is simply not true. According to the U.S. Census data, the number of Spanish speakers in the country has been continuously growing since 1980, from an estimated 10 million to 15 million in 1990, 25 million in 2000, and 37 million in 2015, and it is estimated to reach up to 41 Million in the next 3 years. So, while the relative number of Spanish-speaking Hispanics may be decreasing due to the growth of U.S.-born Hispanics, the absolute number of Spanish-speaking Hispanics keeps growing.

Second, is advertising in Spanish relevant or effective? Over the past few months, we have seen further proof of the power of the Spanish language to drive higher effectiveness within U.S. Hispanics' marketing efforts.

For example, in October 2016, Facebook released the results of their "Facebook IQ" study conducted by Latinum Network. The study investigated 500 Hispanics from different language usage backgrounds (English-dominant, bilingual, and Spanish-dominant), complemented by in-depth interviews.

The study had several conclusions, of which we highlight the following:

- 80% of U.S. Hispanics don't feel they need to stop speaking Spanish to be part of the American culture.
- 86% of respondents believe the Spanish language helps them remain connected to their culture.
- Ads targeting Hispanics in Spanish significantly increase their interest in purchasing products.
- When online, more than 80% of Spanish-dominant Hispanics use Spanish at least half of the time when they read, write or watch videos.

- 79% of Spanish-dominant, 82% of bilingual, and 60% of English-dominant Hispanics surveyed on this research think brands should reach out to consumers in both English and Spanish.

- 58% of Spanish-dominant Hispanics and 48% of bilingual Hispanics think that brands that reach out to the segment in Spanish demonstrate they value the Hispanic community.

Furthermore, the Facebook IQ study also mentions that Hispanic consumers don't want to be exposed to mere translations of messages from English to Spanish; they want to receive messages that reflect their culture, and this message should also be reflected when casting actors who speak Spanish, with the usage of humor, and in situations that consumers can relate to from a cultural standpoint.

Finally, in what many would find very surprising, was the fact that when it came to bilingual Hispanics, 62% used Spanish at least half of the time when reading online, 66% when writing online, and 69% when watching videos online.

This study has significant importance, as it destroys the idea that the more acculturated the Hispanic consumer is the less relevant Spanish language is. In addition, the study challenges the common perception that while some Hispanics still prefer to consume some traditional media in Spanish, English was the best bet to reach Hispanics online and on social media.

Moreover, the source of the [study](#) is also important since Facebook is considered a neutral media company as it doesn't have any preference on whether advertisers use English or Spanish on their campaigns, and they are just interested in helping their clients maximize their campaigns' ROI.

Interestingly enough, Nielsen, another heavyweight when it comes to advertising effectiveness, also recently released a new [study](#) where it analyzed the ROI of hundreds of Spanish-language TV campaigns and compared their effectiveness to their English-language

General Market TV ads. The study was authored by Matt Krepsik, Nielsen's Head of Marketing, ROI Analytic Products.

The study started to compare the ROI of General Market English-language and Spanish-language TV ads and saw a gap, whereas English ads had an ROI of \$1.10, Spanish ads showed an ROI of only \$0.80. Trying to understand the reason behind this gap, the study conducted an in-depth analysis of the Spanish-language TV ads and concluded that not all Spanish-language TV ads were created equally, and actually 54% of these ads showed equal or higher ROI than their General Market counterparts.

So what made these ads more effective? What were the common characteristics that significantly increased their ROIs?

Stronger creative. Ads with higher ad memorability, brand memorability, message memorability, and likability tend to have a higher ROI. Furthermore, the study called out what made the higher ROI Spanish ads stronger from a messaging standpoint:

- They were Spanish-language original versus just translations of General Market English ads.
- On-screen Spanish-language dialogues versus voice-overs enhanced cultural nuance.
- Narrative with storytelling.
- Usage of culturally-relevant humor.
- Relatability, featuring characters in familiar, real-world settings.

The study also reported that major CPG brands that followed the above direction have seen ROI returns up to four times higher than General Market ads.

The study continues with additional ways to increase Spanish-language TV ads' ROI, including recency and frequency of media flights and the usage of richer media mix to complement TV, mostly with the inclusion of digital executions.

It is worth noting that similar to the Facebook IQ study, Nielsen also doesn't have a preference when it comes to clients' advertising language strategies, as its sole focus is to support their clients in increasing effectiveness on their campaigns.

Historically, Hispanic marketing has been seen with skepticism given its limited measurement and little ROI analysis, but over the past few years, a series of studies have been shedding light into what works and what doesn't with this segment, so clients can make marketing allocation decisions based on facts, not myths.

While most experts on Hispanic marketing agree that the Spanish language alone is not enough to create an effective campaign, we know now that abandoning Spanish to focus only on cultural nuances may not be enough. You need both. Los dos.