

Hispanic Heritage heartache: Brands fall short in efforts to woo an underserved, growing demographic group

Article

The news: Hispanic Heritage Month ends on October 15, and much like the last few years, it offered up a few cringeworthy campaigns and missed opportunities.

The theme of the observance this year was “**Unidos (United): Inclusivity for a Stronger Nation.**” That’s an apt theme, given that Latino households emphasize solidarity and community. But many brands ignored it, leading to high-profile blunders showing what to avoid when appealing to Latino audiences.

Food fight: **DC Comics** unveiled a series of comic book covers with Hispanic characters like **Blue Beetle** and **Green Lantern**, which sparked a flurry of online criticism when readers noticed the heroes clutching packages of tamales and one brandishing a banner that said Viva Mexico!

- Puerto Rican graphic novelist **Edgardo Miranda-Rodriguez** pointed out that these Hispanic characters were reduced to ethnic cuisine, while Wonder Woman has never been depicted eating a gyro.

Baking...tacos? “The Great British Baking Show” thought it was a good idea to have its contestants make tacos for its “Mexican Week” episode, even though the main goal of the competition is to see who can bake the best.

- The promotional videos with the sombrero-clad hosts **Noel Fielding** and **Matt Lucas** received criticism on social media even before the episode debuted on October 7.
- **Bill Esparza**, author of “L.A. Mexicano,” called the episode “racist” for its ponchos, sombreros, and talk of a Mexican standoff—leaning into easy caricatures without any meaningful research into the country’s culture.

Stopped at the 10 yard line: The **NFL**’s Hispanic Heritage Month campaign was dubbed “Por La Cultura,” which translates to “For the Culture.”

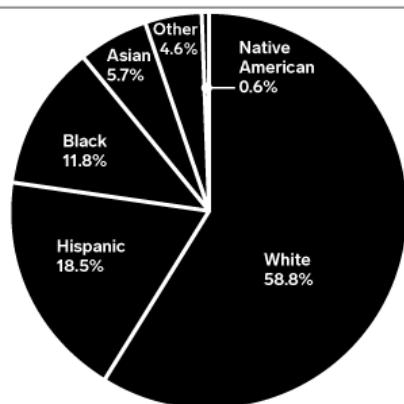
- It included a list of Latino players, coaches, and staff members on the league’s website, an interview with Reggaeton star **J Balvin**, and an announcement of a forthcoming partnership with Mexican streetwear brand **Chito**.
- As part of the campaign, the NFL chose to add a tilde to the N in its logo—but since there is no tilde in the Spanish word “nacional,” many Twitter users called out the NFL’s laziness.

Zoom out: The Hispanic population is sizable, diverse, and a melting pot of cultures.

- More than 18% of Americans identify as Hispanic or Latino.
- With an estimated \$1.9 trillion in purchasing power and improving finances, it's critical for businesses and organizations to craft their messaging effectively.
- US Hispanics and Latinos have several different cultures with various subtle differences.
- Significant regional differences exist: Marketing initiatives for Latinos in Florida should have different considerations than those focused on cohorts in the Northeast or California.

**Share of US Population, by Race/Ethnicity,
Dec 2020**

% of total



Note: numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Source: Insider Intelligence analysis of IPUMS USA (Integrated Public Use Microdata Series), March 2, 2022

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Better luck next year: For brands looking to court this valuable demographic during 2023's Hispanic Heritage Month (or sooner), consider the following:

- **Research:** Failed campaigns neglect Hispanic trends and needs out of ignorance or a lack of adequate research and understanding.
- **Recruit:** Hire internal or external resources with extensive knowledge of Hispanic culture. This can include agencies with domain expertise as well as social media creators who typify the breadth of Hispanic experience.
- **Represent:** While diverse representation is far better than it used to be, brands need to be mindful to include realistic Hispanic actors and consumers in their advertising.

The big takeaway: Approaching this group with sensitivity and research goes a long way; so too does understanding that the Hispanic community is not a monolith and consists of various

subgroups.

Go further: Read our new Spotlight on Hispanic consumers.