

MULTICULTI ● Best of both worlds

Hispanic family dynamics yield insights

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Several discussions and studies in the marketing industry have focused on Latinos as individual consumers, but little emphasis has been placed on the Hispanics' distinct family architecture and how this relates to marketing.

There is, for example, a wealth of information about the fact that Latinos are family-oriented and that the median Hispanic household is larger than the typical general market household. All this information has been helpful to marketers in recent years as the market has blossomed, but moving forward into 2006 and 2007, marketers need to be probing even more deeply into the Latino family dynamics. More importantly, marketers need to explore how the family dynamic affects everything Latinos do, from shopping to celebrating holidays.

The Hispanic family architecture is interesting from a marketing perspective because it resembles a hybrid between an immigrant family in the United States in the early 20th century and the U.S. nuclear family in the mid-50s. Take, for example, the Morales family.

◆ Carlos and Adriana Morales immigrated to Chicago 16 years ago from Alvaro Obregón, Michoacán, Mexico, in search of better opportunities for their children.

◆ Carlos, the father, works in an auto shop as a mechanic. At work he has learned a bit of English, but he doesn't feel entirely comfortable with it. He believes that a good education is key for his children to succeed in life. Carlos is the main provider for the household, and he works hard to ensure he can pay all the bills. He feels a certain amount of accomplishment because he recently ordered a new cable service with several Spanish-language channels and he has been able to send money to his relatives in Mexico every month.

◆ Mariana, the only daughter, is a teenager who divides her time between school, sports and friends. Most of her friends are "Guerras" (Americans), but she doesn't feel different because they share the same tastes in fashion, movies, sports, boys and music. In fact, their favorite artist is Daddy Yankee and Mariana feels special because she is the only one among her school friends who can truly understand his lyrics. Mariana is upset about having to celebrate a Quinceañera (the equivalent of a Sweet 16 party when a Latina turns 15) instead of a Sweet 16 party like her American-born counterparts.

◆ Pedro, the only son, gets spoiled by all members in the household. His Dad teaches him about soccer and his Mom takes him to the park on weekends. Pedrito, or Pete, as his friends in school know him, is obsessed with Harry Potter and can't wait until the next movie comes out in theaters. Recently, the Ratón (tooth fairy) visited him and he is eager for his Dad to take him to get a new X-Box 360 video game.

◆ María Guadalupe, the maternal grand-

mother, came to the United States three years ago to help Adriana with the children and the household chores. She spends most of her day watching over her grandchildren and enjoys watching *Novela* while she cooks.

This family structure may be similar to both the U.S. immigrants of the 20th century and the U.S. nuclear family of the 1950s, but it is different from today's typical general market household. These differences are important to marketers because they influence everything these consumers do, from the programs they watch (Spanish vs. English vs. bilingual) to the type of car that they purchase, to the type of toothpaste they use. And as would be expected, it also affects the way they celebrate different holidays.

According to a recent study (conducted nationwide in January 2006 among 250 Hispanics, 18 years and older, by C&R Research using its LatinoEyes.com online panel) many Hispanics celebrate unique cultural holidays such as Cinco de Mayo, Día de los Reyes and Día de los Muertos, and nearly 100% celebrate Christmas and New Year's. Interestingly, many also celebrate traditional U.S.-centric holidays—65% celebrate the 4th of July and 85% celebrate Thanksgiving. The fact that they are celebrating so many different traditions from both Latin America and the United States speaks volumes about the acculturation process Latinos are going through.

Not only is the acculturation process evident in what they celebrate, but also *how* they celebrate. Nearly all holidays are celebrated as a big family event, including New Year's Eve. In most cases these events start with attending mass, followed by parties that last more than five hours and include alcohol and dancing (41% of Latinos danced as part of their Christmas 2005 celebration). Regarding foods and drinks, Latinos are serving traditional U.S. foods, such as turkey and cranberry sauce for Thanksgiving, while integrating these with traditional Hispanic dishes. A few examples the survey revealed include the fact that more than 50% of Latinos serve rice or beans for Thanksgiving, 10% have turkey tacos, 21% serve guacamole and 20% serve empanadas. Also for Thanksgiving, 60% serve beer, 20% tequila and 10% serve Atole.

Overall, as marketers continue to target Hispanics in 2006 and 2007, the unique family architecture will be a key variable in how this market is addressed. The consumer packaged goods, music and airline industries, to name a few, can all benefit from a basic understanding of how the Latino family operates and what drives their decisions about holiday celebrations and how they spend their family and recreational time together. ■

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