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Direct Marketing: Multicultural Name Identification

by Candace Kennedy, Director, Sales and Marketing, Ethnic Technologies, LLC



Conventional wisdom says that America is a melting pot of many different cultures. Try mixing up six different cheeses in a pot then try to find the different taste values of each. It is very difficult to do. The same idea applies to identifying the different cultures that make up our nation. The segmentation system that we habitually use simply divides the population into color or racial categories: White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian. Using this type of approach or methodology has its downfalls and in most cases antiquated census information is used, as it's sole input for development. A better approach is to see the diversity in America as a mixed salad, where each ethnicity is a different ingredient and can be identified. This method, if used properly applies to the many ethnicities and different cultures in our nation and each can be identified.

Marketers, researchers, advertising agencies and the media often market to Hispanics as a separate group from Whites, Blacks and Asians. When you take an in-depth look at the Hispanic population in the United States they often associate with one or more of the aforementioned racial groups and those racial groups can be correlated to their country of origin or cultural identity. An individual or family from Puerto Rico does not exhibit the same cultural identity or buying habits as those of a family that has immigrated to the US from Mexico. If that is the case then why do marketers, researchers, advertising agencies and the media often approach Hispanic's as a whole with the same exact offers, disregard their country of origin and then complain that their campaigns were not successful. Even the dialect of the Spanish language they speak differs.

The same issues arise and in greater depth when attempting to target the Asian community, the "One Size Fits All" mentality is often the method used and low response rates and product interests are the norm. With so many different Asian countries of origin and Asian languages of preference currently residing in the US, it is the smart marketer that embraces technology that allows them to identify all ethnicities, countries of origin and languages that are available. An offer tailored to a Chinese American living in San Francisco CA should differentiate from one being tailored to a Korean American living in Fort Lee NJ or a Vietnamese American living in Houston TX. Now if you add into the mix the different levels of assimilation and acculturation, the buying habits and traditional cultural customs the individual embraces are all over the chart.

An individual's ethnicity is not in all circumstances related to ones "Country of Origin". A Deepak Banerjee may have been born in England and then came to our country, but his ethnicity and cultural identity is Indian and in most cases his religion would be Hindu.

Many ethnic and religious groups in the United States maintain a strong cultural identity. They are often attracted to communities with their same ethnicity, communities in which many traditional cultural customs are maintained. Given that the ethnic diversity in the US is far more reflective of a global landscape, it is even more important for marketers to fully understand cultural differences, language preference, purchasing habits and other socioeconomic information and integrate those variations into their everyday marketing strategies and tactics. The time for the " One Size Fits All" methodology is gone that way of the dinosaur.

Contact:

Candace Kennedy
Ethnic Technologies, LLC
866-333-8324, ext. 106
candace@ethnictechnologies.com
www.ethnictechnologies.com