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COMMENTARY

Mi' Familia? Ads Targeting Hispanic Dads Must Move Beyond The Tropes

by **Carlos Aguilar** , Op-Ed Contributor, October 28, 2022

It's a truism-turned-advertising trope: Hispanics value family.

Of course, we're not alone. A 2019 ThinkNow **report** showed Hispanics identify *family* as their central value. But the same held true across non-Hispanic respondents. This should come as no surprise. Filial love is a biological impulse bolstered by a myriad of social institutions. To say, then, that *Hispanics value family* is to say nothing distinctive about the approximately 14 million Hispanic dads in the United States.

Brands and marketers interested in connecting with this burgeoning daddy demographic will have to move beyond the general and toward the particular by leveraging rich data to craft nuanced creative; after all, billions of dollars are at stake.

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How are Hispanic Dads different from non-Hispanic dads? How are we similar? And how might brands leverage those insights?

You're already talking to Hispanic dads, it's time to look at them.

Brands and marketers make a costly mistake when assuming Hispanic dads are best reached with Spanish-language advertising. A recent PwC study indicated that Hispanics of all ages prefer English language media, with projections set to increase.

Even more, Hispanic dads over-index in almost every sector of public life. Hispanic dads consume more sports, drink more alcohol, attend more concerts, are more religious and have larger families than the average American. This means your brand or agency is *already communicating* with Hispanic dads with your general market campaigns. The problem, though, is you haven't always looked at us and as a result, we don't see our reflection in the creative. Brands are missing an opportunity to develop and deepen relationships with their audience when they fail to recognize Hispanic dads as the general market.

Look beyond macho

The *macho man* is often thought to typify Latino masculinity. Hispanic dads are often portrayed as irredeemably chauvinist, stubborn and even violent. Thankfully, paradigms are shifting, in part because values work upstream from more socially progressive children to parents. Social media has amplified and accelerated this shift.

A 2021 Tik Tok **video** featuring a Hispanic father walking in on his teenage son applying makeup went viral because of the dad's reaction. Instead of outrage, the Hispanic dad offered his acceptance and love.

Research on ThinkNow ConneKt reveals that younger Hispanics think of equity and inclusion in broader terms than their parents. Whereas Gen X and Boomers think of diversity and inclusion primarily in terms of race, Millennials and Gen Z value gender and differently-abled issues more highly.

Advertising doesn't have an obligation to reflect reality, but it does have the opportunity to envision a future where Hispanic dads move further away from the machismo culture defined by previous generations and move toward a more inclusive culture. Advertising that portrays Hispanic dads as charitable, emotional and vulnerable will move us beyond the tropes.

Zero in on distinctions

The ThinkNow ConneKt research also revealed a surprising distinction between Hispanic dads and their ethnic counterparts. Hispanic dads value educational attainment over financial attainment and mental health over financial health. The reasons are likely varied. The difference, though, should be central to any aspirational brand campaign and has already given rise to the next generation of financial service companies targeting the Hispanic consumer.

If brands want to connect deeper with Hispanic families and Hispanic men in particular, we'll have to move away from the tropes that have defined previous generations. They'll have to recognize they're already talking to Hispanic dads with their general campaigns and it's high time we see ourselves reflected in the creative. Advertising should not only reflect who we are but who we aspire to be.