

HISPANIC CONSUMER BEHAVIOR:
A REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

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As of 1979, the U.S. had the fifth largest Hispanic population in the world(19 million), according to the U.S. Dept. of Commerce. By 1985 it is estimated that Hispanics will be the largest minority group in the U.S., and many predict that by 1990 the Hispanic population will be 25% of the U.S. population. The buying power of this market is enormous. Recent studies have shown that they buying power of Hispanics in New York City is \$6 billion, while in Los Angeles and Orange Counties it is \$4 billion.

The Culture and its Subsets

In an early study Sturdivant(1971) reported on low income families in two small towns. Findings showed insignificant differences between the two towns on eight variables. Two variables did have significant differences from one town to the other(use of credit, and family indebtedness). Many studies, however, have suggested that assuming Hispanic segments of the U.S. to be homogeneous is a drastic error.

Anomie and Attitudes Toward the Market

Longman and Pruden(1971) reported that there were significant differences among Afro-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Anglo-Americans with respect to anomie. Mexican-Americans experienced a significantly greater level of anomie than did Anglos, but not as much as Afros.

Landon and Lundstrom(1973) challenged these results, however, contending that alienation is a very complex construct treated lightly by Longman and Pruden.

Discrimination in the Marketplace

Griffin and Sturdivant(1973) published the findings of a discrimination study of middle-income Anglos, Blacks, and Chicanos. No statistically significant differences as relates to possible racial discrimination among the groups was found. Regarding the income level, Aaker and Day(1971) have suggested that as regards consumers there are only two important segments: low-income ghetto shoppers, and all others.

Sturdivant and Wilhelm(1968) reported findings different from those above. They found that prices quoted to three disadvantaged couples were higher outside each couple's local area, and that prices were higher in the lower-income areas than the higher-income areas.

Shopping Patterns and Habits

Berry and Solomon(1971) studied 100 low-income Mexican-American food shoppers in Denver. It was determined that the majority of the shoppers shopped at supermarkets outside the barrio. Contradictions arose in a study by Wall(1969), among others. This study found that the low income consumer had a propensity to shop in his/her own neighborhood.

Communications

One of a few, a study by Alexander and McCullough(1979) showed that Mexican-Americans tend not to use print

media, their preference is television and radio. Cervantes(1979), however, reported that of 250 households interviewed, 48% read La Opinion(Spanish language newspaper) and 45% read The Los Angeles Times. He also found that one of the local English language television stations garnered 57 rating points against KMEX, a Spanish language station.

Conclusions: Directions for Further Research

Our search yields several immediate general conclusions. First, a rather small body of literature has been attempted in this area. Second, the studies in the area suffer from a lack of an integrative focus. The literature is repleat with a number of small studies which have addressed a myriad of issues. Third, studies in the area seem to be largely devoid of a theoretical focus. Such a focus is needed if further investigation is to take place.

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