Interactive Food & Beverage Marketing: Targeting Latino Youth in the Digital Age

Mari D. González

University of the Pacific
School of International Studies

Abstract
Recent interest in U.S.-based Latino/Hispanic populations and their cultures has led to fruitful research and increased attention. Comprehensive books on Hispanic marketing have been made available by multicultural marketing experts. Marketing that targets Latino/Hispanic youth has become a promising, specialized, and lucrative field. This study shows how cultural research has been utilized by marketers to target young Latinos/Hispanics, who are the most susceptible members of the ethnic group to new trends in technology. It investigates the type of cultural knowledge that marketing researchers are using to target Latino/Hispanic youth and the effectiveness of their interactive advertising campaigns. It also explores how the ever-growing access to digital media changes the way the food and beverage companies do business with Latino/Hispanic youth.
The goal of this study is to combine academic and non-academic research on multicultural internet marketing in order to examine how food and beverage marketers have utilized cultural knowledge to reach Latinos/Hispanics. The study examines what this specific segment has to say about their online media habits and digital advertisement. Information on U.S. Latinos/Hispanics as online consumers seems to constantly change among marketers, and because of the constantly upgrading and renewing nature of technology, new findings will emerge to rebuke old ones. It is my endeavor to combine what researchers have studied on culturally relevant digital marketing with young Latino/Hispanic Americas’ experiences and their preferences with internet, mobile phone, and food and beverage advertising.

A Note on Terminology

There is no current agreement on which of the two official terms “Latino”\(^1\) or “Hispanic” is more accurate. Researchers (Davila, 2001; Oboler, 1995) indicate that either label “Hispanic” and “Latino” lump together and inaccurately define a group of people that span several generations, nationalities, and socioeconomic groups, and that “both terms are equally guilty of erasing differences while encompassing highly heterogeneous populations” (Davila, 2001, p. 15). For purposes of inclusion and based on the differences in meaning of each label among the people being categorized, I have chosen to use both labels and place them in that order for easy reading; however, the order is not to be read as a preference.

\(^1\) “The term Latino was officially established in 1997 when the Office of Management and Budget published recommendations for classification of federal and ethnicity data indicating that the terms Hispanic and Latino were to be used interchangeably as of January 1, 2003” (Chong & Baez, 2005, p. 4).
Latinos/Hispanics in the U.S.

Latinos/Hispanics are the largest minority group in the United States. As of July 2007, they accounted for 15.1 percent of the total U.S. population (Wayne, 2009). It is projected that “the Latino labor force will increase by 77 percent during [2000 and 2020], while the non-Latino labor force will grow by only 9 percent” (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2002, as cited in Chong & Baez, 2005, p. 6). Recent partnered advertising initiatives prove the extent of interest that these data hold for marketers. Major interactive media collaborations have shown increased attention being paid to Latino/Hispanic consumers as the new promising market. In April 2009, the online media news portal *Media Daily* (www.mediapost.com) published an article announcing that Terra USA, “the largest internet-access provider in the Americas,” (Valdes, 2002, p. 102) and a company that targets U.S. Latinos/Hispanics, had joined Interactive One, owned by network radio operator *Radio One* which mostly targets African-Americans to “cross-market and cross-sell their respective audiences” (O’Malley, 2009, ¶ 1).

The number of Latinos/Hispanics online has grown beyond initial expectations, surpassing the growth of the non-Latino/Hispanic market. In 2006, an online analysis (Williamson, 2006) projected that “US Hispanic internet users” would rise to 19.8 million by 2009. However, according to *comScore*, a global internet report (Kato, 2009), the number of online U.S. Latinos/Hispanics “climbed 50 percent faster than the overall Hispanic population in the past year” (¶ 1). By February 2009, it had reached 20.3 million, a six percent increase from the year before (Walsh, 2009, ¶ 1). “The Hispanic online population is now 11 percent of the total American market and in the last year [its growth] has significantly outpaced the rest of the market” (Wayne, 2009, ¶ 1).
Mari D. González

Online Latinos/Hispanics are younger than their mainstream counterparts (Williamson, 2006; Vence, 2005). Online research company eMarketer (Williamson) estimated in its 2005 report that the number of U.S. Latino/Hispanic internet users under the age of 35 would increase 33 percent from 9.1 million to 12.1 million in 2010, with one third under the age of 18. In 2008, the Latino/Hispanic online market was reported to be overall younger, with 56 percent between the ages of 18 – 24 compared to 34 percent of the general market in the same age range (Rios, 2008). Knowing these facts and figures makes it difficult to disagree with Assistant Professor of American Studies and Anthropology Davila’s (2001) statement that, “Latinos are the hottest new market and those who target them will not regret it” (p. I). Young online Latinos/Hispanics in the U.S. have a great market potential, and the food and beverage industry has stepped forward.

Drinks, Chips, Spanish-language Media, and American Football

One example of a recent marketing campaign by a food and beverage company occurred this year, when PepsiCo joined Telemundo, the number two ranked Spanish-language TV network owned by NBC Universal, to present two one-hour programs for Spanish-speaking audiences during Telemundo’s third annual Super Bowl special. The two programs, Tazón Latino III (Latino Super Bowl III) sponsored by Doritos, and a concert, Pepsi Música Super Bowl Fiesta, aired on Saturday, January 31, the day before Super Bowl. These events were heavily advertised online on Telemundo’s http://msnlatino.telemundo.com and Univision’s, the number one Spanish-language media network in the United States, owned by Univision Communications, Inc., http://www.nflatino.com, the online unit that operates the NFL’s Spanish-language website.

---

Review of the Literature

Culture and Marketing

There is a greater-than-ever interest in Latino/Hispanic culture as a way to tap into their market potential “not just [because] the growing numbers…. [but because their commanding] buying power,” (Singh, Kwon & Pereira, 2003, p. 868) which is estimated to be at “just under $800 billion,” for 2006 (Dodson & Kvicala, 2006, ¶ 1). In 2003, Latinos/Hispanics became the largest minority, surpassing African-Americans in number, resulting in a generation that is expected to influence the American economic, political and cultural landscape (Grow, Grover, Weintraub, Palroni, Der Hovenesian & Eidman, 2004).

Research (Cui, 1997; Singh, Kwon & Pereira, 2003) establishes the relationship between ethnic segmentation and marketing advantage. It has been proven that understanding the consumers’ ethnic culture is the best way to communicate with and thus attract them (Cui, 1997; Korzenny & Korzemny 2005; Peñaloza & Gilly, 1999). Academic research (Cui, 1997; Peñaloza & Gilly, 1999; Singh, Baack, Pereira, & Baack, 2008; Singh, Toy & Wright, 2009; Torres & Gelb, 2002), internet analysts (Chang, 2009; Fadner, 2008; Medina, 2006; Vence, 2005; Williamson, 2006) and multicultural advertising professionals (Korzenny & Korzemny, 2005; Valdes, 2002; Vann, 2006) agree on the significance of “cultural relevance” when advertising to online Latino/Hispanic youth. A “culturally relevant” advertisement speaks to the collective values and/or ethnic identity of a particular cultural group.

PepsiCo’s collaboration with Telemundo demonstrated a strategy in line with current research for targeting Latinos/Hispanics in the U.S., which indicates that “the large growing U.S. Hispanic segment prefers culturally-adapted marketing messages” (Singh, Baack, Pereira &
Mari D. González


Culture and the Web

Latinos/Hispanics in the U.S. share a common immigrant and acculturating experience (Vann, 2006), a common sociopolitical experience, and a common history of colonialism (Martin, 2005). They have a strong connection with their countries of origin and their loved ones back home (Vann, 2006). An effective website should therefore “account for differences in perception and attitudes between Hispanics and the [mainstream] market” (Vann, ¶ 9). A positive online experience ought to include an emotional connection to their heritage, which for example may explain Latin Americans’ “passion” for their national soccer teams (Vann).

Based on the 2006 AOL Latino Cyberstudy, Medina observes the differences in preferences in online behavior between acculturated and non-acculturated Latinos/Hispanics in the U.S. According to the report, “web habits” displayed by the acculturated group resemble U.S. white Americans’ or mainstream web habits; they visit entertainment, finance, and health-related sites, while the non-acculturated group prefer sites that inform them on Latin American events and on soccer (Medina).

Two Cultures

Palumbo and Teich (2005) recognize the relevance of a bi-dimensional acculturation model (Ryder et al., 2000, as cited in Palumbo & Teich), in which an ethnic population such as Latinos/Hispanics in the U.S. “retain[s] parts of [its] culture even as they gain American ideals and values” (p. 155). Ibarra (2009) observes, “Latinos live closer to their families’ countries of
origin and have access to Spanish-language television, radio, newspapers and magazines...[and]
a universe of Web sites” (p. 84).

Researchers Palumbo and Teich (2005) suggest that marketers should adapt their messages in a way that represents aspects of both cultures — U.S. American and Latino/Hispanic — that form “[their] new Hispanic-American identity” (pp. 155-156). They conclude, “[a]dvertisements should include both American and Latino elements” (p. 156) and bilingual messages because this not only shows respect for and acknowledgment of their two cultural values, but it also shows their inclusion into the mainstream society (Palumbo & Teich). These suggestions could also apply to localization professionals.

**Relevance of the Study**

The relevance of this study is based on the premise that the number of second-generation Latinos/Hispanics is growing at a faster rate than that of first generation Latinos/Hispanics. Currently, there are more Latinos/Hispanics being born in the U.S. than the number of Latinos/Hispanics immigrating to the U.S. A study of digital advertising trends that target young U.S. Latinos/Hispanics should be useful to online marketers and localization professionals in further understanding a generation that has not been looked at as a separate segment. I focus on the food and beverage companies because this industry “[works] with a growing number of ad agencies, market research firms, and consulting groups that specialize in developing digital strategies for targeting [specific ethic groups] in particular Latino... youth” (Chester & Montgomery, 2007, Multicultural Marketing, ¶ 1). In reflecting this need I pose the following question: How are food and beverage companies utilizing cultural knowledge to target Latino/Hispanic youth in the U.S. online?
Methods

In order to understand cultural perceptions and media use by young Latinos/Hispanics, this research relied on ethnographic interviews (Lindsley & Braithwaite, 1995). Lindsley and Braithwaite observe that ethnographic interviews “emphasize descriptive emic [meaningful to actor and culture-specific] information of people’s actual behaviors and their own interpretations of their communication interactions” (p. 202). As such, this study looks at interviews in which participants reported on their use of mass media, including internet and mobile phones, and their opinions on interactive and food and beverage advertising.

Ten bilingual college and high-school students each participated in a one-hour interview. They responded to an invitation by their Puente Project4 and English Language Development (ELD) advisors for an interview of media use by Latino/Hispanic youth. The face-to-face interviews were conducted between May 19 and May 26, 2009 in Pleasant Hill, Concord, and Fremont, California. Four of the participants were high school students and six were junior college students. There were two US-born participants; five from Mexico; two from Guatemala; and one from Bolivia with parents from Bolivia and Argentina. There were three males and seven females. Their ages ranged from 18 to 22.

Participants had to be students who identified as Latino/Hispanic and within the ages of 18 and 25. The written information provided to them was in English and Spanish including two consent forms and an interview questionnaire. They had the choice to answer the questions in English or Spanish. Three students requested to be interviewed in English and seven in Spanish. However, those who requested to be interviewed in Spanish had answers that included English-

---

4 A state-wide interdisciplinary junior college and high school program with counseling and mentoring components for underrepresented students in California. Retrieved from http://www.puente.net/about/
language words and phrases. The participants who requested English-language interviews had lived in the U.S. ten or more years. The interview consisted of 39 open-ended questions divided into seven sections: 1) TV, 2) Radio, 3) Mobile Phone Use, 4) Internet Use, 5) Social Network Sites (SNSs), 6) Internet Ads, and 7) Food and Beverage Advertising. Although this study focuses on digital media, the questionnaire included TV and radio to explore any connections between broadcast media and internet and mobile phone use.

Because technology and its utilization changes continuously, a new interview questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire was intended to demonstrate whether this small sample represented what multicultural advertising professionals have reported to date on Latino/Hispanic digital media usage and to lead the way for further research on bilingual Latino/Hispanic media experiences, internet advertisement, and localization strategies.

This study also gathers up-to-date information on multicultural digital media for Latinos/Hispanics in the U.S. Participants’ answers were tabulated by looking for similarities, differences, and common themes. The challenges of this bilingual study were giving the participants the choice to answer in either or both languages and translating their answers into English. One certified interpreter whose first language was Spanish and one translator whose first language was English looked at the questionnaire translations to review the accuracy of translations. The translator suggested changes to the English-version questionnaire on back translation from translated Spanish-version to keep it “true” to the Spanish translation. She also looked at the English translations of Spanish quotes.
Results

The data were analyzed by tabulating participants’ language of preference in different settings, number of hours spent on preferred media outlet, type of online activities, what participants considered to be relevant to their cultural identity, and their opinions on interactive and food and beverage ads.

Language of Preference: English, Spanish, Either One, or Spanglish⁵

Participants’ language of preference was measured for different settings, and language options included: 1) Spanish; 2) English; 3) “either one,” Spanish or English; and 4) Spanglish. All of the participants preferred speaking Spanish at home; however with friends, four preferred Spanish, three Spanglish, two “either one,” and one English.

At school, six respondents preferred using English, two “either one,” one Spanish, and one Spanglish. Five of respondents read the news in English, three in Spanish and two in “either one.” Five of respondents browsed the internet in English, and five in “either one.” Out of the eight participants who reported being employed, five stated that at work they spoke “mostly” English, two “mostly” Spanish, and one “either one.” At work participants did not choose one language over another. They explained that they were required to speak the preferred language of their supervisors, coworkers, and customers.

TV

Interview participants watched an average of three hours of TV a day. Their selection of programs included 1) Spanish-language programs from their countries of origin (for example, Canal Sur, a South American cable channel or Mexican movies from the 1950’s golden era); 2)

Spanish-language programs (telenovelas\textsuperscript{6}, preferred by the females; and soccer games, preferred by the males) on U.S. media outlets \textit{Unvision}, and on \textit{Telemundo}; 3) bilingual video and music-centered programs such as \textit{MTV Tr3s}, a bicultural entertainment network owned by \textit{MTV Networks (Viacom)}; 4) English-language documentary and “kids” TV channels (\textit{Discovery, Disney, Nickelodeon}) and 5) Latino/Hispanic-themed programs on mainstream media (reruns of the George Lopez TV series).

\textbf{Radio}

Participants reported listening to radio in their cars and/or online an average of 1.3 hours per day. Their music preferences fell into three main categories, 1) Pop in English (rock, alternative rock, hip hop, urban), 2) Latin (\textit{reggaetton, bachata, rock en español}), and 3) regional from their country of origin (\textit{banda, rancheras, folklórico, marimba}).

The most frequently mentioned local radio station was San Francisco Bay Area’s \textit{La Kalle}, owned by \textit{Univision Communications, Inc.}, which appeals to young bilingual urban Latinos/Hispanics. Two participants described \textit{La Kalle} as bicultural and modern, and said that they listen to it because 1) “ponen música nueva, del género urbano [they play new music of the urban genre];” 2) “[porque me entero] de las noticias, anuncios, eventos culturales para Latinos [como] ‘Cinco de Mayo,’ [y] ‘Día de las Madres’ [(because I find out about) news, cultural events for Latinos (such as) ‘Cinco de Mayo,’ (and) ‘Mother’s Day’].” One participant reported that she rarely listened to music on the radio. She downloaded her favorite music and burned it on CDs. She commented, “Most of the music I listen to is from the internet; mostly in English, \textit{reggaetton}, pop, and hip pop. I download the music that I listen to on TV video programs [like]

Mari D. González

MTV Latino [MTV America Latina or] ‘Dos mundos’ [mun2].’ She added, “Todo el mundo las escucha [como] mis amigas [Everybody listens to them (like) my girlfriends].”

Mobile Phone Use

Out of the ten participants, eight had access to the internet on their mobile phones. One respondent did not own a cellular phone and another did not pay to have internet access. Of those with access to mobile internet, half reported using it for entertainment purposes: 1) “[I use] email, IM, música [music downloads], [and] sistema de navegación [GPS navigation system];” 2) “[I use] hotmail messenger, [para] bajar música de FunForMobile [porque tiene] la música que me gusta gratis” [to] download music from FunForMobile (because it has) the music I like free;” 3) “[I use] Twitter, I recently opened [an account]. I follow a lot of artists [for instance] Panda from Monterrey. [They play] rock en español;” 4) “I use internet on my cell phone [to] download music, [use] email, MySpace, and Hotmail.” The other four who paid to access internet on their cell phones reported using it mainly for emergencies such as GPS navigation system or to check their email when away from home.

When asked if they received advertising via their cell phones, five out of the eight who used cell phones, said “yes,” and four reported receiving advertising only from their wireless phone providers including Verizon, T-Mobile, Metro PCS, AT&T. One of the participant who reported having received ads from non-wireless phone companies stated, “Domino’s Pizza me envía promoción, ‘el especial de la semana.’[Creo que obtuvieron mi número cuando] una vez ordené pizza por [mi] teléfono [móvil]. [Domino’s Pizza sends me promotions, ‘the special of

---

the week.’ (I believe they got my number when) once, I ordered pizza from (my mobile)
phone].”

When asked if they would mind receiving ads on their cell phones, six out of the eight
who used a cell phone said they “would not mind.” Three stated that as long as the ads where
about products they like it was ok, 1) “No importa si es otra compañía pues me doy cuenta; si es
algo que me interesa [I don’t mind if it’s another company that way I find out if it’s something
I’m interested in];” 2) “[It] depends on what the ad is. Something I like, no problem;” 3) “No me
molestaria recibir ‘texts’ de productos y eventos que me gustan [I wouldn’t mind receiving texts
on products and events that I like].” One participant clarified that he would not like to receive
ads from the same company on a daily basis, “No me molestan [pero] si me lo mandaran todos
los días lo bloquearía [They don’t annoy me (but) if they were to send them everyday, I’d block
it].”

Of the cell phone users seven reported having sent and/or forwarded text messages to
their friends about concerts, promotions, new information from the internet, school-related
events, inspirational quotes, party invitations, and/or ads on missing children. The promotion
they reported receiving and forwarding via text message most frequently was for “a free
breakfast at Denny’s.” One participant explained, “Denny’s tenía desayunos gratis y ‘textie’ a
[mis] conocidos. Me enviaron un text en español; fue una combinación [de promoción] de TV
en español. Fueron al desayuno como cinco amigos [Denny’s had free breakfasts and (I) texted
(my) acquaintances. A text was sent to me in Spanish; it was a (cross) promotion with Spanish
TV. About five of my friends went to the breakfast].” Another participant indicated, “Siempre
Mari D. González

les digo a mis amigos. Los Latinos somos muy comunicativos [I always let my friends know. We Latinos are very communicative people].”

Internet

Interview participants reported spending an average of four hours a day online. Their top activity was interacting on social network sites (SNSs). The second most popular activity was “music downloading,” followed by reading and/or watching the news and sports (soccer and “lucha libre,” [wrestling]) news, email, and chatting. Other online activities mentioned included shopping, using search engines, retrieving driving directions, reading Spanish-language media (Univision.com), and soccer news. Respondents also reported visiting Univision’s online telenovela forums. Limewire was mentioned by three students as their preferred site to download music. Other music download sites mentioned were Ares, Videorola, a regional Mexican online radio and Sideral, a Guatemalan online radio, and iTunes.

Social Network Sites (SNSs)

Only one participant reported not having an active profile on any social network sites. Eight reported having an active profile on MySpace; three on Facebook; two on Hi5; and one on MetroFlog, a Spanish-language photolog website. Among the reasons mentioned in favor of MySpace were, 1) “Es el más popular, todos mis amigos lo tienen [It’s the most popular, all my friends have it (including) the ones from Mexico];” 2) “[Tiene] más aplicaciones, oportunidades para expresarte, decorar, fotos [It has more applications, opportunities to express yourself, decorate, pictures];” 3) “Everybody has MySpace, y se la pasan allí [they spend their time there]. If my friends don’t answer the phone, they’re on MySpace;” 4) “[It’s] easier to use, manage [and] put pictures, [I] get a lot of help, [answers to my] questions, editable pages, it’s all decorated,
different, music, pictures, [information] about me;” 5) “Puedes poner fotos las que quieras, escuchar música, escoger colores, [hacerlo] llamativo [You can post pictures all you want, listen to music, choose colors, (make it) attractive];” 6) “MySpace en español para comunicarme con amigos en los dos idiomas [MySpace in Spanish to communicate with friends in both languages];” 7) “I like MySpace more because I like to follow bandas [bands] and [I] get to hear [their] music;” 8) “Puedes crear la pagina a tu manera. Me da la oportunidad de expresarme a mi manera. Lo tengo extravagante [You can create the page your way. It gives me the opportunity to express myself my way. I have it extravagant]."

**Internet Ads**

Interview participants reported recalling online ads for recently-released movies, fast food products, weight loss products, skin care (acne) products, concerts, dating sites and free laptops. The most frequently recalled ad was for weight loss products, mentioned by three female respondents. Two respondents reported being annoyed by internet ads, saying that 1) “Me molestan porque estoy [they bother me because I’m] ‘chatting’ [and] they’re in my way;” and 2) “Once [I clicked on it], me bajo muchos [it got me a lot of] viruses.” Three respondents reported downloading wallpaper related to the product’s promotion.

**Interactive Food and Beverage Ads**

Three respondents favored Coca Cola’s ads. Two describe them as creative: 1) “Destapas la botella y te dirige a su sitio… tiene mucha música de animación, alegre [You open the bottle and it leads you to its (web) site… it has a lot of animated music, cheering];” 2) “I like Coke [ads. They] bring your senses to the product.” Another described Coca Cola’s promotions in Latin America as “especial [special]” and “stronger” than in the U.S. “[Coca Cola] traía
grupos de rock y ponían conciertos en las [Coca Cola used to bring rock bands and had concerts in the] high schools.”

Two respondents mentioned McDonald’s ads as their favorite online ad. One noted the importance for companies to give back to the Latino/Hispanic community, “[Mi anuncio favorito es] sobre una joven [estudiante] que ganó una ‘scholarship’ [y dice] ‘Gracias a McDonald’s pude ir a la escuela.’ Lo más relevante es que ayuden a la comunidad [Latina/Hispana]. Las compañías ganan mucho de nuestra comunidad, si no [nos] van a ayudar… para que consumir. [My favorite ad is about a young student who won a scholarship and says, ‘Thanks to McDonald’s I was able to go to [college].’ The most relevant is [for companies] to help the Latino/Hispanic community.” Another respondent liked the fact that McDonald’s has the same ads in Spanish and English. However, he explained, “Me identifico más con el de español [I identify more with the Spanish one].”

One respondent described a Redbull energy drink ad, “[It’s] funny, gracioso [funny], cartoons. [Muestra] al abuelito bailando en la mesa y el nieto dice, ‘mejor no le hubieramos dado la bebida’ [(It shows) the grandfather dancing on the table and the grandson says, ‘We shouldn’t had given him the drink’].”

Online Promotions

Five participants stated being registered on promotional websites. Two mentioned the Coca Cola website (www.mycoke.com) where members can earn promotional points. They reported that downloading free music was their main reason for registering. Another respondent stated that he was registered on the Domino’s Pizza’s website “para obtener cupones [to get
coupons].” The other two mentioned Victoria’s Secret website, as requested by her mom and Mary Kay website for the informative lessons on make up.

Five respondents stated that they were not registered on any promotional website. Two of them noted the sites’ requirements as the reason for not registering: 1) “there are a lot of requirements;” 2) “too many requirements.” One expressed her disbelief to win something, “I’ve never done it. I don’t believe I have a good chance [to win].”

Six respondents reported that they did not have any language preference for internet ads. Three participants reported preferring online ads in Spanish: 1) “Spanish [ads] are funnier. I understand humor in Spanish.” 2) “[I] prefer [them] in Spanish so that my parents can understand; to persuade my family.” 3) “Spanish, to understand the offer… humor in English is not as funny. [En español] le ponen el vocabulario mas figurative [(In Spanish) they use a more figurative vocabulary].” Two reported preferring bilingual ads and one recognized that they were uncommon: 1) “Es mejor ‘mixteado’ porque resalta el español, se nota. Puro español no hay palabra chusca que resalte [It’s better mixed because Spanish stands out, it can be noticed. (In) pure Spanish there isn’t any funny word that stands out].” 2) “Hay pocos. No hay muchos. Hay mas en ingles [There are few. There aren’t many. There are more in English].

Cultural Relevance in Advertising

Interview participants mentioned several “culturally relevant” online elements, which included Latin music, brighter colors, inclusiveness, cultural values, bicultural Latino/Hispanic role models, and successful Latino/Hispanic individuals in mainstream media. Their comments on these culturally relevant elements included the following:

- Latin music makes websites “Más llamativa [More inviting].”
Mari D. González

- Inclusiveness: “[I] hate discriminatory commercials that [show] that only Mexicans speak Spanish [or] that only Mexicans eat tacos.” “[Me gustan] películas donde ponen música en español. Nos hace sentir bien porque si nos toman en cuenta [(I like) movies where they put music in Spanish. It makes us feel good because they take us into account].”

- Cultural values: “It’s important to show the Latin flavor… for Spanish-speakers. It makes me feel proud. Language does not make [as much] difference but values, [the] importance of family, [being] hardworking, being a good friend.”

- Bicultural Latino/Hispanic role models: “Me gusta [George Lopez] porque muestra una familia Hispana ‘mixteada’ con como es la cultura de Estados Unidos.” [I like (George Lopez) because it shows a Hispanic family mixed with the way the U.S. culture is].”

  “Enrique Iglesias, su música sigue siendo Latina pero con pop. Cuando graba discos siempre incorpora la versión en español. No se aleja completamente de su cultura [Enrique Iglesias, his music is still Latin but with pop. When he records (CDs) he always incorporates the Spanish version. He doesn’t stray away completely from his culture].”

  “Oscar de la Hoya, siempre ayuda a los Latinos, es importante… que uno no se olvide de sus raíces y que ayude a su gente [Oscar de la Hoya always helps Latinos, it’s important… that one doesn’t forget his roots and helps his own people].”

- Successful Latino/Hispanic on mainstream media, “I wish there were more Latinos in Hollywood, we’d get more respect [like] Gael Garcia Bernal. I was surprised to see his latest movie on a mainstream theater. It gives him exposure. It says a lot.”
Discussion

Research points out three main cultural values when targeting online U.S. Latinos/Hispanics: 1) preference for bilingual content; 2) *familismo*; and 3) the use of celebrities as spokespersons. While multicultural internet marketers also recommend bilingual websites, they note two more recent trends: 1) the extensive use of mobile internet; and 2) the widespread use of entertainment and social network sites by young Latinos/Hispanics.

**Bilingual Websites Preferred by Bilingual Youth**

The majority of online Latinos/Hispanics prefer English content. Yet, bilingual U.S.-born or second generation and 1.5-generation Latinos/Hispanics, who immigrated as children, prefer English websites that include Spanish because those sites speak to their cultural identity and make them feel included (Vann, 2006). In fact, researchers (Singh, Baack, Kundu, & Hurtado, 2008) argue that “[l]anguage in this case… Spanish, tends to be the most visible manifestation of U.S. Hispanic identity” (p.2). According to Williamson (2006), Latinos/Hispanics appreciate “quality Spanish-language content online…. [It resonates with their] cultural pride and a feeling of community” (p. 17).

Multicultural marketing analysts (Singh, Baack, Pereira & Baack, 2008; Vann, 2006; Wasserman, 2009; Williamson, 2006;) advise advertisers to include both Spanish and English to reach the whole spectrum of Latino/Hispanic online users. Most U.S. Latino/Hispanic youth are comfortable with either English or Spanish advertisements and marketing professionals understand that simply translating or adapting websites does not work for Latinos/Hispanics (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005; Valdes, 2002; Vann 2006) because they are fully bilingual and bicultural (Valdes).
Mari D. González

**Familismo: the Maximum Representation of Latin/Hispanic Collectivism**

Young Latino/Hispanic Americans hold onto the *familismo*, the strong value Latinos/Hispanics place in family orientation. They acknowledge being swayed by parents and grandparents to watch a particular TV program or registering for promotional websites of products their parents like. They also appreciate TV programs and ads that allude to *familismo*. *Familismo* and collectivism play an important role and are central to their culture and traditions (Chong & Baez, 2005; Davila, 2001; Korzenny & Korzenny, 2005; Singh, Kwon & Pereira; 2003, Valdes, 2002; Vann, 2006). According to Chong and Baez (2005), *familismo* “is one of the most important Latino cultural values” (p. 39). Online advertising professional Lee Vann (2006) advises marketers to “craft an online experience that appeals to strong family principles…. [for the site to ‘feel] Hispanic”’ (¶ 4). Companies that reach out to minorities capitalize on peer and family pressure because collectivist societies tend to share more information and depend more on word-of-mouth referrals (Singh, Kwon & Pereira, 2003).

**Use of Celebrities as Spokespersons to sell Food and Beverages**

Research (Singh, Baack, Pereira & Baack, 2008; Torres & Gelb, 2002) recommends the use of audience-like spokespersons or models to increase ad receptivity. Torres and Gelb, suggest “accommodation” or the use of people “similar to target audience to increase the likelihood of reaching communication objectives” (p. 71).

Among the top 50 food and beverage companies that advertised in Hispanic media in 2008 as measured by U.S. media spending included four food and beverage companies: *McDonald’s* (No. 6); *SABMiller* (No. 24); *PepsiCo* (No. 27); and *Coca Cola, Co.*, (No. 43).

---

Food and beverage companies effectively utilize “culturally relevant” advertising to target Latino/Hispanic youth. They employ Spanish-language media, well-known Latino/Hispanic celebrities, and telenovela-inspired ads to promote their products. The list of companies includes Carl’s Jr., Coca Cola, Tecate (Heineken Mexican beer), McDonalds, and Pepsi. Trade magazine, Mediaweek (Bachman, 2009) announced that Carl’s Jr. was launching a TV campaign for affiliates at Univision and Telefutura, a Spanish-language broadcast network owned by Univision Communications, Inc., from March 23 through June 23, 2009. Benchman (2009) describes Carl’s Jr. ad “disguised as mini-novela” (¶ 1). Carl’s Jr. media company approached Univision’s “telenovela experts” for the ad production. The telenovela characteristics include, 1) the characters, “a scantily clad young woman… [and] a ruggedly handsome man;” 2) the suspense, “[being] interrupted by the woman’s former lover;” and 3) concludes with a happy ending, with the woman enjoying the burger with two men” (¶ 4).

In March 2009, Coca Cola began airing a Latino/Hispanic-targeted campaign with a telenovela-related promotion. This is not the first time Coca Cola joined a Spanish-language telenovela fan club for cross-promotion, but the fifth. For one week, the promotion participants entered sweepstakes to win telenovela memorabilia and a chance to meet telenovela stars in person (Parpis, 2009).

Pepsi relies on promotional music concerts. According to de Lafuente (2008), “Pepsi… has made a significant push in music programming,” (¶ 5) to target young bilingual Latinos/Hispanics with PepsiMusica, named after its main sponsor, is a bilingual entertainment program that showcases top Latin pop music performers from Latin America and the U.S. aired on Telemundo’s mun2 network.
Tecate, Heineken’s Mexican beer, targets Latinos/Hispanics with dual campaigns and separate English and Spanish ads. While the Spanish-language ads were aired on Univision, Telefutura, and Telemundo affiliates, the English-language ads were aired on ABC, CBS, CW, Fox, and NBC. The Spanish-language ads are “aimed at recent immigrants from Mexico…. [and] the English-language ads celebrate the influence of Mexican-Americans in the U.S. culture” (Greenberg, 2009, ¶ 1). The later campaign features boxing legend Oscar de la Hoya on one of the spots (Greenberg).

Bicultural Campaign

In 2007, McDonald’s designed a campaign for bilingual Latinos/Hispanics called “Flying Fry” which features two young Latino/Hispanic actors. McDonald’s ads did not utilize celebrities or telenovela formats. Instead, it ran an “elusive and breakthrough” bicultural campaign that used TV, radio, and online ads to “[connect] with the growing acculturated segment of Hispanics, especially second generation” (de Lafuente, 2007, ¶ 5). The campaign centered on Latinos/Hispanics between the ages of 16 and 19. They combined Latino/Hispanic celebrities, Latin music, and Spanish-language with a mainstream message. The ads aired on English-language networks including Comedy Central, Fox, MTV and VH1. The interactive online banners came up during urban-type programming. Tommy Thompson, the ad agency’s president, observes that bilingual Latinos/Hispanics do not connect with mainstream English-language advertisement because, “they don’t find the message relevant” (de Lafuente, 2007, ¶ 7).

AdvertisingAge’s Hispanic Marketing and Media guide for 2008 reported that McDonald’s Corp., spent $89,657.6; PepsiCo., spent $41,054.7; and Coca Cola Co., spent $26,990.8 thousands of dollars in U.S. “Hispanic” media for 2007.
Current Trends on Online Advertising

Mobile Internet and Entertainment Media

Latino/Hispanic youth enjoy having access to Internet on their cell phones and they use it widely for entertainment purposes. Media analysts (Chang, 2009; de Lafuente, 2008; Kutchera 2009; Loechner, 2008) note that Latinos/Hispanics are the highest users of mobile media. Chang observes “U.S. Hispanics are more engaged with their mobile phones than Americans overall” (¶ 6). In 2009 comScore M:Metrics reported (Kutchera) that 71 percent of Latinos/Hispanics consume mobile online content while the “market-average” consumption is 48 percent (¶ 2). De de Lafuente observes, “part of this boils down to demographics: 51.5 percent of U.S. Hispanics with phones are between 18 and 34 years old while 31 percent of the general ‘mobile’ population falls within that range” (¶ 3). According to BIGresearch’s 2008 report (Loechner, 2008), Latinos/Hispanics topped the list of regular cell phone users of “the form of new media used the most…with 57%... [compared to] 53% of African Americans, 53.9% of Asians and 49.4% of Whites” (¶ 60).

Loechner (2008) argues that “minorities…. are more likely to use iPods, text on cell phones, play video games, use video/picture phones, instant messaging online and watch videos on cell phones… than Whites” (¶ 7). Reports (de Lafuente, 2008) on Latinos/Hispanics as “more sophisticated mobile users” drove the telecommunications company Sprint to launch a new cell phone that includes “GPS navigation, music download capabilities, text messaging, web browsing, live TV, picture taking/sending and voice activation” (¶ 7) and was set to be heavily campaigned to attract Latinos/Hispanics (de Lafuente). Latinos/Hispanics do not mind receiving
mobile ads even pass them to their friends. They “tend to notice and respond well to ads on cell phones” (Kutchera, 2009, ¶ 2).

**Online Entertainment Media and Social Network Sites**

Young Latinos/Hispanics tend to socialize online more through social network sites and instant messaging sites than non-Latinos/Hispanics. *MySpace* and *MySpace Latino* executive Manny Miravete observes, “Social media…. [is] the fabric of Hispanics online” (O’Leary, 2009, ¶ 3). Miravete reported that 65 percent of online Latinos/Hispanics use social network sites (O’Leary, 2008).

Williamson (2006) argues that Latinos/Hispanics spend more time chatting and/or using instant messaging than the general population online. Research firm, Mintel reports (Greenberg, 2009) “Hispanics are more likely to have profiles on social network sites than non-Hispanics…. [and] it is young Hispanic consumers who are driving the trend” (¶ 4). Market research company Mintel (Greenberg, 2009) reports that “Hispanics spend nearly twice as much time -- 5 hours -- using networking websites or chatting via instant messaging than any other demographic group” (Greenberg, 2009, ¶ 2).

**Conclusion**

Based on the reported findings, online advertisers, internet marketers, and localization professionals wishing to target bilingual and acculturated Latinos/Hispanics in the U.S. ought to account for their “hybrid” cultural identity which is formed by American and Latino/Hispanic values. Localization professionals and online marketers can successfully reach this demographic group by including content that uses a blend of mainstream American and Latino/Hispanic cultural elements. For an online ad, an internet marketing campaign or a website to be
“culturally relevant” to this sub-group, it needs to include ethnic identifiers that are immediately recognized and collectively accepted by its members as Latino/Hispanic such as, Spanish-language words or phrases within English content; popular modern Latin/Hispanic music; Latino/Hispanic spokespersons, celebrities or “audience-like” models; and images that portray a Latino/Hispanic family.

Including these “culturally relevant” elements on ads or websites is more effective than Spanish-language only or simply translated content when targeting bilingual U. S. Latinos/Hispanics. Having the same ad or web page in both languages, English and Spanish, is not necessary for this demographic. It can be redundant. They are fluent in English and prefer to navigate the internet in English. Yet, a mainstream ad or website in English-language only does not resonate with them as much as a bilingual or Spanglish one because it includes the two languages they regularly interact with. Adding commonly-used Spanish-language words or phrases to an ad or web content is more attractive for bilingual and bicultural Latinos/Hispanics. It makes them feel included into the mainstream American society.

Popular bicultural Latino/Hispanic-American celebrities are effective spokespersons for this demographic on marketing campaigns because they are seen as role models. These celebrities are immersed in the American mainstream culture and at the same time they display a level of attachment to Latino/Hispanic values which is comparable to this sub-segment of bilingual young Latinos/Hispanics. Bilingual and bicultural second-generation Latinos/Hispanics are in tune with both cultures and as consumers they are best reached with online marketing and digital campaigns that are bilingual and bicultural as well. The best examples of this model are music-themed websites and TV video programming channels on
which their hosts interview performers in English but incorporate some words and phrases in Spanish and the performers sing in both languages too.

Internet marketers and localization professionals can highlight *familismo* on an English-language website to give it a Latino/Hispanic feeling with pictures of Latino/Hispanic families that include grandparents and other extended family members.

Other online widespread elements recognized by Latino/Hispanic in the U.S. are brighter colors and on social network and interactive sites, the option for artistic and self-expression. Because of second-generation Latinos/Hispanics’ affinity with soccer and *telenovelas*, a *telenovela*-inspired and a soccer-themed commercial or marketing campaign will strongly resonate with Latinos/Hispanics in the U.S. To increase the effectiveness when advertising, promoting, and selling to this sub-segment, it is recommended opting for brighter colors and including applications for online interaction such as forums and social network sites and alternatives for the user to customize and creatively personalize her individual page.

The growing number of second-generation bilingual Latinos/Hispanics in the U.S. uses the latest digital technology such as mobile internet, online media applications and cell phone text messaging and makes extensive use of mobile media and social network sites. This market segment welcomes cell phone text ads as long as those are on products and services relevant to their age and lifestyles. Online advertisers and internet marketers that target them can effectively utilize cross-promotions that include TV, internet and mobile phone. Offering free-music downloads greatly increases the campaign’s success given that this demographic makes the most of their mobile phone by downloading their favorite songs.
References

Retrieved from http://www.brandweek.com/bw/content_display/news-and-features/hispanic-marketing/e3i710f01ed18601fd49b46521626dc6b1b

AdvertisingAge, 18.


Brandweek, 49(16), 8-81/2. Retrieved from EBSCO database.


Ocaña, (2009, June/July). Doing it our way: The way Latinos assimilate could be changing the very basis of what it means to be American. *Latina,* 82-84.


Mari D. González


Appendix

Interview Questions

TV
1. How many hours of TV do you watch?
2. Which programs do you watch the most on TV?
3. Are they in English, Spanish or both?
4. Is language important? If yes, why? If no, why?
5. If it is not relevant, what is relevant (important) about the programs you watch?

Radio
6. How much radio do you listen to?
7. What are you favorite stations?
8. Are they in English, Spanish or bilingual?
9. Is language important? If yes, why? If no, why?
10. If it is not relevant, what is relevant (important) about the programs you watch?

Cell Phone
11. Do you use your cell phone to navigate the Internet?
12. Do you pay to use any of the following: IM, watch videos, download music, email, or another, (which one)?
13. Do you receive ads on your cell phone? From what companies?
14. Do you send text messages to your friends about ad campaigns or events?
15. Are you ok with receiving a few ads on your cell phone about things you like?

Internet
16. How much time do you spend online? ______ per day/week/month

17. Is it in English, Spanish or bilingual?

18. What online activity consumes most of your time? [IM/chatting, downloading, shopping, watching videos, playing games, social network]

19. What do you enjoy most about the Internet? Is it in English, Spanish or bilingual?

20. What are the top 3 internet sites you visit the most? Are they in English, Spanish or bilingual?

Social Network Sites (SNSs)

21. Do you have a profile on one of these websites? Which website?

22. What is the most popular SNS among your friends? Is it in English, Spanish, or bilingual?

23. What ad do you most remember from this site?

24. Why do you like it?

25. What makes it relevant or interesting?

Interactive Advertisement

26. What is your favorite Internet ad? Why?

27. Do you get coupons, freebees, special codes, or memberships for something? How does it work?

28. Do you share it with your friends? Do you invite your friends to be part of it? How?

29. Do you download banners, wallpapers, avatars or other things from these sites?

Food and Drinks Ads

30. Do you prefer online ads in English or Spanish or bilingual?
31. What ads are popular among your Latino friends and family? Why?

32. What is your favorite online or cell phone drink ad? If there is not one you can mention a TV ad.

33. What is your favorite online or cell phone food ad? If there is not one you can mention a TV ad.

34. Is it in English, Spanish or bilingual?

35. If it is in English, what do you like about it?

36. Are there ads in Spanish that are really cool? Why?

37. Are there ads in English that are really cool? Why?

38. Are there bilingual ads that are really cool? Why?

39. If language does not make a difference (or is not relevant) what is relevant?