

# **Trends in Marketing Insurance to Hispanics**

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## Introduction

The Synovate U.S. Hispanic Market Report calculated that as of 2004 there were 43,530,000 Hispanics living in the United States. Projections from the same report estimate that by the year 2020, there will be about 80.4 million Hispanics in the U.S., comprising over 20% of the total population<sup>1</sup>. It's not just the fact that Hispanics are the fastest growing minority in the United States that has marketers jumping to cater to this market. While these numbers are impressive, even more striking are figures which estimate Hispanic buying power. The University of Georgia's Selig Center for Economic Growth reports that in the next two years Hispanic buying power will reach \$926.1 billion dollars<sup>2</sup>.

What are Hispanics purchasing with all this buying power? Increasingly, cars and homes. Hispanics accounted for 6% of new vehicle registrations in 2003. In addition, between 1994 and 2004 Hispanic home ownership rose an entire 8%, from 41% to 49%.<sup>3</sup> These statistics show that the stereotypical image of the poor Hispanic farm worker is being replaced with a new Hispanic identity. Hispanics are becoming progressively wealthier and car manufacturers and real estate companies are taking note. Toyota and other manufacturers have been targeting the Hispanic consumer with culturally-specific marketing campaigns. Real estate training websites such as *www.isucceed.com* have launched training programs stressing the importance of Hispanic-specific services and advertising. However, these increases in car and home ownership are also causing another industry to finally wake up to the Hispanic market: the insurance industry.

Though Hispanics are buying cars and homes at record rates, they still represent the group most underserved by the insurance industry. The percentages of Hispanics who have various kinds of insurance are significantly lower than non-Hispanic whites and other minority groups:

- *Auto Insurance*- As of 1997, 55% of Hispanics had auto insurance, compared to 80% of the general population.<sup>4</sup>
- *Homeowner's Insurance*- 33% of Hispanics have homeowner's insurance, compared to 63% of non-Hispanic whites, 50% of Asian-Americans, and 44% of African-Americans.<sup>5</sup>
- *Health Insurance*- Approximately 67% of Hispanics have health insurance, compared to 81% of African-Americans and 89% of non-Hispanic whites.<sup>6</sup>
- *Life Insurance*- 34% of Hispanics have life insurance compared to 62% of the general population.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, Hispanics are much less likely to have ever met with a financial planner. According to a Hispanic Market Weekly report on the insurance industry, almost three times as many non-Hispanic whites have met with a financial advisor as Hispanics (41.4% compared to 15.3%).<sup>8</sup> These statistics confirm that the insurance and financial services industries have not yet successfully reached Hispanic consumers.

This is not surprising considering the relatively short time in which insurance companies have been involved in the Hispanic market. Companies like Allstate and State Farm created specific marketing campaigns geared toward the Hispanic market in the mid-nineties.<sup>9</sup> Other companies like Prudential, Met life and Farmers Insurance launched Hispanic campaigns soon after, in the late nineties. However, as is the case in most Hispanic marketing, these first campaigns were under-funded and simplistic, not taking into account Hispanics' cultural motivations for not purchasing insurance or differences within the Hispanic community.

In recent years, many insurance companies have increased budgets and marketing efforts for the Hispanic market, and with positive results. According to the AHAA, insurance companies increased their spending by 80% between 2000 and 2003.<sup>10</sup> Who are the big players? The top spenders in homeowners and automotive insurance in 2004 spent almost \$16 million on television and print advertising intended for Hispanic consumers. The top three companies in terms of spending were 21<sup>st</sup> Century Insurance (\$5,629,000), State Farm (\$4,650,000) and Allstate (\$3,023,000) with Nationwide Mutual and American Family Mutual rounding out the top five.<sup>11</sup>

Increased spending does not automatically translate in higher numbers of Hispanics purchasing insurance. Insurance companies targeting Hispanic consumers must overcome numerous cultural and educational barriers. In most Latin American countries, including Mexico, insurance for major investments such as homes and cars is not obligatory.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, because most Hispanics had nothing of value to insure in their home countries, they are relatively uninformed about insurance and its importance in U.S. society. One Hispanic participant in a focus group on insurance conducted by the Tomas Rivera Policy Center confirmed this when he stated "You know, in Mexico, insurance is never considered something you must have. It is not like food. Some people even think that it is a waste of money. Many others would think it is something you can live without."<sup>13</sup> Another barrier in marketing insurance to Hispanics is found in insurance terminology. Financial terms can be difficult to explain or translate, as many have no equivalent term in Spanish. This leads to confusion among Hispanic consumers, who desperately need to understand the terminology. They also need to understand how insurance works in the United States and why it is so important.

Even more complicated to overcome than the above-mentioned educational barriers are certain Hispanic cultural beliefs which create obstacles to those marketing insurance and other financial products to this group. Korzenny & Korzenny (2005) describe some of the cultural dimensions and archetypes which affect the way insurance messages must be communicated to Hispanics in Hispanic Marketing: A Cultural Perspective. Cultural beliefs about the unpredictable nature of life and the desire to "live for today" make marketing insurance to Hispanics more complicated, as many don't see the value in planning for the future. These consumers, therefore, cannot be targeted in the same way as mainstream consumers. Their backgrounds and motivations for purchasing insurance are too different.

The insurance industry should not be discouraged by these obstacles. Research has shown that Hispanics are likely to be a very receptive audience to insurance if approached properly. Hispanics know that they need insurance. They are passionate about protecting their families and ensuring a bright future for their children. A survey conducted by State Farm Insurance shows that nearly 9 out of 10 Hispanic adults (87%) believe their “most important financial goal is to make sure they leave something for their family.” Only 38% of the general population placed the same importance on leaving wealth to their families.<sup>14</sup> Providers who promote their products as a way to protect their family’s future will find that Hispanics are open to the idea of insurance.

Hispanics are also in contrast with the general population regarding their perception of the insurance industry. While general market consumers tend to distrust insurance agents (a 1992 Gallup poll reported that insurance salesmen were the least trusted professionals of all!), most Hispanic consumers consider the insurance industry to be trustworthy.<sup>15</sup> The major obstacle of establishing trust with consumers, which insurance companies face in the general market, does not yet exist with Hispanic consumers.

Finally, as Hispanics buy new cars and apply for mortgages on homes, they become aware that certain kinds of insurance are compulsory in the United States. These consumers know they need insurance policies. They want to protect their families and they trust the insurance industry. According to the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute study on Hispanics and insurance, companies that are able to create culturally-specific, intelligent communication messages for Hispanic consumers will find “little negative reaction or suspicion as [they] attempt to penetrate the community’s great market potential.”<sup>16</sup>

## Company Focus

In order to gain a better understanding of where the insurance industry stands in its efforts to market insurance products to Hispanic consumers, it is necessary to examine what individual insurance providers have done. Much of the information needed to complete a comprehensive company profile was not available due to its confidential and proprietary nature. Here, the information that was available was organized in such a way as to provide a general idea of each company's efforts in Hispanic marketing. The information used for this report was gathered between October and December of 2005 from various sources (see references).

### Allstate

Allstate was one of the first insurance providers to realize the potential of the Hispanic market and continues to be a leader in terms of both ad spending and market share among Hispanics<sup>17</sup>. The insurance provider began by offering life, property and casualty policies and then expanded to offer Hispanics financial planning. Helping Allstate with its efforts in Hispanic marketing is La Agencia de Orci, which has been their Hispanic ad agency since 1995<sup>18</sup>.

A past Hispanic effort, "Mis Manos," was a branding campaign focused on the agent as someone Hispanics could trust and count on.<sup>19</sup> All advertising was based on true stories of agents and the consumers they served. The campaign was launched at the end of 1999 and included spots on Univision's "Sabado Gigante" (sponsor of a musical segment each week), Telemundo, Galavision, and Fox Sports en Español. Radio ads were also produced and aired in the top ten Hispanic markets and Atlanta. In addition, print ads were run in top Hispanic magazines, like *Hispanic* magazine, *Latina*, *Latin Style* and *Hispanic Business*<sup>20</sup>.

Allstate's most recent campaign, "Así Piensa Allstate," ran in 2004. The campaign ran in Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Miami, Phoenix, San Antonio and Tucson and featured Hispanic actor Esaí Morales<sup>21</sup>. The campaign's television commercials dramatized scenes showing entire Hispanic families together. One of the television spots took place at a wedding with family and children in the scene and explained that Allstate would help Hispanic consumers protect their dreams. Another spot explained that Allstate agents understand Hispanics and would take the time to get to know its customers, even offering them a cup of coffee. Other marketing efforts have included bilingual sales brochures, direct mail, sponsorship of the Colorado Rapids soccer team and support of various community organizations<sup>22</sup>.

Furthermore, Allstate was one of the first insurance providers to have a fully-bilingual call center and a Spanish-language website. The call center allowed Hispanics to obtain information about Allstate in Spanish, and provided an excellent opportunity for Allstate to understand and build its database of potential Hispanic consumers. By noting

the time and location of the call, Allstate was able to see which advertisements or direct mailings were most effective<sup>23</sup>.

Allstate's outreach to the Hispanic community starts from within the organization, where it works to increase diversity. The insurance provider hires Hispanic agents and conducts diversity training for all employees. The company recognizes the importance of the agent as a marketing tool and provides support and training to help agents serve Hispanic customers, who generally prefer face-to-face interaction<sup>24</sup>.

Allstate's efforts and decisions regarding the Hispanic market are also based on the thorough research that the company conducts about what Hispanics need from an insurance provider. It found that while Hispanics place importance on the same attributes of insurance as mainstream consumers, the relative value they give to each attribute is very different. For the general market, the most important attribute of an insurance provider was its financial strength while for Hispanics it was longevity. Using these insights, Allstate positioned itself as an insurance provider that Hispanics could trust, because the company had been around for over 70 years<sup>25</sup>.

Allstate's target audience is Hispanics who have been in the U.S. for a few years and have begun to buy cars and homes and have made investments. However, its marketing strategy aims to make the Allstate name known among all Hispanics, so that when new immigrants establish themselves and their driving record/credit history, they will think of the Allstate name when they buy insurance<sup>26</sup>.

In 2004, Allstate spent over \$3 million on Hispanic television and print advertising and spent 3% of its total ad budget on Hispanic media<sup>27</sup>. Allstate now insures over 2 million Hispanics and its Hispanic-produced revenues now top \$2 billion<sup>28</sup>.

## **Farmers Insurance**

Farmers' efforts with the Hispanic market began with a few television spots produced by their general market agency, Campbell Ewald. The commercials were simply general market commercials translated into Spanish and aired on Univision in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Dallas, Phoenix and Chicago<sup>29</sup>.

Hoping to create a more effective campaign for Hispanics, Farmers hired Enlace Communications in 2001. In September of the same year, a branding campaign for radio and outdoors was launched in cities where Farmers has bilingual capacity, including San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego and Phoenix. The campaign promoting property, casualty and life insurance adopted the slogan "Tranquilidad Asegurada"<sup>30</sup>.

In addition to its advertising campaigns, Farmers is currently reaching out to Hispanics with its sponsorship of a photo exhibit entitled "Americanos: Latino Life in the United States." They also sponsor the "Young Americanos" photography competition and an accompanying curriculum for teachers to use in the classroom<sup>31</sup>.

Farmers connects with Hispanics through a Spanish-language section on its website which contains more colorful images and pictures of family than its general market website. The site includes information for Hispanics about the different types of insurance offered and answers common questions about insurance. Consumers can also search for a Spanish-speaking agent by location. The website includes links to other informative sites, including a site which gives information to new parents about how to protect children and the family and a link to the “Young Americanos” exhibit.

## **Metlife**

Metlife recognized the importance of the Hispanic market before most insurance companies. In 1983, it hired Conill Advertising for its Hispanic marketing efforts with a budget of about \$1 million. From 1988 to 1992, MetLife’s Hispanic market campaigns were handled by Grau and Garcia, who worked with a budget that by 1988 had reached \$3.5 million. Metlife began aggressively targeting the Hispanic market in 1997 with the help of the Bravo Group, who created a campaign including television commercials<sup>32</sup>.

MetLife’s current “Mas Vida” campaign is in the hands of Conill Advertising. Current campaign efforts include print and television advertising as well as sponsorship of the “Nuestras Voces” national playwriting competition, focusing on the experiences of Hispanics. The campaign concentrates on the concept of protecting the family and ensuring educational opportunities for children through life insurance<sup>33</sup>.

The insurance company recognizes the importance of developing educational and culturally-sensitive campaigns. New Hispanic immigrants are the focus of Metlife’s campaign. Because they know little about insurance, the brochures provided to consumers by Metlife are educational and are not focused on creating sales. Brochures include information on retirement planning, life insurance, the different types of life insurance and how much is necessary<sup>34</sup>. In addition, the MetLife website includes a Spanish-language section where consumers can obtain information about insurance, search for a Spanish-speaking agent or call a toll free number with bilingual capabilities.

## **Progressive**

Progressive sells its insurance policies through independent brokers, a toll free number and its website. Companies like Progressive have done well in the Hispanic market, especially in places like South Florida because of the personalized service that independent brokers are able to provide Hispanic consumers<sup>35</sup>.

Progressive has a Spanish-language website where Hispanics can find information about different types of automotive insurance and see real-time quotes for Progressive insurance and other insurance companies at [www.progressiveseguros.com](http://www.progressiveseguros.com). Other links take the consumer back to the general market website.



## **Safeco**

One of Safeco's first efforts to reach Hispanic consumers was the implementation of an AT&T language line in 1990<sup>36</sup>. As the number of Spanish-speaking callers grew, the insurance company added more bilingual representatives to help Hispanic consumers. Safeco's commitment to diversity extends far beyond call center representatives. One quarter of its agencies represent a minority group. In addition, Safeco has opened centers in Seattle and Atlanta for multicultural training and recruiting.

Marketing through multicultural organizations and sponsorship of community events has helped Safeco create brand awareness within the Hispanic market. Safeco is currently partnered with the National Council of La Raza, Hacienda and local Hispanic chambers of commerce. Their advertising efforts have been focused in Hispanic magazines, such as *Hispanic Business*.

In 2002, Safeco launched a Spanish-language website. On the site, Hispanic consumers can search for a Spanish-speaking agent and find basic information about insurance policies. The website also contains informational pages in Spanish and a page detailing Safeco's commitment to the Latino community.

## **Infinity**

Infinity, an automotive insurer in California and Texas, chose Garcia 360 as its Hispanic market agency in 2004<sup>37</sup>. A recent campaign used the slogan "Cumple" (It delivers) and featured television advertising in Spanish highlighting the idea that consumers can trust and will save money with Infinity automotive insurance. The advertising was complemented with a Spanish-language website, [www.infinitycumple.com](http://www.infinitycumple.com).

The Spanish-language sections on the website provide basic information about the different kinds of insurance offered and give a toll free number which Spanish-speakers can call to receive more information in Spanish. The website also includes a glossary of insurance terms in Spanish and English with definitions.

Sponsorships are also part of the Infinity Hispanic marketing plan. Infinity currently sponsors LA Galaxy and the Hispanic Scholarship Fund.

## **Geico**

Geico, another auto insurance company, has been working with the Hispanic marketing agency Lopez-Negrete since 1999. Geico's Hispanic marketing budget for 1999 was estimated at about \$4 million.

All of their business is done without agents, directly through a toll free number, so Geico has chosen to focus its Hispanic market campaign in areas where it has bilingual call centers, like Florida, Texas, New York and Chicago<sup>38</sup>.

Campaigns have focused on the ease and security of Geico insurance, with slogans like “Seguro y facil” accompanying radio, direct mail and print ads. In addition, sports sponsorships and event marketing have been utilized<sup>39</sup>.

Currently, Geico is using English and bilingual advertising to reach younger, more acculturated Hispanics. Television ads have been shown on the English-language Hispanic cable channel SíTV. Print ads and direct mail pieces are bilingual or in English, and focus on themes of family, trust and saving money.

## **Allianz**

Allianz is one of the most recent players to enter the Hispanic scene, but it is aggressively targeting Hispanic consumers through various tactics and media. Allianz is currently working with WING Latino for its Hispanic market campaign.

The campaign aims to educate Hispanics about how to reach their financial goals. It uses a mix of marketing strategies including b2b media, event marketing, public relations, direct marketing, community events and educational seminars. Materials and advertisements are Spanish-language and bilingual. Spanish-language print ads focus on the importance of spending money wisely. The ads promote Allianz insurance as a lasting investment that will allow Hispanics to take care of their families<sup>40</sup>.

In order to educate young Hispanics about college debt, Allianz has also created an educational brochure entitled “Financial Survival Tips for College Students<sup>41</sup>.” Other tips included in the brochure are: how to finance an education, how to use credit responsibly and the importance of investing.

Allianz also sponsors the Hispanic Heritage foundation LOFT program, an initiative which connects Hispanic youth with corporations. This program supports Allianz’s own program for promoting diversity within the company.

## **Conseco Insurance Group**

Conseco began targeting Hispanic consumers a few years ago with its life and supplemental health insurance policies. Its efforts have included less advertising and more grassroots work than most other insurance companies. Conseco has participated in numerous local Hispanic festivals including Miami’s Calle Ocho, Los Angeles’ Fiesta Broadway, and Dallas’ Conci de Mayo celebration. Conseco also signed on as official sponsor and insurance provider of the Latin Grammy Awards in 2002. During this time,

it was handling its Hispanic marketing in house and without the help of a Hispanic marketing agency<sup>42</sup>.

One of Conseco's main strategies is to provide the right kind of insurance products for its Hispanic target audience. Over half of Hispanic households earn between \$25,000 and \$75,000 a year and fall into the "middle class," the income group that Conseco is targeting<sup>43</sup>. Conseco feels it has the right kinds of insurance for this group, including life insurance, annuities and health insurance for specified diseases.

Bilingual materials are available to these Hispanic consumers, who are often younger and English-dominant. The bilingual materials allow consumers to take the information home to discuss with parents and grandparents who may not speak English. Conseco has also hired bilingual service representatives in areas with a high Hispanic concentration.

### **New York Life Insurance**

The New York Life Insurance Hispanic market campaign combines various elements of advertising, sponsorship, direct marketing, agent training and a Spanish-language website. The advertising campaign has been focused in major Spanish-language publications. In addition, a specific direct mail campaign was designed for the Hispanic market. Instead of merely translating its general market direct mail pieces, New York Life created new mailings for its Hispanic consumers. These pieces used color, vivid language and pictures of family and children<sup>44</sup>.

New York Life is also reaching out to Hispanics through its support of ASPIRA of New York, an organization which serves 8,000 Hispanic youth and families annually and works with Hispanic businesses to provide financial information and education to Hispanic families.

Another effort, which begins inside the organization, is agent education. In 1999, New York Life Insurance initiated a national Hispanic marketing conference for its independent agents<sup>45</sup>. These conferences instruct well over one hundred agents each year in how to provide reliable service to Hispanic consumers. Past conferences have included presentations about training and networking as well as speeches by company executives. New York Life also provides continuing education within the Hispanic community. The insurance company realizes that Hispanics value their families and children and recognize the significance of education.

New York Life's Spanish-language website, launched in 2003, provides Hispanic consumers and agents with information in Spanish<sup>46</sup>. The website features information about the company's insurance policies and services, but also includes educational information about starting a business, buying a home, getting married and dealing with the death of a loved one. A toll free number is also available to consumers who want to speak with a bilingual service representative.

## **Nationwide**

Nationwide has been involved in the Hispanic market for several years and has employed various Hispanic marketing agencies. In 2000, the insurance company hired Publicis, Sanchez and Levitan for its Hispanic market campaign. The same year, Nationwide's first Spanish-language television commercial was produced. However, Nationwide decided to enter the Hispanic market slowly, advertising only where it had Spanish-language capabilities<sup>47</sup>. Independent agents were able to use Nationwide's Hispanic advertising and, in addition, Nationwide split the cost of local advertising with independent agents who wished to reach out to Hispanic consumers in locations where Nationwide's advertising campaign was absent.

By 2002, almost one out of ten of Nationwide's agents were bilingual and Nationwide's revenue from Hispanic consumers topped \$170 million. In 2003, Nationwide partnered with Capital Bank to offer insurance and banking products to Hispanic consumers in South Carolina<sup>48</sup>.

The second major Hispanic campaign for Nationwide was created last year by Bromley Communications. The multi-million dollar effort was launched in 25 Hispanic markets and included television, radio and print ads. Nationwide translated its slogan into Spanish ("Está de su lado") but created messages and images which would connect with Hispanic consumers specifically. The campaign was targeted both at first generation Hispanics and younger, more acculturated Hispanics<sup>49</sup>.

One of the television commercials, "Foreign Language," dramatizes what happens after a crash. It focuses on the feeling of not understanding what is being said and done. Nationwide agents reassure the customer and make him feel protected by explaining the claims process. Another spot, "Invisible Man," explains that Nationwide can provide insurance even to people who don't have extensive driving records or insurance histories. Though many other insurance companies see these people as invisible, Nationwide assures Hispanic consumers that it does not.

Nationwide has also sought to reach Hispanics through sponsorships and an aggressive company diversity program which actively recruits and trains agents<sup>50</sup>. Nationwide has been involved with numerous initiatives and community organizations including Corazon de mi Vida, a safety-seat donation program in conjunction with the National Latino Children's Institute and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Nationwide has also made over \$600,000 in donations to the National Hispanic Scholarship Fund. Other partnerships with Hispanic organizations include: the Ohio Hispanic Coalition, Louis Barajas—Latino Journey to Financial Greatness, National Council of La Raza, National Hispana Leadership Institute and the North Carolina Society of Hispanic Professionals.

Nationwide has a small section on its website where Spanish-speaking consumers can obtain a quote, find a Spanish-speaking agent, or contact the company. There is also a toll free number with bilingual service representatives.

## **Prudential**

Prudential's first Hispanic marketing campaign began in 1998 and included television commercials shown in markets where Prudential already was already a major competitor<sup>51</sup>. Unfortunately, no information is available about Prudential's current advertising efforts in the Hispanic market. However, the company has created numerous initiatives within the company and in the community to further its Hispanic outreach.

Prudential has created Business Resource Groups for its employees. These groups serve various minority groups within the company, including Hispanics, by providing educational programs, recruitment, marketing programs and outreach activities. In addition, Prudential sponsors a variety of events and organizations within the Hispanic community, including the American Latino Media Arts Awards, the National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts, the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the National Society of Hispanic MBAs and the National Society of Hispanic CPAs.

## **21<sup>st</sup> Century Insurance**

21<sup>st</sup> Century Insurance is currently among the top spenders in Hispanic television and print advertising, with over \$5.5 million in 2004<sup>52</sup>. In the same year, 21<sup>st</sup> Century signed a contract with Viacom Outdoor Latino to place outdoor advertising on the sides of buses and transit shelters in Chicago. This was the first outdoor campaign effort for the company. The campaign "Get more!" includes Spanish-language advertisements which focus on saving money on auto insurance with 21<sup>st</sup> Century by cutting out the middle man. 21<sup>st</sup> Century sells its automotive insurance policies to Hispanic consumers in Arizona, California, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio and Texas through its Spanish-language website. Hispanics can purchase insurance through the website or a toll free number with bilingual capacities.

## **State Farm**

One of the most highly regarded insurance companies among Hispanic consumers, State Farm is also one of the biggest spenders in Hispanic marketing and media. In 2004, State Farm was the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest spender in television and print initiatives to reach the Hispanic community, spending over \$4.5 million<sup>53</sup>. In addition, as of 2003, 9% of its total advertising budget was allocated to Hispanic marketing, the highest of any of the major insurance companies<sup>54</sup>.

For several years, the Hispanic campaign was an extension of the general market campaign and made use of the same slogan, translated into Spanish: "Buen Vecino." State Farm's 2003 campaign for its life and automotive insurance products was created

by DRM/DDB and introduced the slogan “Vivimos lo que tu vives.” One commercial for life insurance focuses on father/child relationships. Another spot for automotive insurance shows how car owners identify with their vehicles. The commercials focused on common events and experiences and were filmed in Mexico<sup>55</sup>. In addition to the “Vivimos lo que tu vives” advertisements, DRM/DDB also created an advertisement for the Hispanic market in 2004 for State Farm’s new general market campaign, “True Stories.”

Other efforts by State Farm include a partnership with the National Council of La Raza aimed to educate the Hispanic community through a financial program entitled “Securing Your Family’s Future: A Personal Financial Guide for Latinos.” Various aspects of financial planning are covered and the video and accompanying workbook are available in Spanish and English<sup>56</sup>.

State Farm also has a Spanish-language website where Hispanic consumers can obtain information, locate a Spanish-speaking agent and find a toll free number where a bilingual service representative can be reached.

## Trends and Findings

After examining the efforts of some of the major insurance providers, it is helpful to look at the marketing patterns and trends found in the company profiles. By examining what has been done by insurance companies to reach out to the Hispanic market on a broader scale, an idea of which efforts have been overused, underused and more or less successful can be obtained. A thorough examination of past and current trends should also yield some insight into where the industry is headed with regards to the Hispanic market.

### Spanish-language website

A common trend in marketing insurance to Hispanics has been the creation of a Spanish-language website. The quality, content and size of the websites vary greatly from one company to another. However, most include some of the same basic attributes.

Almost all of the websites include an “En Español” link to the site from their general market website. Once on the Spanish-language site, consumers can generally find three things: an explanation of the types of insurance offered by the provider in Spanish, a search tool which allows consumers to enter their location by city, state or zip code and locate a Spanish-speaking agent near them, and the toll free number to call for more information in Spanish. Similar to the toll free number, some companies allow Hispanic consumers to purchase an insurance policy through the website (21<sup>st</sup> Century, Progressive).

Various companies include more detailed information about insurance terms and their policies. Infinity’s Spanish-language site has a glossary of insurance terms with definitions in English and Spanish. In addition to the information about insurance, some companies provide information about related topics, such as life events like marriage and buying a home (New York Life Insurance) or information for new parents (Farmers). Companies generally include information about their community involvement and sponsorships on the website and links to the sites of sponsored groups and events. Other features of the websites differ from site to site.

Spanish-language websites are most effective when they are not merely translations of the English-language website. Studies have shown that Hispanics are using the internet to find information at an increasing rate. In fact, according to a recent study carried out by America Online, 61% of Hispanics have used the internet in the past three years to pay a bill, do online banking, compare insurance rates or open a checking account<sup>57</sup>. Therefore, the website must be seen as a marketing communication tool just as much as advertising. Ineffective websites provided little information to Hispanic consumers or had links in Spanish to information that was in English. Many were also difficult to navigate.

More effective were websites that had been designed from scratch for Hispanic consumers. For example, the Farmers website is much more colorful and visually-oriented than its English-language counterpart. It contains pictures of families and children, along with vibrant colors typically associated with the Southwest. In addition, the website is very simple to navigate, making it accessible even to consumers who may not be very comfortable using the internet. The site contains all of the attributes mentioned above, including a link to the “Young Americanos” photo exhibit it sponsors.

### **Toll free number for Spanish-speakers with bilingual call center representatives**

Most insurance companies have recognized the need for a toll free number supported by bilingual service representatives and have implemented such a line. The lines are usually available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, though some companies (Progressive) have a Spanish line available only during certain hours. Hispanic consumers can obtain more information about policies and get answers to questions about insurance by calling a dedicated line. A few companies actually offer consumers the chance to compare rates (Progressive) or purchase an insurance policy (Progressive, Geico, 21<sup>st</sup> Century) through the toll free number. The toll free number can usually be found in company advertising and on the company website.

It is important to remember that the toll free number may be a customer’s first direct contact with the company. Therefore, it is essential that the Spanish language number truly have Spanish language capabilities. Some customers find themselves speaking with a representative who doesn’t speak Spanish and being transferred to another representative or a translation service. This can be very frustrating. A successful effort needs to have fully integrated Spanish language capabilities. This means that a separate number may need to be dedicated to the service, so that callers are automatically greeted in their own language. In addition, for insurance providers who sell their products through agents, a service like Allstate’s which transfers calls directly to a Spanish-speaking agent in the caller’s area creates a more direct and authentic line of communication between the company and the consumer.

It is unclear whether other insurance providers are taking advantage of all the opportunities a toll free number can provide, as Allstate has done. As mentioned in the company focus, Allstate uses its toll free number to obtain information about Hispanic consumers and prospects. Information regarding the time and location of the call is entered into a database which also holds information about current advertising campaigns. By analyzing data about the calls and the advertising campaigns, Allstate has been able to concentrate its efforts where they count the most. The success of certain media vehicles or television spots over others can be easily measured by the number of calls received soon after the spot was aired.

The toll free number, therefore, is also a valuable tool for creating a database and profile of current and potential consumers. By requesting simple demographic data from



callers, a detailed database can be created and used to focus future marketing communication efforts on viable and interested consumers.

## **Community involvement/Sponsorship of Hispanic events and organizations**

Almost every major insurance provider is involved in the Hispanic community in some capacity. The most common forms of involvement are partnerships with Hispanic organizations, sponsorship of Hispanic community events and initiatives within the Hispanic community.

Some of the organizations sponsored by or partnered with major insurance providers are:

- American Latino Arts Awards
- ASPIRA
- Hacienda
- Hispanic Heritage Foundation -- LOFT
- LA Galaxy
- Local Hispanic Chambers of Commerce
- National Council of La Raza
- National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts
- National Latino Children's Institute
- The National Hispanic Scholarship Fund
- U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Some of the local and national events sponsored by major insurance providers are:

- Latino Grammy Awards
- Calle Ocho- Miami
- Fiesta Broadway- Los Angeles
- Conci de Mayo- Dallas
- "Americanos: Latino Life in the United States" Photography Exhibit
- Puerto Rican Day Parade- New York City

This involvement is particularly important within the Hispanic market where grassroots and word of mouth marketing techniques seem to be very effective. While participating in these event and partnerships may not yield immediate sales results, they make sure that the company name stays in the mind of the Hispanic consumer. Dr. Felipe Korzenny notes that "the immediate impact of having some event participants notice the brand and approach a booth is only a small portion of the long term effect of this type of presence. As the brand builds equity in the community its presence becomes part of the emotional environment of those who participate in it<sup>58</sup>."

Participating in one festival, or giving a sum of money to a Hispanic organization won't yield great returns. Community involvement works best and gives the greatest return on investment when it is part of a long-term and genuine effort to create relationships with the Hispanic community.

## **Education for Hispanic consumers**

Many Hispanic consumers arrive in the U.S. without a clear idea of what insurance is and why it is necessary. In many Latin American countries including Mexico, insurance is not compulsory. Furthermore, most Hispanic immigrants to the U.S. did not have insurance in their home countries because they had nothing to protect. A fatalistic view of life also contributes to Hispanic consumers' misunderstanding of insurance products. This has led to an effort on the part of many insurance providers to educate Hispanic consumers about insurance and financial services.

As previously mentioned, insurance companies' Spanish-language websites are often more information-oriented than their general market counterparts. Most provide basic definitions and descriptions of the various types of insurance available. Some websites even included information on how to choose the right policy. Insurance providers have also created or sponsored various educational initiatives regarding insurance and financial planning, including educational brochures ("Financial Survival Tips for College Students" Allianz) and programs ("Louis Barajas—Latino Journey to Financial Greatness" from Nationwide and "Securing Your Family's Future: A Personal Financial Guide for Latinos" from State Farm).

While these educational initiatives are beneficial to Hispanic consumers and help them make wise decisions about insurance, research shows that Hispanics still have many questions and doubts when it comes to understanding what happens when an accident occurs and the claims process. A study done by the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute on attitudes towards insurance of Hispanics in Los Angeles revealed that one in five Hispanics doesn't know what to expect when filing a claim. Two out of five respondents believed that their rates would go up if they filed a claim<sup>59</sup>.

Insurance providers must educate Hispanics about the entire process of obtaining insurance and what happens after. Uncertainty about what can/may happen in the future causes Hispanics to be confused and disoriented, as seen in the Nationwide "Foreign Language" spot. This confusion can be partially remedied through continued education.

## **Hispanic media (print, radio, television)**

As would be expected, most of the television, radio and print advertising targeted at the Hispanic market has been delivered to the public through Hispanic media outlets. Spending on television and print advertising for the Hispanic market is growing rapidly,

and advertisers are taking advantage of the lower advertising costs found in Hispanic media.

Print ads have run in various Hispanic-oriented publications, such as *Hispanic Magazine*, *Latina*, *Latina Style* and *Hispanic Business*. Television ads have run on Univision, Telemundo, Galavision, Fox Sports en Español and SÍTV.

An interesting trend to watch is the use of English-language Hispanic television channels. As mentioned in the Company Focus, Geico is advertising its insurance products in English on SÍTV, which has programming for younger, more acculturated Hispanics in English. Determining which media outlets are most appropriate depends on the target audience. Geico is attempting to reach a younger, more acculturated Hispanic segment of the population and SÍTV's viewers fit this demographic profile.

With the variety of Hispanic media available, it becomes increasingly important for insurance providers to choose the correct publications, radio stations and television networks which have not only a Hispanic audience in general, but the right Hispanic audience for a company's insurance products.

## **Direct mail**

Research has shown that direct mail can be an effective way to reach Hispanics. Hispanic Market Weekly Online reports that the average Hispanic consumer receives much less direct mail than other consumers<sup>60</sup>. They also seem to be much more receptive to the mailings, and tend to read most of the direct mail that they receive. In fact, nearly one out of five Hispanics made a direct mail purchase in the last year.

Allstate, Geico, Allianz and New York Life Insurance have all used direct mailings as part of their Hispanic campaign. As with all marketing communication messages, direct mail is most effective when it is created specifically for the Hispanic consumer and is not just a translation of general market materials. New York Life recognized this and used more colorful images and language in addition to pictures of families and children in its direct mail pieces for Hispanics, in contrast with its more austere general market mailings.

## **Company diversity/Agent training**

In order to attract diverse consumers, many insurance providers are trying to make themselves more diverse. Numerous companies have diversity initiatives in place to recruit, hire and train diverse agents, including Hispanics. In addition, many insurance providers give instruction to their agents about how to effectively communicate with Hispanic consumers.

Companies like Allstate, Nationwide, and Prudential among others have documented initiatives in place to increase the number of Hispanic agents working for the company and to train all employees on matters of diversity. Many of these companies have also been named among the top companies for Hispanics to work by sources like *Hispanic* magazine.

These initiatives are important for many reasons. On the surface, an increase in Hispanic agents and employees within the company means that Hispanic consumers will be able to communicate effectively with the agent, probably in Spanish. Hispanic agents may be able to better understand the motivations, fears and questions of Hispanic consumers. Furthermore, companies who add Hispanics to their management team are more likely to have employees who understand the Hispanic target audience. However, it is necessary to have a diverse workforce also because it adds credibility to the company. If Hispanics see a company that actively recruits and takes care of its Hispanic employees, they are more likely to view that company as a company that cares about Hispanics.

### **Location (targeting top Hispanic markets)**

Hispanic marketing initiatives have generally been focused in top Hispanic markets, such as:

- Chicago
- Dallas
- Denver
- Los Angeles
- Miami
- New York City
- Phoenix
- San Antonio
- San Diego
- San Francisco
- Tucson

Concentrating efforts in these markets can save insurance providers money and assures that advertising is only being done in areas where there are Spanish-speaking or bilingual capacities.

However, Hispanics have actually been moving out of the traditional US Hispanic centers and into other regions where there is work and housing costs are lower. For this reason, it is essential not to focus marketing campaigns exclusively in California, Texas and Florida, as has been done in the past. Providers who extend their outreach to the new centers of Hispanic growth, like Georgia, for example, are likely to see good results.

## Language

Most insurance providers have chosen to market to Hispanic consumers using the Spanish language, from the use of Spanish-language websites to Spanish-language television and print advertisements. However, some companies (Geico, Allianz, Allstate), especially those targeting younger or more affluent Hispanics, have started to advertise in both English and Spanish. These bilingual and English marketing efforts are still specific for the Hispanic market. Allianz English print ads for the Hispanic market focus on important events in life like the *quinceañera* or Allianz's partnership with the Hispanic Heritage Youth Awards. Other insurance providers, like Allstate and Geico, use images of Hispanics in their English-language marketing efforts for Hispanics and focus on the family. The ads, rather than focus only on language to create relationships with Hispanic consumers, employ culturally relevant images and experiences which help these insurance providers connect with Hispanics in a meaningful way.

The use of the English language versus the Spanish language depends on many factors. Hispanics may feel more of an emotional connection with the Spanish language, but English may be more appropriate for communicating certain concepts which are problematic to explain in Spanish. Determining the most appropriate language or mix of languages to use depends greatly on the specific target audience. Young Hispanics, more affluent Hispanics and those who were born in the United States may respond well to English-language advertising. Other Hispanics may need Spanish-language materials, support and advertising in order to understand and feel comfortable with the process of buying insurance. Insurance companies must know exactly what kinds of Hispanics make up their target audience and conduct research to determine the language preferences of this group. The right mix of English and Spanish for the target audience will allow insurance providers to reach more Hispanics in the most efficient and relevant way.

## Culturally-specific marketing messages

Merely translating an advertisement into Spanish or using Hispanic actors for advertising is not enough to reach the Hispanic market and most insurance providers are aware of this. Like mainstream consumers, issues of price, security and reputation are important to Hispanics and shouldn't be ignored in marketing communication messages. Messages for this market must be culturally relevant and appeal to values and experiences which Hispanics can relate to.

Insurance companies that understand this have focused on important elements of Hispanic life, such as family and children. For example, one current Allstate television commercial shows a wedding scene with children running around in the background. Another Allstate spot shows a Hispanic family together at a café. Other companies stress the importance of buying insurance in order to protect children's future and education. The importance of the family extends beyond advertising. Many insurance agents make their offices more inviting for the entire family by including television and games for

children. Other companies include information on their websites for the family, such as Farmers' Spanish-language website for new parents.

Another cultural issue that insurance companies have used in order to reach Hispanic consumers is the concept of "protecting your dream." Insurance providers realize that many Hispanics (or their parents, grandparents, etc.) came to the United States with nothing. Insurance was not important to many people in Latin America because they had nothing to protect. Hispanics who have achieved some success, maybe bought a house and a car, possibly even started a business, now want to protect what they have earned. Reminding Hispanics that they can protect these dreams by buying insurance is a strategy which has been employed by Allstate among others.

Understanding the cultural values which shape Hispanic life is essential. Insurance companies that want to reach out to Hispanic consumers must understand who these consumers are. By examining Hispanic cultural values, insurance providers can tailor communication messages to appeal to these values, thus creating culturally-relevant messages.

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendation #1: Address cultural tendencies relevant to insurance marketing**

As mentioned throughout the report, there are certain Hispanic cultural orientations which make insurance problematic. One of those dimensions is fatalism. Its roots in Catholicism, fatalism is the belief that we do not control our lives. Associated with this idea is a tendency toward present time orientation. This concept is best expressed through the expression “If I can’t control the future, I might as well enjoy myself today!” This means that Hispanics may not see preventive spending on products like insurance as a logical thing to do. However, research has found that Hispanics want a way to take control of their lives. Education is the key to showing Hispanic consumers how insurance products and intelligent financial decisions can actually help them take control of their future and protect their loved ones.

### **Recommendation #2: Understand Latin American culture regarding insurance**

Education will also play a vital role in helping Hispanics to understand which types of insurance are obligatory in the US, how much they need, and why it is important. In most Latin American countries, including Mexico, car and home insurance are not necessary. It is also probable that the Hispanics coming to work in the United States had little or nothing to protect through insurance.

### **Recommendation #3: Understand Hispanic attitudes about money and business**

Hispanic consumers prefer face-to-face interaction. Though things are changing a little now, as more Hispanics go online and become comfortable doing business transactions online or on the telephone, the majority of them still prefer to know the persona they are doing business with. This is especially true for substantial purchases, like insurance. Insurance providers should prepare their agents to deal with Hispanics in the office, maybe a few times, and maybe the entire family, before an insurance purchase is made.

Additionally, Hispanics often prefer to pay in cash, rather than with a check or credit card. There are many reasons for this. A great number of Hispanic immigrants comes from countries with unstable economies, making it unsafe to put money in the bank. Hispanics are also generally less receptive to the idea of credit cards, as the idea of credit has a very negative connotation in Latin America. Agents in high density Hispanic areas may want to consider accepting cash payments from Hispanic customers.

### **Recommendation #4: Educate Hispanic children about insurance and finances**

Education has been a recurring recommendation throughout the report. However, here the idea is presented in yet another form: educating Hispanic children. A large percentage of Hispanic families are composed of member of different levels of acculturation and different language capabilities. This means that often, within Hispanic

families, children play the role of the educator. They may teach their parents English, and share things they have learned at school with the entire family. If an insurance provider created a program to teach Hispanic children about insurance and finances, these children would 1) understand the importance of these concepts from a young age, 2) go home and teach their parents about it and 3) forever associate the name of that insurance provider as a company who cares about Hispanics. This is a chance to create life-long relationships with Hispanic consumers and make a difference in the Hispanic community through an educational outreach program.

### **Recommendation #5: Create a relationship of trust with Hispanic consumers**

As with any relationship, trust is key. How does an insurance provider create and maintain that relationship with Hispanic consumers? A company that shows a genuine, long-term interest in Hispanics, learns about them and invests time and money in their community will gain the trust of Hispanic consumers.

Hispanics have been shown to be brand loyal. If they buy one kind of insurance from a company and have a positive experience, they are likely to buy all their insurance from that same company. In addition, they are likely to recommend the company to family and friends. Therefore, creating a relationship of trust is in the best interest of the consumer and the insurance provider and will provide lasting and beneficial results.

## **Conclusions**

Insurance providers are just beginning to recognize the great potential of the Hispanic market. Most insurance companies have begun to target Hispanic consumers through specific marketing and advertising campaigns. Some of the methods used include: Spanish-language call centers, educational materials and websites, culturally-relevant advertising in Spanish and English, partnership and sponsorship of Hispanic community events and organizations, diversity training and recruitment of Hispanic employees and agents.

Currently, spending on Hispanic marketing in the insurance industry is not commensurate with the percentage of Hispanics in the population. However, as the potential of this market is understood, Hispanic marketing budgets will continue to grow. It is interesting to note that advertising to Hispanics presently costs much less than advertising to mainstream consumers because advertising costs in Hispanic media vehicles is less expensive, allowing insurance companies to get more for their money.

While more money deserves to be spent on Hispanic advertising campaigns, an increase in research spending and database management could also yield great return on investment. The Hispanic community is not homogeneous. Hispanics come from different countries, have different language preferences, live in different parts of the country and celebrate different events. They differ because of length of residence in the United States, education and level of income. Marketing insurance products to a newly



arrived migrant Mexican farm worker in Houston and a third-generation Cuban from Miami requires different methods. This kind of research is useful in determining which language(s) to use, which media to use (radio vs. television vs. print vs. outdoor) and which community partnerships and sponsorships can be most beneficial, among other things.

This research should also focus on gaining insight into Hispanic cultural beliefs. A company that finds new and original means to connect with Hispanic consumers in a meaningful way will have a great advantage over companies that do not. While a cultural value like the importance of the family is powerful, it becomes a less influential message when all insurance companies' advertisements focus on the same thing. Insurance companies need to find a way to distinguish themselves from other companies with Hispanic consumers.

Some of the initiatives begun by insurance companies in recent years have been more successful than others. The most successful companies in the insurance industry's Hispanic market have something in common: integration. This means that at every level of operation, from the website to the advertising to the employees themselves, one consistent message is communicated to Hispanics. Take the example of Allstate. From the beginning of the insurance buying process to the very end, Hispanics see evidence of Allstate's involvement in and concern for Hispanics and the Hispanic community. A typical experience with Allstate might go something like this:

- A Hispanic sees that Allstate is sponsoring a Hispanic community event and is motivated to search for more information about Allstate on the internet.
- On the Internet, a Spanish-language site explains the different types of insurance. The Hispanic still has some questions and decides to call the toll free number listed on the site.
- A Spanish-speaking agent answers the phone call and is able to give the Hispanic further answers to insurance policy questions in the preferred language, either Spanish or English.
- Still not sure, the Hispanic decides to wait before making a final decision about buying insurance. In the meantime, he sees a television spot for Allstate insurance featuring one of his favorite Hispanic actors explaining that Allstate insurance understands him and will help protect his dreams. In the background, a family that much resembles his own is having coffee together.
- This causes him to return to the Allstate website, where he searches for and finds a Spanish-speaking agent near him.
- When he arrives at the agent's office, he is pleased to find a Hispanic agent who welcomes him and his family (including children) into the office, offers them a cup of coffee and takes the time to answer their questions.

Allstate, using an integrated method, has captured an enormous share of the Hispanic market. Companies who do careful research in order to create culturally relevant messages and then communicate those messages to Hispanic consumers in all aspects of its business will be much more successful in marketing insurance to the Hispanic market.

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