

Reaching Latinos

The Latino audience wants to hear from you, provided you know who they truly are

Unless you haven't been paying attention, Latinos are becoming more of a buying force by the year. Still, how often do you see a web site completely in Spanish? Hector Orci, president of Los Angeles-based Orci, an advertising agency specializing in reaching Latinos, says this demographic doesn't necessarily need the whole screen to scream Español—but one box wouldn't hurt. “When Latinos are reading English and they see just one ad in Spanish...their eyes are drawn to it,” Orci says. “You do that and you force us to think, ‘Someone’s trying to talk to me in my language—I have to know what it is.’”

But what can you do beyond that? Orci says many agencies don't do much more out of fear of offending. “Don't be afraid, just be sensitive,” he says. “Show my people in ads in a comfortable shirt, but don't show us all the time in a mustache and a big hat.” Lauren Weisberg, senior director of strategic insights and research at Yahoo, says their research shows certain spokespeople also fill the bill more than others. The qualitative discussion groups she looked at revealed people wanted to see ads with Salma Hayek and Sofia Vergara over Jennifer Lopez and Jessica Alba. “They felt at times like certain spokespeople weren't representing them,” Weisberg says. “They saw the look of Lopez and Alba and said, ‘this isn't my hair color, they don't look like me.’”

And, says Orci, it wouldn't hurt to learn the language. “Braniff Airlines did an ad where they were telling people they can fly in leather chairs,” Orci recalls. “It translated as ‘fly naked.’ It wasn't what was being said that bothered us, it was that they didn't take the time to translate it properly.” Weisberg says Yahoo research shows there's another important area where translation is lost. “Even when marketing is clearly trying to depict Latinos, this group wants to see that it also reflects their morals,” she says. “They want to believe it was put together by people who really understand the culture.”

And as far as a good online ad? Orci says focus on positive interests. “Jack in the Box is a client of ours and the World Cup was going on,” he remembers. “We took soccer balls from each country and had them rib each other and tell jokes about the other—Argentina, Mexico, on and on. It was huge. Latinos love soccer so they'll love an ad like that!”

But Orci reminds not to forget about social media such as Facebook. “You have over one million identified Spanish speakers on there who want to speak in Spanish,” he says. “We are much more social than the average person and we love to stay connected...What could be more valuable to a marketer?”