

Diverse Hispanic market complicates Chicago ads

In Chicago, ethnic markets have always presented a special opportunity for local and national merchandisers. The Hispanic community is the newest and fastest-growing of these markets.

The Hispanic population in the 1970s grew 5½ times faster than the Anglo population and 60% faster than the black population. This dynamic audience of 300,000 households, spending more than \$3 billion annually, figures prominently in the marketing strategies of many local merchants. To reach the Chicago Hispanic population, however, requires understanding the ethnic mix.

For example, Chicago is unique among major U.S. cities with sizable Hispanic populations in that the market is heterogeneous. Whereas New York City has a large population of Puerto Ricans, Miami has Cubans and the Southwestern cities have Mexican-Americans, Chicago has a composite population with all of these nationalities and most other Caribbean, Latin and South American nationalities as well. This causes problems for merchandisers who venture into this marketplace, often with the attitude of "if sales increase fine; if not, then back to the old reliable advertising mix."

To minimize costs, the most common initial approach is to dub Spanish soundtracks onto existing English language commercials for radio or television. Dubbing, however, can lead to inadvertent alienation of market segments within Chicago's quilt-like Hispanic community.

There exists within the Spanish language diverse cultural usages of words and idiomatic expressions, somewhat like the differences between American English and British English (referring to the trunk or hood of an automobile versus the boot or bonnet). For example, the word "camion" can mean a bus to Mexican-Americans, or a truck to other South Americans. The word "guagua" can mean a bus to Cubans and Puerto Ricans, but the same word can mean a rodent to other South Americans. The uninitiated could inadvertently advertise a "rodent sale" rather than a "truckload sale" to Mexican-Americans.

According to Jesse G. Wilson, an authority in marketing to Chicago

Hispanics, the commercial setting and music also convey discernable cultural signals. He cited a supermarket chain which utilized Puerto Rican sound tracks made in New York City for their Chicago commercials even though most of their local stores are located in primarily Mexican-American trade areas.

For radio, accents are the key elements with which to be culturally attuned. "A major local merchandiser initiated a radio campaign that was delivered by a non-Spanish speaking Anglo reading Spanish copy," Mr. Wilson recalls. "The resulting message was so distorted that community reaction, including comment in a major Spanish language newspaper, pleaded with management to withdraw the commercial."

"In another case, a national brand of beer opened an advertising campaign in the Chicago area with two jingles—one with Tex-Mex music and the other with Mariachi music. While the Tex-Mex was developed for the Southwestern area of the U.S., where this style of music enjoys strong appeal, it was emphasized locally over the Mariachi music, which would have had more appeal to the Chicago Mexican-American who migrated more extensively from the Central areas of Mexico."

The media selection also can have other demographic and nationality implications, and buying by the book only scratches the media surface. For example, in broadcast media, the rating services list one part-time television station (Channel 26) plus one program on Channel 44 and two radio stations (WOJO and WOPA). Overlooked are 11 other part-time radio stations. To orchestrate the best media buys (both in cultural mix and cost) requires not only monitoring each media, but also knowing the individual brokers and quality of programming because reliable measurement is not available to quantify buying schedules. Most stations and programs appeal individually to various sectors of the Hispanic market, thus a commercial receives exposure to a narrow segment.

In addition to broadcast, the Hispanic market can be reached by using other media including 21 full-time and seven part-time Spanish

language movie theaters, three main Spanish language newspapers, 10 neighborhood Spanish language newspapers, out-of-home and on-door advertising vehicles.

Because this population is a concentrated, urban one, reached by such well-defined media, the cost of advertising is normally much less than Anglo-directed advertising, but requires a good deal of individual attention. The need to charge special fees for specialty servicing is a factor of some concern to major agencies considering undertaking Spanish language advertising for their current clients. Some are using smaller agencies that specialize in the Hispanic market and provide not only commercial development but complete services, especially market research, public relations and merchandising programs.

"The Chicago Hispanic market is not impossible to understand," Mr. Wilson says, "just different in its attitudes related to cultural and economic background. The question of whether it is absolutely necessary to utilize Spanish language advertising appears to be a moot point today as more and more research results identify the most effective commercial is one in Spanish—the language used in the Hispanics' decision-making process. With carefully-planned objectives and assistance from professionals involved in the local market, the returns on advertising will justify the attention paid to the Hispanic consumer," according to Mr. Wilson.

"While the racial mix will probably remain fairly constant over the next several years in Chicago, the economic magnitude of the Hispanic market will continue to expand. Even today, the aggregate annual family income is much higher than commonly believed. Not only is there the existence of large amounts of unrecorded income, which is overlooked due to such factors as undocumented workers and a heavy reliance on a cash economy, but in the extended family structure it is common for all able members to contribute to the family income. The incidence of trade and barter practices is higher than found in the Anglo or black communities, thus allowing a stretching of the disposable family income," Mr. Wilson points out.

With the economic situation of high unemployment and high inflation, the Hispanic market sector's cash purchasing characteristic must be viewed by merchants as most attractive. #