Hispanic Food Shoppers in the U.S.

Description: Hispanic Food Shoppers in the U.S.

Food retailers have long known that the U.S. Hispanic population represents an enormous opportunity. And also, The author has found, a challenging opportunity.

First, the upside: over the past decade, spending on food in grocery stores by Hispanics has grown more than 80%, more than double the average growth registered by consumers overall. And as the Hispanic population has grown and Hispanic consumers are moving into areas not traditionally known for a large Latino presence, food retailers across the country can tap into this burgeoning market. This has ceased to be an opportunity restricted to places such as south Florida, Los Angeles, New York City and Chicago.

Now the challenge: the Hispanic population is not a monolith. Spanish language commonality aside, food preferences, idioms and shopping habits can vary depending on the country of origin. In Los Angeles, for example, stocking the shelves for the “Hispanic” food shopper means understanding the preferences and traditions of shoppers who are mainly Mexicans but also include a substantial population of Salvadorans and Guatemalans. In Miami food stores need to satisfy the expectations of Cubans, Colombians, Venezuelans, Hondurans and Nicaraguans. In New York they need to cater to Puerto Ricans and Dominicans along with shoppers from a wide variety of other countries in Central and South America.

Hispanic Food Shoppers in the U.S. offers critical insights into what food marketers and grocers can do to attract and retain the loyalty of Hispanic food shoppers.

Scope of the Report

Hispanic food shoppers are defined as Hispanic respondents to Simmons National Consumer Study (NCS) who report that they shopped at any supermarket or food store within the past four weeks. Hispanic food shoppers number 31.6 million and represent 88% of the total population of Hispanic adults.

The report uses the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” interchangeably. According to a 2012 report by Washington, D.C.-based Pew Hispanic Research Center ("When Labels Don't Fit: Hispanics and Their Views of Identity") 51% of those self-identifying as “Hispanic” or “Latino” have no preference for either term. Those expressing a preference choose Hispanic over Latino by 33% to 14%.

The size of the market is defined as expenditures by Hispanic consumer units on food at grocery and other food stores, or food at home, as measured by the Consumer Expenditures Survey of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). As defined by BLS, a consumer unit is functionally equivalent to the household category of the Census Bureau. According to BLS, a consumer unit comprises either: (1) all members of a particular household who are related by blood, marriage, adoption, or other legal arrangements; (2) a person living alone or sharing a household with others or living as a roomer in a private home or lodging house or in permanent living quarters in a hotel or motel, but who is financially independent; or (3) two or more persons living together who use their income to make joint expenditure decisions. Financial independence is determined by the three major expense categories: Housing, food, and other living expenses. To be considered financially independent, at least two of the three major expense categories have to be provided entirely, or in part, by the respondent.

Methodology

The consumer data in this report come from several sources. These include national Online Consumer Surveys conducted in January/February 2014 and April/May 2014, which reflect a panel of 2,000 U.S. adults (age 18+) that is balanced to the national population on the primary demographic measures of gender, age bracket, race/ethnicity, geographic region, marital status, presence or absence of children in the household and household income.

Another source is Simmons NCS for Fall 2013 from Experian Marketing Services, which was fielded from November 2012 through November 2013. (The report uses the Fall 2004 NCS in the case of 10-year-trend tables and figures.) On an ongoing basis, Experian Marketing Services conducts booklet-based surveys of a
large and random sample of consumers (approximately 25,000 for each 12-month survey compilation) who in aggregate represent a statistically accurate cross-section of the U.S. population. The report also includes data from Simmons National Hispanic Consumer Study (NHCS) for Winter 2014, which was fielded from January 2013 through March 2014. Simmons NHCS includes an additional set of questions specifically geared toward Hispanic consumers.

A number of other surveys are cited in the report including data from reports published by Pew Hispanic Research Center, The MSL Group/The Hartman Group, AMG Advisors and McKinsey & Company. The report is also based upon data collected from a wide range of industry sources, including company websites, trade publications, business newspapers and magazines, consumer blogs and releases from public companies.

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