

Hispanics: In-Culture Marketing to Reach the Fastest-Growing Youth Culture in the U.S.

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Corporate America has at last discovered the value of the youngest Latino citizens. Not only are traditional advertisers developing programs to appeal to them and their parents, but a number of new players are entering the market.

It is estimated that, by 2009, nearly one person out of every six living in the U.S. will be of Latino origin and that these people will control \$992 billion in spending power, up from \$686 billion in 2004.

For marketers aiming at this increasingly important Hispanic market target, "in-culture" is highly effective.

In-culture is a marketing method based on the premise that all consumers are raised in a specific culture that sets up their values, beliefs systems, feelings, expectations, and dreams. Culture is like an "invisible bubble" or programming that is an intrinsic part of who we are, consciously or, most of the time, unconsciously shaping our actions. This approach capitalizes on the culture of the non-Anglo-American consumer by recognizing that people experience life in different cultural contexts. Their needs, wants, feelings, attitudes, expectations, and lifestyles (dietary preferences, etc.) often differ from the traditional mainstream culture.

The non-aculturated Hispanic cultural-value orientation places much greater value in the family group—including the extended family and friends of the family—than Anglo-Saxon cultures. This *familismo* (family-centered) orientation has three main pillars:

- *Machismo*, that defines the man's role as a leader, provider, and protector of the family
- *Marianismo*, that defines the woman's role of sacrifice and taking care of the family, keeping it together
- *Chicoismo*, the child, who represents the family legacy

The effect of *familismo* is so powerful that it results in differences in the life-cycle process of Latino families as compared with Anglo-Saxon families. For example, Latino children start preschool on average one year later than non-Latino children. That is because the non-aculturated, traditional mother enjoys having her children under her wing for as long as possible. In the Hispanic traditional culture, children live with the parents until they marry, even if they are thirty or forty (less so in the U.S. than Central and South America, of course).



Chicoismo plays a key role in the way Latino families spend their money. Typically, they over-index on a wide variety of products and services—such as children's clothing, amusement parks, and entertainment—in their goal of making their children happy. Many Hispanic immigrant parents say the main

reason behind their immigration to the U.S. was to provide their children with opportunities for a better life. In turn, the parents tend to expect attention, social time, and support from their children.

In other words, these family-centered cultural values are a two-way street that opens marketing opportunities to both children and parents. Every product or service can be analyzed with the in-culture framework and lens to uncover the role it does or could play within the dynamics of *familismo*.

The U.S. Hispanic market now has enough consumers to create a complete in-culture age-based market segmentation. Because the ages selected to create the segments are based on the natural breaks of the U.S. Hispanic population and the marketing opportunities these represent, they are not necessarily the age breaks used for the general market.

There are four age segments among Latino youth: Los Bebés, (ages 0 to 5), Los Niños (6 to 9), Tweens (10-14), and Teens (15-19). Together, these segments represent more than 25 percent of the Hispanic population.

Los Bebés (Ages 0-5)

The youngest of the Census 2000 Latino age segments is close to 3.2 million Latino babies and toddlers (up to age five) and represents nine percent of all Hispanics in the U.S. The vast majority of the Bebés 2000 are native born in the U.S. (96 percent). Given the growing recognition and value of multiculturalism in a global economy and the growing maturity of Spanish-language education and media, it is highly possible that these Bebés 2000 will grow to be bilingually fluent in English and Spanish, and they will live in a bicultural way.

Judging from the growing marketing activity targeting new Hispanic mothers and the proliferation of pre-school cartoons in Spanish, corporate America has at last discovered the value of the youngest Latino citizens. Not only are traditional advertisers developing programs to appeal to these moms, but also a number of new players are entering the market. These include consumer products, toys, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, the financial sectors, magazines, and the online world.

Talking to expectant and new moms is a perfect point-of-entry venue coveted by savvy marketers. Finding these new women is now easier than ever before. Hospitals in high-density, new-immigrant Hispanic areas are glad to distribute samples and educational materials (Spanish or bilingual), since doing so helps them inform and communicate with these



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patients. In addition, marketers can use several pre-natal magazines, dedicated online websites, television and radio programs, and newspaper articles. These dedicated media talk to the specific needs and wants of the Latina mother, and they do it in-culture.

Market researchers who study children know that the “nag factor” starts at about age two. Hispanic families also have a compensatory behavior, a strong need to provide their children with what they themselves did not have growing up, which results in an even more powerful “Latin nag.”

Great marketing opportunities exist for corporate America to build “share of heart” with their brands and products and to help

future generations of Latinos to become successful and productive American citizens. To get the ball rolling, leaders in the Hispanic-advertising world have created an education campaign to encourage education among Hispanics. FuturaMente focuses on three- to four-year-olds, stressing the importance of early education. The campaign, funded and created by members of the Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies (AHAA), broadcasts its message in English- and Spanish-language television, radio, print, online, and outdoor media. It is a challenge to change deeply rooted cultural values such as *familismo*, but not impossible.

Los Niños (Ages 6 to 9)

Between 2001 and 2010, the percentage of Hispanic children aged six to nine will increase by 21 percent, while the share of white non-Hispanic and non-Hispanic black children will continue to decline steadily. This demographic shift will continue to fuel the growing diversity in America’s grade schools.

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The pressure to deliver good-quality education, added to the increasing numbers of students from different cultural backgrounds in already crowded classrooms, will push schools to find solutions. Fortunately, many Latino children are becoming computer-literate at a fast pace. As access to computers at school continues to grow, Los Niños press their parents to get a home computer, and then often the children teach their parents how to go online.

Many Latino youngsters still face identity conflicts as a consequence of being raised in two cultures. However, this is a declining problem, as pride in being Latino today continues to grow. These children's first-generation parents are learning to get around in a new country, have more disposable income, and are happy to indulge their children with the products, goods, and fun that they themselves did not have.

Given that 89 percent of Niños are born in the U.S. and go to grade school here, their non-Latino peers at school will shape their language use/preference and also their cultural value orientation. In highly concentrated Hispanic urban areas (such as East Los Angeles, Coral Gables in Miami, Corona in Queens, and Washington Heights in New York), children interact closely with other Latino children. More than with previous generations of Latinos, their child peers help them become more comfortable with their Latino culture and in speaking Spanish outside the home. School systems around the country, with few exceptions, have a much more supportive attitude towards children of diverse backgrounds. Many actually have programs to make these young immigrants feel special and at home. As a consequence, this Niño generation will grow to be bilingual and bi-cultural and, in most cases, will maintain its traditional Hispanic value orientation.

This observation is less the case with Latino children residing in lower density Hispanic population areas—usually suburbs with higher incomes. These children, exposed mostly to an Anglo-Saxon value-oriented culture, mostly speak English with their friends and peers. Depending on the parents' degree of acculturation and fluency in English, they may or may not speak Spanish at home.

Savvy marketers know that in order to secure brand loyalty among Latino parents,



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One in five teens in the United States is of Hispanic descent.

they need to touch both their hearts and their minds. This also helps Latino families raise healthy, happy children. Today's Hispanic marketing mix includes many activities to this end. For example, there is often some form of live, "eye-level" marketing for the Latino family group, that is, targeting and interacting with these consumers on a one-to-one basis. Examples include product sampling, meeting a brand representative, and sponsorship of events, such as vaccination clinics, circuses, and football games, where young consumers connect experientially with the brand. Investing money to build parks and soccer fields, or to sponsor health programs, all go a long way toward building unshakable brand loyalty that can last a lifetime. Another venue is corporate contributions to scholarship funds that are promoted to the Hispanic community.

Retailers and manufacturers aware of the pull Latino children have on their parents' purchase behavior are increasingly partnering to attract this young lucrative segment with programs that give something to all.



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Generation Ñ (Ages 10 to 19)

Generation Ñ is probably the most written-about and coveted Hispanic market segment today. At more than six million in size, this group is living fully the best of both worlds. Media, entertainment channels, music producers, and manufacturers of apparel, foods, beverages, and cars are targeting Latino tweens and teens, and through them, their parents.

A study by Teenage Research Unlimited in June 2001 said, "Latino youths shop more and outspend their counterparts in the non-Latino world—despite coming from lower-income families. The average Hispanic teen spends \$320 a month, four percent more than the average non-Hispanic teen. Favorite shopping outlets are malls (84 percent), supermarkets (80 percent), and discount chains (78 percent)."

With an estimated \$19 billion in spending power, Gen Ñ is changing the content of not only Hispanic TV, radio, and print media, but also of general market media. That is because one-half of the U.S. Latino population is under age 26, compared with age 39 for non-Hispanic whites. One in five teens in the United States is of Hispanic descent. Between 2005 and 2020, the Latino teen population is expected to grow 35.6 percent, compared with a decline of 2.6 percent among non-Hispanic whites.

More than their predecessors, members of Generation Ñ are generally bilingual and open to adapting to the American way of life. At the same time, they are proud of their Latino heritage, and they do not want to lose their Hispanic identity.

Language preference for English or Spanish by Gen Ñs is a challenge to understand. A large percentage of Hispanic teens, especially foreign-born ones, speak Spanish at home, speak both Spanish and some form of "Spanglish" with their Latino friends, and speak English with their non-Latino peers. Teens' chances of speaking and writing either good English or good Spanish are greatly limited, particularly in lower-income areas.

Media use by Latino youth is a puzzle, as well. On the one hand, their exposure to mainstream American media is much greater than previous generations of Latino youth, since more than three-quarters were born and raised in the U.S. On the other hand, Spanish-language

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media have matured dramatically during the past decade, making their programming more appealing to young viewers. These young Latinos take for granted that they will find entertainment and information in both Spanish and English in all media, including newspapers, radio, TV,

magazines, and online sites. Spanish-language television and radio capture large shares of Latino youth, who are particularly drawn to musical entertainment, sitcoms, and sports programs.

Although many Latino teens predominantly speak English, many also watch Spanish-language TV with their parents and other relatives. The elders often watch *novelas* (soap operas), news, and programs with the entire family. These teenagers tend to respond well to Spanish-language advertisements for two reasons: Spanish is “the language of the heart and emotions” of the Latino consumer, and the “in-culture” campaigns and ads have been specifically designed to talk to the mindset of Hispanic youth.

From a marketing perspective, Generation Ñ has the importance of American Baby Boomers when they were in their Woodstock years. These young consumers are adopting brands and making them their own. Marketers who fail to attract this generation today may have lost them during their adult spending years. This age segment needs to be subdivided into Tweens and Teens, groups that have interests, likes, dislikes, and aspirations.

Tweens (Ages 10 to 14)

The 3.1 million Latino tweens are at the center of the swelling growth of Hispanic youth, significantly outpacing the growth rate of all other Hispanic and non-Hispanic age groups, with the exception of Asian youth.

Latino tweens tend to be closer with their parents than their Anglo counterparts. This phenomenon helps explain, in part, the strong adherence to traditional Hispanic value orientation observed in older acculturated Latinos.



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Hispanic Teens (Ages 15 to 19)

Today's 3.1 million Latino teens are leading the dramatic growth of U.S.-born Latino consumers. These teens often look like other teens to the outside world, and in many ways, they are indeed like general-market teens. However, these highly bicultural teens move swiftly between two cultures. Most are proud to be Latinos, ready to show-off their Hispanic roots. They have embraced the best-of-both-worlds attitude like no other Hispanic consumer segment before them. Of all Hispanic teens, 77 percent are native-born. Just over one-half are born to recent immigrant parents (55 percent), while a large segment have U.S.-born, third- and fourth-generation parents, 20 and 25 percent, respectively.

There is a tremendous variation in terms of value orientation, language preference, and socio-economic status within this Generation Ñ segment, depending on their parents' experience in the U.S. Teens born to Hispanics who have

been in this country for a long time, even several generations, have it easier in some respects. For the most part, their parents know English well, have a good understanding of U.S. society, can guide them in their homework, and can help them in college preparation. In contrast, teens born to first-generation immigrant parents face unique challenges because their parents are learning the ropes in a new country. This results in additional frustrations and stress to the typical teenagers' life and higher school-dropout rates.

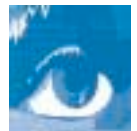
Once marketers understand the family orientation of Hispanic culture and the in-culture approach, it is much easier to develop marketing strategies that will appeal to this growing demographic group. 

Author's note: This article is adapted from Marketing to American Latinos: A Guide to the In-Culture Approach, Part II, 2002. Paramount Market Publishing, Inc.



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