

# Portrayals of Hispanic Americans in Magazine Advertising: A 15-Year Analysis

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## Abstract

Consumer diversity in the United States has created a substantial challenge for advertisers. Diverse consumer markets in the United States indicate there are managerial and social implications advertisers need to examine when pursuing their advertising strategies (Peterson, 2007). This examination is important as each consumer market segment differs in culture, language usage, values, ideologies, preferences, customs, historical perspectives, and consumption behavior. According to Tharp (2001) it is vital to consider the differences in the diverse consumer markets that compose the United States. Although the managerial and social implications of advertising has been researched in the past, it is most important now as the US consumer population is more diverse than ever before (Mittal, 1994).

The Hispanic market is the most predominant within the minority segments, according to the US Census Bureau American Community Survey. In 2004 the US Hispanic market population was estimated to be 44.4 million ("Minority Population Tops 100 million," 2007). Besides being the largest minority segment, Hispanics also are the fastest growing and are expected to reach 60.4 million by the year 2020 representing almost a 50% increase (Pew Hispanic Center, 2005). Hispanics represent a substantial population of the consumers in the US as well as large purchasing power potential. The Hispanic annual purchasing power exceeds \$750 billion and is the fastest growing demographic in the United States (Camelo, 2007). Their purchasing power is expected to increase close to \$1 trillion by the year 2010 (AmCham, 2007). Hispanics are characterized as one of the most brand loyal segments of the US general population which makes it a valuable market for advertisers. These Hispanic attributes are vital for economic growth and business success indicating that advertisers have viewed the Hispanic segment as an attractive and high potential segment to target.

The purpose of this article is to analyze how marketers have altered their advertising campaigns by using culturally relevant content in magazine advertising to specifically target the US Hispanic population. Stereotypes have been an important aspect of the advertisers' efforts to target the Hispanic population. Therefore, it is important to also investigate how Hispanic stereotypes and the portrayal of Hispanics have evolved in the past 15 years. As the Hispanic population expands so does their economic impact. Moreover, an effort will be made to investigate whether marketers regard Hispanic culture as a profitable segment that is worthwhile to be targeted. This relationship will be determined by examining the trend of the number of

advertisements directed toward Hispanics. If the number of advertisements directed toward Hispanics over the past 15 years has increased then we can infer that marketers view the Hispanic market as profitable.

Examining whether marketers are modifying their advertising campaigns to reflect Hispanic heritage as an effort to relate and influence them with greater effectiveness is also important for this study. Stevenson and Swayne (1999) indicate that the use of a member of a minority group in an ad increases the effectiveness of ads. Efforts by marketers to relate to Hispanics are demonstrated by the increased use of Hispanic cues such as Spanish language in the form of code-switching in the ad copy or the increased use of Spanish-only ads and the use of Hispanic models. These efforts will be analyzed in this content analysis. The 15 year evolution of several aspects of the portrayal of Hispanics will also be analyzed. The aspects include the frequency and prominence of Hispanic portrayals, the different representations of Hispanics in different magazines and the types of settings and relationships in which Hispanics are portrayed. Overall, this investigation will focus on the modifications that marketers have made throughout the past 15 years in Hispanic oriented magazines and how that relates to the increased predominance of Hispanic consumers and culture in the United States.

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