



Craig Jaffe Research 360° Leadership in Research & Analytics

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Not All Spanish Is Equally Effective for Advertising (White Paper)

I applaud the strategy but have reservations about the tactics that marketer, First Response, is using to advertise its pregnancy test and ovulation prediction kit on Spanish-language television.

For the first time, First Response is targeting its advertising to reach a Spanish-speaking audience on networks that include Univision, Telemundo, Galavision, and MTV Tres. It is a bold and well-thought out strategy given the increasing size of the Hispanic market in the United States.

Tactically speaking however, there are potential pitfalls and problems regarding the Spanish being used in the commercials themselves. Although the vast majority of Hispanic women in the United States are of Mexican origin, the brand's spokeswoman who is being featured on the 15-second and 30-second commercials is from Puerto Rico.

Research has indicated that dialectal differences in Spanish can be less than ideal. In this case, a Puerto Rican dialect may not be the best way to optimize the effectiveness of the advertising.

Based on the 2010 Census, 63% of the Hispanic population in the United States is of Mexican origin compared to only 9% who are of Puerto Rican origin. Therefore, it may have been more prudent to have done the commercials with a Mexican dialect. At stake are factors such as purchase and purchase intent, ad recall, brand awareness, attribute correlations, and other psychographic and qualitative variables.

As is, the ad campaign may see benefits on a local level, especially in the New York area. New York has the largest Hispanic population of those who are of Puerto Rican origin in the United States.

A case in point that demonstrates the effectiveness of a Mexican dialect: in 2004 under President James M. McNamara, a company-wide decision was made by Telemundo to begin producing a number of its own telenovelas while teaching its actors to speak with a Mexican accent. In this case, the decision helped raise Telemundo's profile considerably and allowed it to narrow the Nielsen rating gap between itself and Univision.

Experts believe major variations among dialects make it semantically and pragmatically impossible to define a single standard Spanish. Differences in verb conjugations also make it impossible to form grammatical structures in a neutral way.

For sound strategy on key business decisions like these, ask media maven Craig Jaffe. Mr. Jaffe is an award-winning media and marketing executive who manages his own consultancy helping television networks and advertising agencies maximize viewership, drive revenue, and productize research concepts. He can be reached at 917-587-3649 and CraigJaffe@optonline.net. Feel free to also visit him at www.linkedin.com/in/CraigJaffeResearch.