

# CONSUMER PROFILES

## Latino Youth

### Consumer Profile: Latino Youth

Leading marketers have recognized that in order to meet the needs of their specific target segment within the Hispanic market, a one-size-fits-all, mass-marketing approach is no longer valid. A marketing message aimed at a 14-year-old Latino who was born in the U.S. cannot be communicated in the same way as a message aimed at a 30-year-old, Spanish-dominant consumer who was born in Latin America.

The Hispanic market is as complex and multi-layered as the mainstream population segment. Age and varying levels of integration within the U.S. economy and culture play a significant role. And while youths may be more assimilated, they are holding on to their cultural values and identity.



The dramatic growth of the U.S.-born Latino segment has altered the traditional Hispanic landscape. In 2000, at least 60% of all Hispanics were born in the U.S. In the case of the 12-24 segment, 80% were U.S.-born. In fact, the U.S.-born segment is younger, with a median age of 19 versus 35 for the foreign-born Hispanic segment.

Although the majority of the youth segment are bilingual or English-dominant, they are proud to straddle both the American and Latin cultures. Their unique value system is a fusion of the best of both the American and the Latin worlds. This makes them different from the foreign-born segment as well as their mainstream counterparts.

The focus for marketers targeting this segment must be cultural relevance and creating an authentic connection to their brands as opposed to simply communicating in the Spanish language.

The 12-24 Latino youth segment represents 20% of the total U.S. 12-24 population. And in top cities like Los Angeles they represent more than half of the total 12-24 age segment. Additionally, while Hispanic youth are expected to grow by 25% over the next decade, the Anglo youth population is expected to decrease by 6%!

Hispanic youth have the typical concerns of average teens, but their close affinity to Latin culture and traditions influence every decision. They hold more liberal social values than foreign-born Latinos but are more conservative than their mainstream counterparts (strong role of church and family).

Unlike the foreign-born, immigrant population the more acculturated Latinos view themselves as part of a "larger pan-Hispanic movement." They feel misrepresented by Spanish media and under-represented by Anglo media.

Latino youth constitute the emerging majority of America's educational, economic, political and cultural foundation. And because they live in America's cultural epicenters, they are influencing and setting mainstream cultural trends.

Latino youth are attaining greater English proficiency and higher levels of education and affluence than the older-skewing, immigrant segment. They consider themselves trailblazers as they are usually the first in their families to go to college and own a home – they are the pioneers. Their "gatekeeper" and "communicator" roles make them key influencers in their households and communities.



Today's Latino youth want to see themselves authentically and positively portrayed, and they don't want to be forced to choose between their two worlds! They equate technology with "status" and "making it" and are more marketing savvy and likely to be earlier adopters than the older-skewing, foreign-born segment.

Marketers who celebrate Latin culture, exalt Latin pride and validate their hybrid lifestyle will capture the souls of young Latinos and reap the benefits from making a strong connection to their brand.

Sources:

"Marketing to American Latinos" by M. Isabel Valdes  
2004 CAA and Youth Intelligence Research Study on Hispanic Youth, Various Pew Hispanic Center Studies conducted in 2003 and 2004.