

# MARKETING TO LATINOS:

# 15

## *Misconceptions That Can Ruin Your Campaign*



Created by

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## Introduction

There is no denying that the Latino population is changing the face of the US population. This is evident in flourishing destinations like Miami, Los Angeles and Dallas, but it's also true in Seattle, Raleigh and Detroit. Their influence on our culture and the sheer numbers and rate of growth is causing marketing managers at companies, big and small and from various industries, to consider how to effectively reach this community. Whether the first generation or fourth generation who has longtime roots in the States, predominately Spanish-speaking, bilingual or English-speaking only, liberal or conservative; the Latino population in the United States is as diverse as the country itself.

Identifying differences and commonalities within the audience you are trying to engage is essential for any campaign to work. However, sometimes we have assumptions that just aren't correct and could kill a campaign before it even has a chance. We've put together this list of 15 popular misconceptions for exactly this reason. We want to help companies engage this growing and powerful market in a way that is both respectful and aspirational.



“It’s funny, because marketers talk demographics and cultural differences on a regular basis and in an open and honest way. It’s essential. But when we walk in the room, as three Latinas, there is such fear of not offending us that the conversation gets watered down. Companies know they need to engage this population but there’s a fear. Either they just don’t know how to do it which causes them not to start or their take a change, it’s not done well, and it doesn’t work so they don’t try again. We want to help them get past that.”

–Latina Creative Agency

## Demographics & Geography

### Myth 1 – Most Latinos are immigrants

The United States is a nation of immigrants and the majority of its citizens are not part of the native population. Starting around 1600 British and other Europeans settled in the east coast. Later Africans were brought as slaves. Many of the Latinos considered “immigrants” are part of a generation that arrived in the US more than forty years ago in the early 1970s. The second generation born in the US (even though considered Latinos) are not immigrants, just as any other immigrant child born in this country.

“As immigration has slowed, the big driver in Latino growth is births,” says Mark Hugo Lopez, Associate Director of the Pew Latino Center. Thus, Latinos are Americans whose background and heritage is derived from different Latin American countries. They are no different than an Irish-American or an Italian-American.

### Myth 2 – Latinos are all from Mexico

Latinos come from a variety of different ancestries, race and ethnic groups and have different physical and cultural characteristics. Their culture will vary based on their country of origin. Their taste in music, food, dressing and cultural entertainment choices can also vary greatly. They come in shades from white and blond, to dark and all shades and variations of skin, hair and eye colors in between.

### Myth 3- Latinos can't assimilate into U.S culture

Young Latinos and other ethnicities are becoming dominant in the U.S, especially in urban areas. However, they don't see themselves as just Latinos. Rather they are defining the American national culture while asserting their culture of origin.



The survey-based study, “The PLUS+ Identity -- Shifting Paradigms and the Future of Latino Culture in the US” says that ambicultural Latinos are more sociable and intermingle with a much more culturally diverse group. The study uses the word “ambicultural” “from here from there” identity to explain that “they are assertively both, gradually re-defining the middle-ground space and becoming more comfortable with their ‘and’

status.” “Assimilated” Latinos live a bi-cultural life; moving seamlessly between their traditional non-Latino circle of friends/co-workers, etc. and their Latino families and friends.

## Myth 4- Latinos are concentrated in a handful of states

Latinos are found all across the country and in various unexpected areas. People have the misconception that Latinos only concentrate in states such as California, Texas, New Mexico and Florida. According to the U.S Census Bureau there are other twelve states with at least a half-million Latino residents such as Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Washington.

## Myth 5- Latinos are mainly blue-collar workers

Latinos are hard workers but this doesn’t necessarily mean they all are blue-collar workers. They care about their education and success in life. And that’s why they set up goals and expectations and work hard to achieve them.

The total number of Latino-owned businesses in 2007 was 2.3 million, up 43.6 percent from 2002. There are several examples of high achieving Latinos who work and have achieved success. Examples include Arte Moreno who became the first Latino to own a major league team in the United States by purchasing the Angeles of Los Angeles baseball club. He is listed in Forbes as a

successful billionaire with a net worth of \$1.15B. The largest Latino-owned food company in the U.S. is Goya Foods, whose success was attained by World War II hero Joseph A. Unanue, the son of the company's founders. Other successes include Nina Tassler who is the president of CBS Entertainment since September 2004 and is the highest-profile Latina in network television.

## Myth 6 - Latinos mostly like spicy food

Latinos are a mixed of cultures when it comes to food and their culinary influences come from all around the world and varies widely. For example Italian traditions are part of the Argentinean cookbook; Africans have a big influence in the Caribbean recipes, etc... As a result there are more non-spicy dishes than spicy ones.

## Language & Education

### Myth 7 – Latinos are not as educated as Caucasian

The Latino community in general thinks education is very important and encourages their children to go to school, graduate and be successful. They are well aware this is a competitive market in which they need to be educated to achieve success. Immigrant parents who come to this country work hard and give the best to their children, including education.

The US Census Bureau determined that Latinos during 2010 :

- 62.2% twenty-five and older had at least a high school education.
- 13% twenty-five and older had a bachelor's degree or higher.
- 6.2% of all Latinos are full-time college students (both undergraduate and graduate students).
- 23.2% of students in elementary and high school.

## Myth 8 – Latinos mostly speak only Spanish

For some, the word Latino refers strictly to people of Spanish-speaking origin or ancestry. But in reality “Latino” is more frequently used in reference to anyone of Latin American origin or ancestry, including Brazilians (who speak Portuguese). Many immigrants may speak Spanish (or Portuguese) in addition to English, but after settling in the U.S., their descendants tend to lose the native language by the third generation.

Accordingly to the PEW Research Center “Between Two Worlds” among third-generation youths, nearly four-in-ten (38%) retain the ability to speak and understand Spanish, meaning six of them are only English speakers. According to a survey done by PEW of English speaking and reading ability among Latinos by generation the results were: among the foreign born or first-generation Latinos, 38% say they can carry on a conversation in English and 37% say they can read a newspaper or book in English “very well” or “pretty well.” English proficiency is higher among Latinos who were born in the U.S. Fully 92% of Latinos in the second generation say they are proficient when it comes to speaking English. Likewise, 91% say they can read a newspaper or book “very well” or “pretty well” in English. Among third-generation Latinos, 96% say they are proficient in speaking English, and 94% say they can read a newspaper or book in English “very well” or “pretty well.”

## Myth 9 - Latinos with a heavy accent are slow learners.



Latinos who learn English late in life as their second language have an accent when speaking. However, this accent is completely unrelated to educational levels. People assume if they have an accent they are uneducated and slow learners. This aspect is completely independent to their level of education; many have bachelors, masters, or PHD degrees and still preserve their accent.

Tom Scovel a professor of applied linguistics at San Francisco State University and an active member of TESOL, AAAL, and the International Neuropsychological society, argued that there is a critical period for the acquisition of the pronunciation of a second language. Pronunciation is the “only aspect of language performance that has a neuromuscular basis”, requires “neuromotor involvement” and has a “physical reality.” He predicted learners who start to learn a second language later than age 12, will never be able “to pass themselves off as native speakers” and will “end up easily identified as non-native speakers of that language”.

However, 1 in 1,000 in any population of late learners, are not bound by critical period constraints and are known as “super exceptional” foreign language learners.

## Purchasing Power

### Myth 10 - Latinos don't have money to spend

Latinos represent 16.7% of the United States population with a purchasing power estimated to reach a staggering \$1.5 trillion by 2015. According to a 2012 study from AMG Strategic Advisors and Univision Communications, Inc. entitled “The Why? Behind The Buy, Latino Edition”, Latino shoppers also usually have a large shopping budget at approximately \$425 per month. Latino shoppers on average spend more than \$100 per shopping trip and they prefer to shop with others.



### Myth 11 - Latinos are always cheap shoppers

For many years brand marketers have operated under the assumption that price wins when it comes to the Latino shopper. Price is an attractive factor for any shopper due to the hard economy, but for Latinos is vastly more important the “value.” Price is certainly a large factor, but not the whole answer. Accordingly to data from Integer’s 2011 study “The new Latino shopper”, while price plays an important role, seasonality does too.

During nine months of the year, price operates a big influence on Latino shoppers, but for the months of May, August and November is more about convenience and family outweigh affordability. These three months reflect three major seasonal holidays in retail: summer, back to school and the holiday season.

When it comes to service, businesses must have cultural intelligence when reaching out to this community - it is not as easy as simply translating English copy into a native language. This lack of understanding is one reason why Latinos often feel they are misunderstood and not treated with proper respect. They will walk away from the business not because they don't have money, but because of the way they feel treated. Embracing cultural sensitivity has become critically important to the design of new business models, leadership development and the relationships that brands earn with their consumers.

To be domestically and globally competitive this is a must-do. Given today's demographic shift in America, brands can no longer afford to make guesses and assumptions about their target audiences.

## Technology & Media

**Myth 12 - Latinos are late adopters of technology so using online and mobile campaigns is unnecessary.**



Latinos actively embrace new technologies and platforms, while keeping close ties to their roots and language. Latinos consume English language media; however Spanish language media holds the key to connecting more effectively with a great number of Latino consumers.

According to Nielsen 2010 universe estimates, approximately 30 million Latinos (62%) have access to the Internet at home. Include the number of Latinos who have online access via work, school or in other public places and rises to about 88 percent. New studies are finding that Latinos are equally, if not more involved in emerging technologies than the general market. They are also more likely to own a smart phone and are valuable mobile consumers, carrying an average monthly bill that is 14 percent higher than market average.

Latinos also lead all ethnic groups with an average of 40 percent more calls made per day and are as well more likely to use text messaging, mobile internet and email and also download a substantial amount of pictures or music on mobile devices.

## **Myth 13 - Latinos rarely shop online**

One of the most common misconceptions about Latino shoppers is that they don't shop online because since they are less affluent and therefore less digitally savvy than mass market consumers. Latinos are not only buying online, but they are also spending more per transaction than the general population.

According to Terra and ComScore, Latinos spent more per online transaction than non-Latinos: \$103.19 vs. \$90.82, respectively. In few words, the online arena is another avenue for brand marketers and retailers to consider and start focusing their efforts to make it attractive and desirable for Latino shoppers as well as in stores.

## **Myth 14 - All Latinos listen to the same music and watch the same television shows**

Latinos are open to a wide variety of different music and TV shows. Second and third generations were born in the US and have had an immersion in the North American culture. While grandparents love mariachis, salsa and merengue and older TV shows and novela, the new generation has embraced popular culture including music genres such as rap, hip hop, jazz, classical, pop, alternative, and many others. When it comes to television habits, it is true that Univision has a large Latino/Latino community. On July 2013 it reached number one most view network with an audience between the ages of 18 and 49 men and women, in any language.

## The Elephant in the Room

### Myth 15- Latinos feel they are entitled

There is this misconception about Latinos who come to this country just in seek of free help from the U.S government. They do come to the United States in hope of a better life but they know it requires hard work to obtain it. Immigrants living in the U.S are well aware that if they are not citizens then by law they can't qualify for public services. However, their U.S.-born children do qualify and can in fact be helped by public assistance programs, regardless of their parents' legal status. This same law applies to any person born in the United States.

While the welfare system is responsible for serving the country's poor, it was overhauled during the 1996 Welfare Reform Act to reduce the number of people dependent on this help for survival. This reform stipulates that even immigrants legally residing in the U.S. are NOT eligible to welfare benefits. These cutbacks affect not only welfare cash payments, but also include food stamps, Medicaid, SCHIP, and SSI.



When it comes to work, in a study done by the National Academy of Sciences, it was found that immigrants add nearly \$10 billion each year to the U.S. economy and on the average pay an estimated \$80,000 more in taxes than they will receive in local, state, or federal benefits over their lifetime.

Latinos are more likely than the general U.S. population to say that one can get ahead in life by working hard. Accordingly to PEW Latino center report eight in ten young Latinos ages 16 to 25 and 86% of Latinos ages 26 and older say most people can get ahead if they work hard.

## Conclusion

As you can see, the Latino community in the U.S. is incredible diverse AND unpredictable. Many traditional stereotypes and assumptions are simply not true - and unless you do your homework in advance, any attempts to market to this increasingly influential demographic group may end up doing more harm than good for your company. It pays to hire those who have expertise and experience in this field to help guide you through the potential land mines - and increase your effectiveness (and ROI).

## About Latina Creative Agency

Latina Creative agency is an integrated marketing & PR agency using all available mediums, digital and traditional to engage our client's brands with their customers in the Hispanic Market.

We have an experienced group of first, second, and third generation Bilingual talent and technical resources to deliver results in Spanish and English and Spanglish.

Everything we do starts with a holistic strategy executed across different mediums to drive a consistent and culturally relevant brand message.

- We measure everything so you can make us accountable for your ROI
- Reaches beyond translation
- Takes into account cultural difference within the fastest growing minority market
- Includes cultural relevance; "talk to me in a language I can relate to"
- Understands localism and idioms

Our principals, Amalia Martino, Cynarah Ellawala and Patricia Carrion-Moras bring over 30 years of combined experience in marketing, PR, & video/audio production. Experience working in traditional and digital marketing with brands such as Lancôme, Clorox, Microsoft, WA Lottery, Latino Community Fund and Hispanic Seafair.

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## About Kaufer DMC

Launched and led by seasoned branding, marketing and communications veteran David Kaufer, Seattle-based Kaufer DMC is a digital marketing agency that creates successful branding, visibility and buzz-building programs that take advantage of the new inbound marketing era.

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