

Enticing Latino Grocery Shoppers to Purchase at your Store

On a Sunday afternoon, Rosa Maria and family went to the grocery store and could not find anything that was appealing for their daily meal preparation, frustrated enough; they decided to go back to Pablo's tienda (store) in the neighborhood. Does it sound familiar?

The US retail grocery shopping market is currently going through advertising and operational adaptation in relationship to their offerings and product demand by Latino and Hispanic consumers. So the question is, "adapt or do not adapt." Here is a marketing recipe for grocery stores looking for growth opportunities in the rapidly growing Latino grocery shopper market.

Before I go on, a quick disclaimer. I claim no particular expertise in cooking; I'm just a marketer that understands the intricacies of celebrating around Latin American meals made by traditional Latin American products.

A Note to the Grocery Store Marketer

If you are interested in adapting your advertising and operational strategy in the grocery store market, you will have to take into consideration three fundamental factors about products to bring Latino consumers to the store on a repetitive basis, and that is, freshness, flavor and traditional products. Per US standards, these factors classify Latino grocery consumers as traditional shoppers since they are not motivated by fast and convenience purchasing, in other words, frozen or pre-cooked food. On the contrary, everything must be natural to be able to cook from scratch.

Product Freshness and Flavor

In Latin American cultures, cooking is an art, in which the preparation of meals is a joy from the moment you go to the grocery store to the point of cooking and serving the meal. Being this a cultural experience, Latinos will look for fresh products since they are more nutritious, naturally flavored and healthy. More importantly, if grocery stores are not offering them, they (Latinos) will look for alternative channels in or outside the neighborhood.

Traditional Products

For Latinos to continue experiencing traditional meals, they must purchase products that are relevant to their cooking needs, including lard as shortening, vegetables, local fruits, oil, cheeses, high quality meats and poultry and daily bread among other products.

Purchasing Drivers, What you want to hear!

Now that you know the recipe (attributes) for your products to be attractive to Latino grocery shoppers, the question arises, how do you entice them to purchase the items? First and for most, as a grocery marketer, you will keep few fundamental cultural factors in your advertising strategy to connect and form an intention to purchase in Latino shoppers.

Store Layout: This part of your strategic operational marketing has to do with your store logistics. From the entrance to the exit, you must create a sense of belonging so the Latino shopper feels welcome and acknowledged all throughout the shopping experience. This is achieved by building a section in the store with established wider aisles and shelves to hold family traffic and culturally appealing decoration. Remember, for Latinos, shopping is a family affair.

Product Assortment: As a marketer, you must be able to offer products beyond mainstream products to allow Latino shoppers re-experience what they left behind in their country of origin. This will be a task for you because you will have to unveil from Latino sub-groups in the community what they expect from your grocery store. A lot of work, right! But once you know it, you will create a value proposition over any other grocery store in the neighborhood as you will have the privilege of assorting products that meets the costumes of your clients (Latinos). Now, it does not mean that you have cover the entire Latin American region, just make sure you take care of those cultures that are prevalent in the Latino community in your neighborhood. That will be enough!

Signage: Directional and commercial signage will direct the Latino shopper where you want him/her to go as soon as they enter the store. Use colorful signage and Latino oriented font to make it visually attractive and enhance a positive experience for the shopper. The latter is an important factor for repetitive business as they (Latinos) perceive it as a friendly place for the family and ultimately for purchasing items. Make it easy on them and not difficult on you!

Advertising and Promotion: In every Latino community in the country, there are local publications, such as newspapers and magazines circulating once per week or every other week. This is the perfect medium for grocery stores to create awareness in the community. Radio stations are also available in the community and most likely TV stations as well. Now, before you commit to any of these mediums, make sure that the ads are properly done in Spanish and that the central proposition is appealing to them only (Latinos).

Latino shoppers love promotions because it is associated with lower prices and good products, so take advantage of it, set up displays or tasting stations in the store for them to try, taste and buy. Use local media for your weekend promotional inserts in Spanish and have a Latino employee delivering the same insert at the entrance of the store. Emphasize in-culture promotion and friendliness.

Bilingual Employees: Having bilingual employees in key areas of your store creates a friendly environment for Latino shoppers, a sense of inclusion and convenience when asking questions. But most importantly, it does influence purchasing behavior because a point of commonality is established between the clerk and the shopper, and that is called cultural bonding. So, the strategic areas in the store are at the entrance of the store, a greeter in this case, clerks behind designated counters and cashiers.

In conclusion, if you decide to Latinize your grocery store, I do not guarantee you anything, but you will most likely get Rosa Maria and family shopping at your store again.

Written by Claudio Perez-Korinko, April 22, 2010

Claudio is recognized for his innovative approach to Latin American and Hispanic marketing and he is the president at IM International Marketing, LLC.