

Perdido en la Traducción*

BY NOEMÍ RICALO

PROMOCIONES PANAVISTA

Much has been made about the stunning impact that Census 2010 will have on Hispanic marketing—but what does that mean for serving the Hispanic shopper?

Understanding the Hispanic shopper purchase behaviors, origins and passions is the cost-of-entry with this influential demographic. I have some insider insights and high-level recommendations to share, and will be quizzing you on your *Español** later in the article!

A new tracking study reveals insights into Hispanics as shoppers.

Because there's very little data to help brand and retail marketers understand Hispanics as shoppers, we developed our own tracking study to explore just that topic—specifically with regard to grocery shopping.

The results of the first two waves of the study provide an interesting look at where Hispanics shop for major categories of groceries; how they plan and conduct their shopping trips; how they respond to promotions; which brands they prefer; and the differences between sub-segments of Hispanics.

Some manufacturers rely heavily on brand equity gained with Hispanic shoppers in their home countries. However, many of these companies have not always carried the message forward in the US market in a relevant way—and sometimes not at all!

Given the awakening of the Hispanic shopper to

other relevant brand options, makers of Hispanic-preferred brands would do well to maintain and even step up the pressure—not only by spending more on awareness and brand-building, but also by tailoring their shopper-marketing initiatives to Hispanics' increasingly hectic mainstream lifestyles.

Our tracking study has uncovered that Hispanic shoppers have evolved in several important ways as part of the acculturation process over the last 10 years:

The shift to mission-driven shopping. Increasingly, Hispanics are shifting from relatively unplanned shopping trips to mission-driven agendas complete with pre-purchase research and a well thought-out plan of attack for when they arrive at the store. This means that marketers must intercept them earlier in the whole decision-making cycle—making the case for product benefits and forging *lealtad** long before shoppers are in front of the shelf.

It's about more than just price. To be sure, price still figures prominently in the purchase decision for Hispanic shoppers, but now more than ever, the attributes of quality, taste and versatility are sharing the limelight. This means that a mix shift is in order—from an inordinate focus on couponing and sales to sampling and education about the best use of ingredients and other engagement tools.

The rising importance of social media. For younger Hispanics in particular, social media has encouraged interaction with both brands and others in their community. Word-of-mouth and product endorsement is as viable today as when the *comadres** used to recommend products, services and professionals to each other—now they're just doing it on Facebook.

For example, we used Facebook to validate Simmons data that suggested that Hispanic households had multiple cereals in their pantry. Within six hours, we were able to confirm the presence of an average of up to five cereal types in their pantries, and also

Reaction to Hard Times

Among Hispanic shoppers, those of different backgrounds use different strategies to deal with economic hardship.

	% agreeing with statement		
	Mexican	Caribbean	South & Central America
Reduced dining out	60	68	63
Used more coupons	49	43	39
Bought more items on sale	46	51	50
Eating more home-cooked meals	55	56	51
Spent less on groceries	39	46	30
Bought more private label or store brands	32	35	29
Decreased vacation/travel	41	37	50
Made fewer shopping trips	44	57	35
Focus more on needs than wants	67	66	72
Spend less on entertainment	56	67	52

SOURCE: Promociones PanaVista

gained anecdotal information on who preferred which cereal and why, and the occasion on which cereals were served. We learned, for example, that moms often serve cereal for dinner to ensure that their “picky” eaters were properly nourished.

CONOCE * YOUR AUDIENCE

The Hispanic market is often referred to as one big target market — an assumption that can leave brand marketers’ target audiences scratching their *cabezas**. Much Hispanic marketing is targeted at first and second generation Mexican culture. However, while Mexicans make up the largest part of the US Hispanic market, Latinos hail from many diverse nations — Peru, Cuba, Argentina, Columbia and more.

Adding to this challenge of cultural differences, are the varying levels of acculturation. To be sure, acculturated Hispanics respond well to campaigns with universal themes designed for the general population. But if the aim is to reach them in a truly relevant and emotionally engaging way, then the goal should be to relay the “theme” in a manner that resonates with the cultural quirks.

For instance, how many general-market children’s birthday parties include an open-ended timeframe, no RSVPs required, multigenerational attendance and dancing ‘til grandpa falls asleep on the couch? That’s what a Hispanic child’s birthday party is like.

*Más** Hispanics are also growing up in a culture where diversity has reached their traditional neighborhoods. In recently conducted groups, we learned that traditionally Mexican neighborhoods are now being shared with Asians and other ethnic groups. The result is that Mexicans have been introduced to sushi and Kirin Ichiban while Asians are enjoying *frijoles refritos**. This dynamic is at play all over the country.

Hispanic moms continue to play a traditional role as chief family nurturer and gatekeeper, however most Hispanic moms today are no longer cooking everything from scratch. A few years ago it was unthinkable that un-aculturated Hispanic women would use canned beans. Now, they doctor name-brands to taste homemade so well that even their husbands can’t tell the difference. Hispanics may be more amenable to stocking ready-made or quick meal-solution options such as pre-cut, pre-washed fruits and vegetables. They know the price of convenience is higher, but are more willing to pay the price to deal with time constraints.

The chef/cooking phenomenon is also helping the retro-acculturation process for Hispanics who grew up outside of predominantly Hispanic areas and did not learn to cook their national dishes. Chefs like Bobby Flay and Rick Bayless, among others, are not only popularizing a Hispanic food point-of-view, they are teaching Hispanics who didn’t learn from their mothers. They are also teaching Middle America to cook and enjoy ethnic foods. So, it behooves national chains to expand their food offerings because it is no longer an issue of serving just their ethnic shoppers but all shoppers.

RETAILERS AS BRAND SOCIOS*

Our tracking study shows that regional chains do a better job of not only addressing the needs of Hispanics, but also in shaping shopper behavior. Hispanics tend to be very loyal to retailers who tailor their approach to them — particularly in certain grocery categories. For example, shoppers at Superior are loyal to the chain for its wide variety of produce, familiar products and brands, special cuts of meats, freshly made tortillas and the ever-favorite *pan dulce**.

One of the challenges of the Hispanic shopper-marketing experience is the lack of sales data to support program expansion. Nielsen panel data are not always available and typically under-represent Hispanic results. Comprehensive Hispanic retail programs such as SuperValu's Jewel-Osco are vital to quantifying the Hispanic contribution to the bottom line. Jewel-Osco partners with manufacturers to provide metrics at the end of the promotional period.

¡VIVA LA DIFERENCIA!*

Regional idiosyncrasies, economic well-being, as well as levels of earning power and acculturation impact Hispanic campaigns. Certain brands do exceptionally well because they address a specific regional need. For example, in the Southwest, Dr Pepper Snapple Group's Clamato Tomato Cocktail has savory and refreshing qualities that help consumers deal with the hot climate.

Urban dwellers have less storage, and rely on public transportation more than suburban and rural dwellers. As a result, there is a tendency to purchase smaller package sizes. Target has done a good job by focusing on packaging that addresses the geo-demographic needs of their shopper segments.

*** How well did you do?**

- Perdido en la Traducción** — Lost in Translation
- Español** — Spanish
- Lealtad** — Loyalty
- Comadres** — Co-mothers, godmothers, best friends, almost sisters
- Conoce** — Get to know
- Cabezas** — Heads
- Más** — More
- Frijoles Refritos** — Refried Beans
- Socios** — Partners
- Pan Dulce** — Mexican Sweet Bread
- ¡Viva la Diferencia!** — Long Live the Difference!
- Gringo** — North American
- Primero** — First
- Segundo** — Second
- Invítanos** — Invite Us
- Dinero** — Money
- Tercero** — Third

The whole shift toward convenience foods manifests itself differently in different regions. For example, in Miami, where I grew up, it was not unusual for on-the-go families to have “Cantina” delivery service. Cantinas are an affordable catering service that busy Cuban moms used to serve their families fresh and hot meals during the week, while they cooked at home on weekends.

Having grown up experiencing this type of meal solution, it was not a stretch to go to the next level, known as *comidas por libra* (or food by the pound), which Miamians have been lining up to purchase for a very long time. Publix was one of the pioneers of this type of authentic meal solution; they have done an outstanding job of addressing the specific needs of their Cuban shoppers and, now, those from virtually every country in Latin America.

WHAT'S A GRINGO* TO DO?

More brand marketers need to view their marketing and communications strategies through a cross-cultural lens. Now more than ever, it is important to create an environment of education — specifically tailored to the needs and appetites of the growing and diverse Hispanic audience in the United States.

*Primero** — Take the time to understand the Hispanic audience. Different cultures, different idiosyncrasies, different regional needs.

*Segundo** — Engage the Hispanic shopper. Offer bilingual or Spanish-language messages they can understand, so they don't feel intimidated by coming to an unwelcoming environment. *Invítanos**, because we spend a lot of *dinero** where we feel welcome.

*Tercero** — Educate the Hispanic audience about what makes your product unique. Be honest and consistent. The Hispanic culture is all about dialogue and engagement — don't talk to them once and ignore them thereafter.

Whether personal or otherwise, the key to a successful and mutually rewarding relationship is long-term commitment, communication and mutual understanding. Those are universal truths that need never get lost in the translation! ■



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