

Spanish translation industry in the US

Afaf Steiert & Yasin Steiert

With an ever-growing Hispanic population in the United States we see an insatiable demand to breach the language barriers between US businesses and the new immigrant consumer base that has emerged. After suffering a major economic setback during the recession of recent years, we have seen the United States begin to mend itself and return to a steady economic growth. Likewise, the supply of jobs has been ameliorating.

Accordingly, it can be deduced that the United States will once again have a high intake of immigrants to serve within the re-emerging job market. Even if this is not the case, there are large groups of already established immigrants within the United States who, to a greater or lesser extent, often continue to pass on their cultural heritage and language to their children (Figure 1). The group of immigrants growing at the fastest pace, and with the most economic and political influence, are Hispanics. The Hispanic population has ballooned in the United States, with estimates made by the Census Bureau in 2012 that it has reached close to 52 million. Consequently, the usage of the Spanish language within the United States has also increased collectively. For example, in some cities and neighborhoods throughout the United States, it's hard to distinguish if English is really the primary language of the region.

This blossoming of the Spanish language within the United States has resulted in a massive translation market sector in which competition is being waged between companies in order to secure a position in the marketplace. Just to illustrate the financial clout of the Hispanic consumer market, take into account that more than one out of every ten businesses are Hispanic, according to the most recent IRS report. Fully 71% of Hispanics are more

likely to buy a product if it is advertised in Spanish, according to the second-quarter 2012 Nielsen report "State of the Hispanic Consumer: The Hispanic Market Imperative." Furthermore, the US Department of Commerce estimated that Hispanic-owned businesses grew by 55% from 2002 to 2007, at a time when the entire US economy only grew at about 10%. The factors regarding the growing importance of the Spanish language within America are endless. That is exactly why we can expect to see a correlation between the burgeoning Hispanic population and the booming of translation services within the sector. In fact, American corporations are already advertising in Spanish to US Hispanics because it has been shown to increase Hispanic consumption.

The Hispanic market's size, growing influence and buying power, projected to expand from \$1 trillion in 2010 to an estimated \$1.5 trillion by 2015, require thoughtful understanding about what the market represents to a company. That buying power alone would make the Hispanic market within the United States one of the top world economies (see sidebar on page 37). That is why money is being spent researching how this market can be tapped. The aforementioned Nielsen report indicates that 56% of Hispanics speak Spanish within their households as a primary language, compared to 40% who speak primarily English. This data clearly outlines the strategic importance for advertising with Spanish. Hispanic consumers are 30% more likely to recall an ad if it was presented in Spanish, which confirms the need for the market to adapt to the new consumer. Much like the evolutionary idea of the survival of the fittest, companies must adapt quickly in order to remain viable over prolonged periods of time. Spanish translation of products, manuals, advertisements and media is the primary way for companies to successfully facilitate this growth.

One area in the Hispanic market that has proven to be advantageous for translation providers is the advertisement sector. According to the second-quarter 2012 Nielsen report, companies spent a total of \$5.7 billion on Spanish media advertisements in 2011. Many large corporations such as McDonald's, the fourth largest Spanish language advertiser in the United States, are learning to adjust to the new ethnic trend within the United States (Figure 2). This in turn effectively contributes to translation companies



Afaf Steiert (left) is president and cofounder of Afaf Translations. She works as a conference Arabic interpreter, voiceover and translator and obtained a masters in molecular biology from the University of Basel, Switzerland. Yasin Steiert (right) has been an intern at Afaf Translations since 2009 and is studying international relations at San Francisco State University.





Figure 1: The San Jose, California, Mi Pueblo supermarket (left) and a supermarket in El Dorado, Mexico (right) are essentially indistinguishable, indicating the growing Hispanic influence in America.

growing their English into Spanish services. This can be seen geographically as well. In areas in which there are higher populations of Hispanic immigrants, there are increased numbers of translation agencies benefiting from the increased demand in services.

Accurate and culturally sensitive Spanish

It may be interesting for the non-Spanish speaker to know that Spanish exists in different varieties, which sometimes makes it just a bit more challenging to address all

Hispanics since, firstly, the Hispanic community is not monolithic. Hispanics come to the United States from all corners of the Americas, and there are cultural and language differences that need to be addressed, especially when crafting the message, be it an advertisement or a news release. While we are not suggesting communicators write many versions of the same release to fit all the various communities, we are saying that the message should be general enough that Hispanic media and their audiences can equally relate to the message. Second,

simply translating news and reports into Spanish without understanding cultural context can cause misunderstanding. If one wants to avoid embarrassment (and embarrassment translates to *embarazo*, which can also mean *pregnancy* in Spanish) someone who is fluent and culturally adept should go over the text. For example, it is crucial to be on the lookout for overly literal translations, which could change the tone and message. Spanish is a language that, in itself, is culturally rich and anyone doing translations needs to completely

rhain_schrift

Translation & Localization

Your German Language Specialist

- translation and localization
- proofreading
- company-specific glossaries
- post-editing services
- project management
- desktop publishing

Outstanding
Localization

Cologne, Germany

Tel +49(0)221 801 928-0

www.rheinschrift.de

TRANSLATION AT THE *SPEED* OF TODAY



smartling **HI!**

www.smartling.com/multilingual









Figure 2: One of many Spanish McDonald's ads presented within the United States.

understand the interaction between words and culture to ensure the message is well-received and understood.

This, of course, puts great emphasis on the notion that cultural blunders can result from trusting an automated program to accurately and sensitively translate news or messages of any kind from English into Spanish, even if the automated program is otherwise quite perfect. It is important to make sure the translator – or post-editor in a machine translation environment – is a native speaker. Again, it has to be remembered that Spanish does not come in one flavor. Words used in one country might mean something very different in another. The best approach is to use generally accepted and grammatically correct Spanish, often labeled neutral Spanish, for any text used for the diverse mix of US Hispanics.

Hispanics are becoming the leading drivers of growth and are economic trend-setters in the sense that their consumer actions have begun to dominate the US economy. Marketers are already researching new ways for companies to communicate to the new consumer. Besides this, future forecasts of consumption do indicate growth, but the Hispanic share is significantly greater than that of non-Hispanics. Furthermore, the sustainability of the Hispanic culture will have a lasting influence on the melting pot known as American culture. As the nation begins to reach increased ethnic plurality with every passing day, understanding the distinctive patterns of demographics, culture and consumption can lead the way to a sizeable and growing impact on total market share. The United States has a new face, and as various businesses learn to adapt and conform, the translation industry will be in a position to benefit from the gains of a truly globalized America. **M**

Companies ignore one of top ten largest economies in world

Test searches for companies	"[Company name] en espanol" with language set to English	"[Company name] en espanol" with language set to Spanish	"[Company name] en espanol" with language set to Spanish and region set to US	In language search for [company name] with language set to Spanish	In language search for [company name] with language set to Spanish and region set to US
	Spanish language site for Latin America	Spanish language site for Latin America	Spanish language site for Latin America	Spanish language Wikipedia entry for Apple	Spanish language Wikipedia entry for Apple
	Spanish language appliances site for US	Spanish language appliances site for Latin America	Spanish language appliances site for Latin America	Spanish language version of GE's corporate site	Spanish language version of GE's Latin America
	"Visit Your Country" site in English, with "Mexico/Spanish" listed under "North America"	"Visit Your Country" site in English, with "Mexico/Spanish" listed under "North America"	Spanish language Wikipedia entry for Samsung	Spanish language site for Spain	Spanish language Wikipedia entry for Samsung
	Spanish language support page for the US with a link to country sites in English	Spanish language support page for the US with a link to country sites in English	Spanish language support page for the US with a link to country sites in English	Spanish language Wikipedia entry for Sony	Spanish language Wikipedia entry for Sony
	Spanish language version of Ford's corporate site	Spanish language version of Ford's corporate site	Spanish language version of Ford's corporate site	Spanish language version of Ford's corporate site	Spanish language version of Ford's corporate site
	Spanish language site for Spain	English language job application (only general information in Spanish)	Spanish language Wikipedia entry for McDonald's	Link to store locator in the local area where the search was performed	Spanish language Wikipedia entry for McDonald's

The US Hispanic market continues to hold its position as one of the top ten largest economies in the world. The University of Georgia's Selig Center estimates that Hispanic purchasing power was \$1.2 trillion in 2012, and expects it to rise to \$1.5 trillion by 2015. According to trade organization AHAA: The Voice of Hispanic Marketing, one in six Americans is now Hispanic. What makes this audience somewhat unique is that typical profiles include both Spanish-dominant and English-dominant buyers. In some verticals, such as high-tech consumer electronics and food and beverage, Spanish-speaking Hispanics spend more per transaction on products than their English-speaking counterparts.

Our research shows that Spanish on its own may not be enough to reach this community effectively. Bilingual content caters to both profiles and improves search engine optimization. US Latinos also differ from the general online population in several other areas besides language preference. Their rate of mobile use is far higher and they are more receptive to display and search ads. They are more apt to engage in online conversations with advertisers, as well as post a higher number of comments and share more content.

Do large companies in the high-tech consumer electronics and

food and beverage sectors now pay more attention to Hispanic demographics and preferences? To find out, Common Sense Advisory conducted test searches in Google for the companies listed in the table above. What stands out is that the majority of these companies still send US Latino visitors to sites in Latin America or Spain, even though their purchasing power is much greater than the markets targeted by those websites. Worse yet, most in-language searches send the visitor to Wikipedia.

In fairness to the companies listed, some now provide mobile sites designed specifically for the US Hispanic market. Why? Because US Hispanics are more likely than the general population to purchase high-tech consumer electronics. They also spend a higher proportion of their income on groceries and restaurants. Nonetheless, these searches indicate that even large companies with millions of dollars and euros to spend on their websites still have a lot to learn when it comes to engaging one of the largest economies in the world. This means a world of opportunity for language service providers that understand how to reach the US Hispanic market.

— Rebecca Ray, Common Sense Advisory