

Adapting Brand Communication to Latino Culture

Before every exam he gave us, a professor of mine would repeat his mantra: “read the question, answer the question.” His intent was to remind us of the basics: When he wrote the question, he was looking for specific information. The question is designed to trigger a specific response, answer it in the context in which it’s being asked.

When it comes to brand advertising there is no difference; everything is designed to generate a desired response from a targeted group. Respond to our request, buy our “widget”. When we refer to Latino advertising, the principal is identical, but the question/request must be formed with the cultural market segment in mind. The question or in this case the proposition has to be drafted differently to get the same expected response as the general market.

Consider the beer market in which we are bombarded by ad messages regardless of the brand. How do we create meaning that can connect with the targeted Latino audience? Think about a TV ad you must’ve seen, remember the commercial in a Latino nursing home, a Latina old woman watching a Latino soap opera? You see her picking up a beer and the brand of it (beer), she drinks it and after her grand son leaves, she turns young and starts dancing to Latino music. The context of the commercial is Latinized through Latin Americans celebrating, speaking in Spanish jargon and wearing Latino clothing, while you’re seeing the beer brand and its motto in Spanish at the center of the screen. The commercial symbolically recreated a magical moment, something called in Latin American literature “magic realism,” in which myth comes live. The commercial ends, with the old woman, now an attractive Latina saying “señorita, no señora” and holding the product: beer.

In one minute, the commercial captures the targeted audience by recreating a moment unique to Latinos through a mythical cultural experience which the consumer identifies with regardless of the country.

You see! The most successful ad campaigns identify the cultural segment to which the targeted audience belongs. They create promotional pieces that resonate with their market and encourage them to connect and engage with the offerings in their own cultural terms.

Adapt Brand Communication Strategy to Latino Culture

Reaching a targeted ethnic market doesn’t have to shake up your world. Existing strategies can be adapted to meet a market demand in various segments. It can be done from the product to the promotion mix in order to appeal to localized cultures. In this case, we’ll focus on the promotion mix to illustrate how a brand should communicate in a Latino market segment.

When we refer to cultural branding, we are addressing a consumer’s localized historical experience to connect with in a defined group or society independently from another. The historical experience is a culture variable that will always change depending on who the targeted segment is regardless of culture and language. Now for the sake of making my point clear, we are not going to modify a brand’s design but the communication process as to how a brand should transmit its meaning and/or proposition while resonating with a Latino targeted audience.

Latinos are accustomed to use most of their senses when evaluating an opportunity or simply celebrating. Consider two women, one Anglo American and the other one a Latina (female) consumer going to the produce section at the grocery store. Watermelon for lunch! What a perfect idea. The Anglo American woman realizes that the watermelon is big and green and buys

it, while the Latina woman taps on it, holds it, looks for white spots on the surface, examines its coloring and lastly asks a clerk to cut out a piece for tasting. Once the Latina consumer has evaluated each stage of the purchase, and is satisfied with the results, she buys it. The point to be made from this purchasing experience is that the typical Latina consumer relied on the sense of sound, touch, sight and taste to make a decision, while the typical American consumer evaluated the opportunity only through the visual aspects of the watermelon.

Latino Branding: The Process

If a marketer wants to Latinize a brand, he/she will have to identify the *consumer, the consumer's nationality, cultural background, customs and thought process* in relationship to the place of origin (country).

Consumer

The process of identifying and determining who the targeted Latino consumer will be is no different than that used for the general market. However, two essential factors must be considered as part of the data collection among Latino consumers: nationality and respective cultural background.

Nationality

We can get by saying that, for the most part, Latin American consumers share a similar experience pre-independence. From that date forward, however, a unique identity emerges regarding political and economic development of each country. The latter making a significant impact on demographic and socio-cultural characteristics which affect the thinking process of each individual.

Cultural Background

One of most relevant facts to unveil among Latinos is their cultural background as a factor of differentiation from one person to another depending on the country of origin.

This cultural background is influenced by localized environmental elements, such as:

Arts: music, literature, painting, dance and cuisine

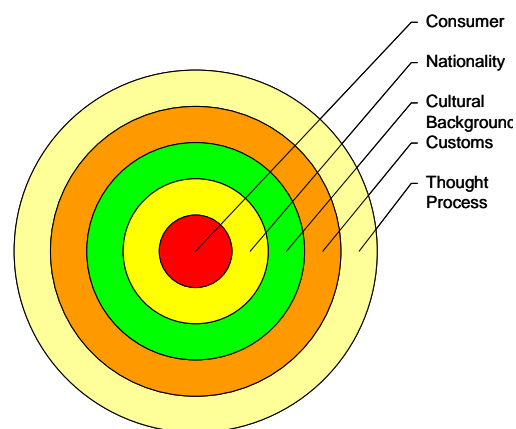
Myth: Folklore, legends, rituals and celebrations

Language: Colloquial versus academic Spanish

Visuals: Colors, dressing codes and symbols

This is what Latinos follow in their country of origin, which in marketing, we refer to as an “experience,” something of their own that can’t be replicated and/or blended with another Latin American society.

Cultural Elements in the Branding Process



When these components are blended into an advertising piece, then and only then, you can say that the brand is Latinized.

Life is filled with customs and rituals, patterns of behavior and interaction that are learned and repeated, something historical that is passed from one generation to another. When Latinos immigrate to the US, they bring these customs with them. The most successful Marketers will learn how these customs vary from one Latino society to another and design promotional programs that resonate with each group. As stated in the example above, the Latino female consumer relied on a customary approach to buying watermelon in the grocery store. If the clerk at the store did not allow her to taste the product before purchasing it, she would likely have gone somewhere else to have her needs met. This is the very reason as to why US grocery stores have a Hispanic section, that is, retail marketers know that the evaluation and thought process in Latino consumers are determined by customs.

Thought Process

Latinos have a tendency to examine the big picture and are not focused on a particular detail until they take in the opportunity as a whole. This affects the deliberation process. As opposed to snap judgments in the general market, a decision process might take minutes, hours or days depending on the product or the nature of the offerings. Once again, consider the example of the watermelon purchase.

Collectivism

I have pointed out the differing elements within the Latino culture, but as a consumer group, *collectivism* is also a key cultural factor to consider as Marketers construct the question for the desired response

A marketer must be cognizant of the fact that Latinos are group oriented and the *thought process* might be influenced by one or more participants in the decision making process. This will most likely occur when an offering is intended to serve more than one individual in a family or group. Consider the banking and health care industry in which the services offered reach beyond a single person. When this happens, there will be a family/group discussion to evaluate the opportunity and make a final decision.

Conclusion

If you are a marketer interested in this growing market, take your time to learn who the targeted Latino consumer is all about. Design your proposition/questions focused on his/her localized experience. When these components *consumer, nationality, cultural background, customs and thought process* are blended into an advertising piece, then you will capture their attention. When you do, you can truly say that brand Latinization is taking place.

Get the Latino consumer to “read the right question within a targeted cultural context, and they will answer the question.” By doing so, your question (proposition) will get your desired response.

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Claudio's article can also be read a <http://EzineArticles.com/?id=3628098>



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