

The myth of the  
**SLEEPING GIANT**

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Why Latinos are the fastest growing segment the sustainability industry has (n)ever seen



**Introduction by  
Nayelli Gonzalez**

When I think of the reasons my dad drives a hybrid, fills his groceries in reusable bags, and never leaves the lights on in an empty room, advertising doesn't exactly come to mind. Marketing and advertising don't quite explain why, as a child, I grew up eating home-cooked meals made of fresh, unprocessed ingredients; I can still taste the flavors of my mom's homemade salsa verde enchiladas covered with queso fresco, all whipped up by hand. My parents, who migrated from Mexico City over three decades ago and now proudly call themselves Americans, would never claim to be "green" or "environmentalists." Yet, some of their habits tell a different story.

What the outside world sees is sometimes different than what goes on behind closed doors – and that is certainly the case when it comes to Latinos' relationship with the environment. My parents are representative of millions of Latinos across the United States who are preservationists at core: they hold an inherent respect for nature, are mindful of future generations, and want to live in healthier, cleaner environments. And it is their children and grandchildren, a younger, more social and tech-savvy demographic, who are shaping the next wave of tastes, trends and traditions of this country. Will that future be green? It depends.

Green or not, the future of this nation is brown. The U.S. Latino population is growing at three times the rate of the overall population, and the group's purchasing power is expected to grow 50 percent in a matter of years. Most businesses know this, but these facts are not entirely reflected in corporate sustainability and marketing efforts.

For various reasons we will explore in this report, sustainability and marketing professionals are completely missing the boat on engaging Latinos in this country. This is not only a missed opportunity, but it is also a shame because Latinos are open and ready to engage with authentic green messaging and

purchase sustainable products that will help them live healthier lives and build a more sustainable future. Yet, in 2012 few companies are reaching out to Latinos to help build that future.

Our aim with this report is to start a conversation among the business, marketing, advertising and environmental communities. We hope the insights garnered in this report will spark dialogue within companies and inspire them to develop effective strategies and communications to engage Latinos in their corporate sustainability efforts – and ultimately design engagement platforms that speak to Latinos in ways that matter and create positive change.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is a call to action. Companies that are not speaking to Latinos with their sustainability messaging are not speaking to the fastest growing demographic in the nation – and this means that their messages are not being heard by an increasingly relevant consumer market. The facts and figures presented here uncover the untapped potential of the Latino market in sustainable business.

The report begins with an overview of the dramatic growth of the Latino population and what its rapidly expanding purchasing power means to U.S. business. It continues with a reality check of what little has been done to target this audience through consumer-facing sustainability campaigns. Finally, this report unravels several myths (outlined below) that help explain why some companies have sidestepped engaging Latinos in their environmentally-focused efforts. The report closes with insights on how to better understand the Latino consumer and create green messaging that is authentic, compelling and culturally resonant.

## **MYTH #1:**

***Latinos are not environmentalists***



Reality: Deep-rooted cultural connections and health reasons give rise to Latinos' innate support of environmental conservation and stewardship.

## **MYTH #2:**

***Latinos don't want to buy green***



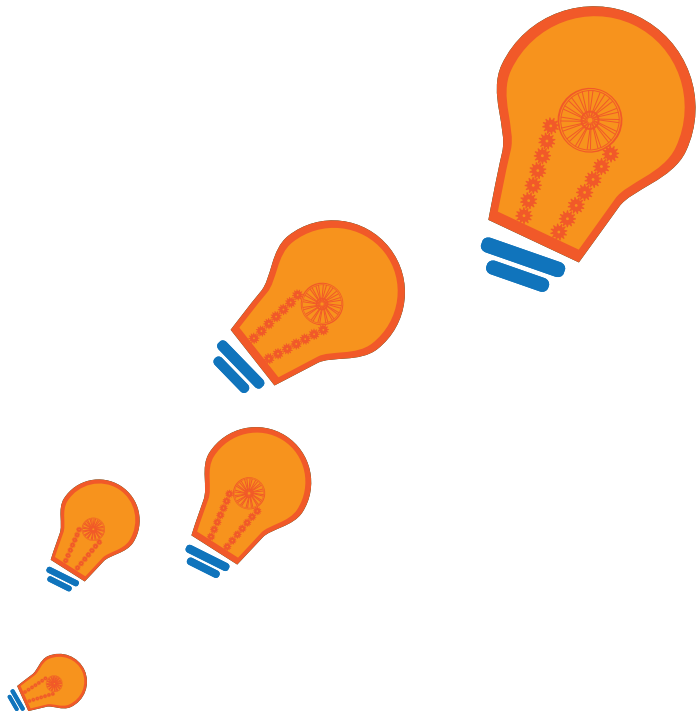
Reality: Latinos are more loyal to brands that positively contribute to communities and the environment and want to be engaged by sustainable brands.

## **MYTH #3:**

***Spanish-language ads are the only way to reach Latinos***



Reality: Latinos are increasingly bilingual, bicultural and online. Companies that want to reach Latinos need to understand how to connect with them by developing relevant strategies and messages. Language is just one tactic of many.



# A Rising Giant

Much has been said about the growing influence of Latinos<sup>1</sup> in the United States. In this election year, in particular, Latinos have garnered much attention for what census data has indicated for years: the future of this nation will largely have roots south of the border. Today, 16 percent of our nation's population and one in five children is Latino. It is projected that by 2050, 30 percent of the country and two in five children will be of Latin American origin. While much of the business world has taken note of this significant trend, increasing advertising dollars to target this market, the same cannot be said of corporate efforts to engage Latinos around environmental sustainability.<sup>2</sup>

Partly due to myths, misunderstandings and misperceptions of Latinos' connection to the environment, corporate sustainability efforts have failed to properly engage Latinos in the U.S. The myth of the "sleeping giant" – a metaphor politicians have used for decades to suggest Latino political and economic potential, and also imply a state of slumber – is an apt way to explain why corporate sustainability engagement of Latinos has been dormant. Similar to politics, Latinos' interests in all things green, eco, or environmentally responsible has been viewed as latent or even nonexistent by most businesses, though the reality is quite a different story. It is time to unravel this myth.

Before dispelling some myths and diving into Latinos' relationship with the environment –

and describing how companies can effectively leverage that connection – it is vital to understand why the Latino market is becoming one of the most lucrative demographics to target. These numbers start to tell the story:

- 1 in 4 American newborns is Latino
- Every 30 seconds a young Latino turns 18
- U.S. Latino population is growing at three times the rate of the overall population
- Home to 50.5 million Latinos, the U.S. contains the second largest number of Latinos on the planet, second only to Mexico
- 13 percent of U.S. residents speak Spanish at home
- Latinos accounted for 56 percent of U.S. population growth from 2000 to 2010
- U.S. Latino population is projected to grow 167 percent from 2010 to 2050

More than growing in sheer size, Latinos' purchasing power is also on the rise. In 2012, Latino consumer purchasing power is estimated at \$1.2 trillion dollars, which represents 9.5 percent of the U.S. total, and by 2015 it is expected to grow to \$1.6 trillion – a 48 percent growth, compared with about 27 percent for the entire nation. It's also interesting to note that the per capita income of U.S. Latinos is higher than any one of the highly coveted BRIC countries, and the Latino market is currently estimated to be larger than the entire economies of all but 14 countries in the world.<sup>3</sup>

Many businesses are becoming savvy to the rise of Latino buying power. Coca-Cola's former Chief Marketing Officer and current Chief Sustainability Officer, Bea Perez, for example, was once quoted as saying that 86 percent of the company's market growth through 2020 would come from multicultural youth (especially Latino) consumers, and that targeting Latinos was part of the company's growth strategy. In 2011, a mix of Fortune 500 companies, including the likes of Procter & Gamble, McDonald's, AT&T, Toyota, and General Mills, spent \$5.7 billion to target Latinos in the U.S., indicating a serious commitment to reach this audience.<sup>4</sup>

That same dedication to the Latino consumer is absent when it comes to how companies engage Latinos around environmental sustainability. The same companies mentioned above have also demonstrated a serious commitment to becoming more sustainable, but they have not effectively engaged Latinos along the way. There is a real disconnect between the rise in the Latino population's size, influence and purchasing power and how many companies are reaching this community around sustainability. What this ridge reveals is that Latinos are not, in fact, the giants who have fallen asleep.



# The Real Sleeping Giant

While some companies recognize the power of the Latino market and are spending millions to reach them, there's still a long way to go. Advertising to Latinos to get them to consume more stuff is one thing; involving Latinos in a company's evolving sustainability conversation is another. The vast majority of companies in the U.S. – even those who are spending serious dollars to connect with Latinos – are not messaging to this audience about environmental sustainability. This needs to change.

Of course, there are a few examples of companies that are bringing Latinos along their sustainability journey, but these are few and far between. NBCUniversal's Green is Universal campaign is a good example. For one week each year, the network invites viewers to learn about environmental issues by integrating environmental themes and messaging into its on-air and online programming. Channels and websites within the network – from NBC to E! Entertainment to iVillage – include environmentally themed material into show storylines and online content. Thankfully, NBCUniversal's Telemundo, its Spanish-language network, and mun2, the bilingual cable network that targets young Latinos, are part of this yearly initiative as well; this year, both Latino channels featured green stories and tips in their daily news shows.

General Mills takes a more culturally relevant approach with its Qué Rica Vida campaign, which launched in 2010 to promote healthy eating and living to Latinos. As part of the campaign, General Mills has organized grassroots educational seminars in Latino neighborhoods across the

country to raise awareness of culturally relevant health issues, such as diabetes, which affects Latinos more than any other group in this country. Take a look at the Qué Rica Vida website and you'll notice that it's not slathered in green nor does it advocate eating only organic and fair trade foods. Instead, the site embraces Latinos' culinary affinities and provides recipes, health tips and deals on General Mills products. Its focus on health encourages sustainable living in its own way. That's the type of positive, sustainably focused messaging Latinos merit.

Unfortunately, after taking a look at companies ranked on various "green" and "CSR" lists, as well as scouring the web and reaching out to several companies, the quest for more such examples did not yield much. The companies that have launched stellar consumer-facing sustainability campaigns, such as Procter & Gamble, Coca-Cola, and Starbucks, simply did not reach out to Latinos in their campaigns in a concerted way. This ever-growing group, which will comprise one-third of this nation by 2050, has not been included in most companies' sustainability conversations.

Procter & Gamble's Future Friendly campaign, for example, launched a stylish interactive website in 2010 that offers tools and tips to help consumers reduce water use, energy consumption and waste. The Future Friendly website is only available in English, even though P&G offers Spanish-language versions of other product websites. Does P&G believe that Latinos don't want

to learn more about saving water, conserving energy and reducing waste? This would have been a perfect opportunity for P&G to connect with its Latino consumer base in a unique way – considering that P&G is the top Spanish-language advertiser in the U.S., investing more than \$225 million to reach this audience in 2011 alone.

The same applies to other company initiatives, such as Patagonia's Common Threads, Coca-Cola's Arctic Home, and Starbucks' Shared Planet campaigns. Companies that are not speaking to Latinos with their sustainability messaging are not speaking to the fastest growing group in the nation – and this means that their messages are not being heard by an increasingly relevant consumer market.

Let's pause here for a moment. All of these companies are doing great sustainability work and should be applauded for their efforts. But it's time to push the sustainability conversation further and get companies to think about the audiences they're reaching (or not reaching).

Truth be told, the fact that companies are not translating green messaging (both literally and



figuratively) for Latino consumers does not mean they are not serving this community in other ways. Many companies have been recognized for their support of Latinos through representation in senior ranks, workforce diversity and inclusion programs, supplier diversity programs, philanthropic efforts, sponsorship of culturally relevant events, and Spanish-language customer service. Some companies have also launched socially relevant campaigns underscoring Latino cultural heritage and supporting educational advancement.

Pepsi, for example, supports Latino advancement with its La Promesa de PepsiCo (The PepsiCo Promise), an initiative that draws from strategic partnerships with organizations like the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute, Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility, League of United Latin American Citizens, National Association of Hispanic Journalists, and National Council of La Raza to promote progress in the community. Through this initiative, Pepsi also engages with the Latino community through the bilingual Twitter handle @PromesaPepsiCo, tweeting a range of culturally relevant (and some not so relevant) content to hundreds of followers.

And Procter & Gamble has demonstrated its embrace of Latino heritage through its Orgullosa (Proud) campaign. The campaign's website provides household and beauty tips for Latinas in both English and Spanish, while promoting cultural pride. Though the website weaves culturally pertinent information into product recommendations, there's certainly room for more environmentally conscious messaging throughout the site.

These are all well and good, but given the relevancy of environmental issues to the Latino community, these programs are not enough. Latinos need more sustainability-focused messaging and engagement platforms that directly speak to them.

So what's keeping companies like P&G, Coca Cola, and Starbucks from translating their sustainability efforts into a language that resonates with Latinos in the U.S.? Several myths about Latinos might be getting in the way.

### **WHAT'S MISSING FROM GREEN RANKINGS?**

Each year, various "green," "CSR" and "sustainability" lists rank corporate sustainability efforts. *Newsweek's* Green Rankings, Interbrand's Best Global Green Brands, and *CR Magazine's* 100 Best Corporate Citizens are a few of the lists that measure companies' environmental impacts, supply chains, governance and/or employee relations. But something's missing here.

None of these lists include acknowledgement of the importance of corporate engagement of diverse consumers in their list of criteria or consideration. In an increasingly diverse country, companies should also be evaluated on how well they engage all of their stakeholders, especially in ways that are culturally relevant to diverse audiences. For that reason, these lists should include diversity outreach as part of their methodology.

In the same vein, it would be worthwhile for the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility, which publishes an annual index that rates corporate efforts in employment, procurement, philanthropy and governance, to also rate companies on their efforts to advance sustainability in Latino communities.



# Myths & Truths

## Myth #1: Latinos Are Not Environmentalists

To some Americans, being an environmentalist might mean driving a Prius, shopping at Whole Foods, and traveling with a tote bag that touts a Sierra Club membership – but that description need not apply to all environmentalists, and is not necessarily the case for all green-leaning Latinos in the U.S. Based on the lack of corporate outreach to Latinos around sustainability issues, one would imagine that Latinos just don't care about the environment. That would be incorrect. Latinos not only care about environmental conservation, but recent studies show that Latinos have a much greater appreciation for the environment than mainstream America, in large part due to deep-rooted cultural connections to the environment and health-related issues.

At its core, environmentalism is about protecting natural resources through actions, large and small. For many Latino families, sustainable behaviors are quite the norm – even if those actions are not always publicly evident or replicas of the 'typical' American environmentalist. Walk into most Latino homes, and you'll find signs of deep cultural connections to nature, especially in the kitchen. Most Latinos in this country grow up eating home-cooked meals made with fresh produce, a mix of herbs and spices found in their country of origin, and from recipes passed down from previous generations.

Latinos love good food, and we're not just talking tamales. Fresh ingredients, local sourcing, and

nutrition are also important to Latinos. A recent study released by the Hartman Group reveals that, compared with non-Hispanic consumers, 43 percent of Hispanic consumers (vs. 32 percent) are more likely to look for food products that offer health benefits, 36 percent (vs. 23 percent) enjoy local or seasonal foods, and 36 percent (vs. 21 percent) make food from scratch using the best ingredients.<sup>5</sup> The strong bond between U.S. Latinos and their countries of origin helps explain this; throughout Latin America, where agriculture fuels national economies and people's livelihoods, ancestral respect for traditional foods and a deep connection to the land permeates cultures.


Similarly, an ethos of conservation, often influenced by people's country of origin, is also prominent in most U.S. Latino homes. Turning off the lights in an empty room, taking a reusable tote bag to the grocery store, reusing and repurposing old household items, and saving water are motivated just as much by practicality and cost savings as by culturally shaped habits to conserve.

The connection between Latinos, religion and family is also significant. The Sierra Club and the National Council for La Raza (NCLR) released a report this year that reveals that 93 percent of Latinos surveyed believe they have "a moral responsibility to take care of God's creations on Earth" and believe in their family's ability to curb pollution through energy conservation. That same study shows that an astounding 9 out of 10 Latinos believe that climate change is already happening and will happen (a different report issued by Yale and George Mason University found that 81 percent of Hispanics believe global warming is happening,

compared with only 69 percent of non-Hispanic Whites).<sup>6</sup> The Sierra Club and NCLR survey also reports that 91 percent of Latinos surveyed agreed with the following statement: "protecting land and water protects my culture, my family and my community."<sup>7</sup> These numbers are telling.

Beyond a cultural understanding of the environment, Latinos also have another very real reason to be concerned for their natural surroundings: health. A large percentage of Latinos live in urban areas across the nation, amid pollution that can increase the risk of asthma and certain cancers; for them, the link between health and the environment is clear.<sup>8</sup> About 8 percent of Latino children in the U.S. live with asthma, and Latino children are almost twice as likely to be hospitalized for asthma as White children.<sup>9</sup> This explains why in a survey released by the Public Policy Institute of California in 2011, 61 percent of Latinos believed air quality is on the decline, compared with 46 percent of Asian Americans and 30 percent of Whites.





The environmental degradation that many Latinos across the country are exposed to may also explain a *Los Angeles Times* poll released in 2010 that found Latinos are more worried about the environment than Whites. Perhaps this is because “California has one of the largest concentrations of minorities living near hazardous chemical wastes and air pollution produced by refineries, port operations, freeway traffic and railroads.”<sup>10</sup> Another poll from 2011 by the New Mexico-based Latino Sustainability Institute revealed that Latinos from that state showed a deep concern for the environment and strong support for efforts to protect and preserve threatened land and water resources for similar reasons.

Some Latino families may have no choice about whether they live near factories, power plants or freeways, but that doesn’t mean they cannot be invited to join a conversation and be provided with options to help them make healthier, more sustainable choices for their families. Environmental organizations across the country, from the Natural Resources Defense Council to the Sierra Club, have taken note of the connection between Latinos and the environment and have been ramping up outreach to Latinos and other communities of color.

Businesses would do well to do the same. Understanding Latinos’ respect for nature, interest in adopting behaviors that promote healthy families, and their desire to safeguard the environment for future generations can only help businesses reach this growing, important demographic.

## **Myth #2: Latinos Don’t Want to Buy Green**

About 13 to 19 percent of adults in this country consider themselves stewards of the environment who proactively purchase socially and environmentally responsible products. They are what the Natural Marketing Institute (NMI) calls the Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS) segment, and this market is estimated at \$290 billion.<sup>11</sup> Are Latinos LOHAS? By the looks of green marketing and advertising efforts, one would think not. But according to NMI, 4 percent of LOHAS consumers (that is, of the 13 to 19 percent) are Latino, and that number is sure to grow.<sup>12</sup>

Even more, a report issued by the Shelton Group in 2010 reveals that Latinos who were surveyed “were significantly more likely than other groups to be searching for greener products, and also more likely to say they felt ‘very personally responsible’ to change their daily habits to help the environment.”<sup>13</sup> According to the Shelton Group report, 75 percent of Latinos are looking for greener products, compared with 61 percent of Caucasians; 25 percent feel “very personally responsible” to shift their purchasing habits to positively impact the environment, compared with 13 percent of Caucasian respondents; and 65 percent have conversations with their kids about conservation or an environmental topic, compared with 49 percent of all respondents.

Not only are Latinos seeking more sustainable product options, they also want to be engaged by advertisers to buy more green products. That’s what NBC Universal discovered when it conducted

a study to understand Latinos, and Latinas in particular, to help launch its “Hispanics at NBCU” campaign in 2011. When NBC Universal asked Latinas “which product categories they would like to target their race or culture more,” 41 percent said they wanted more outreach from organic and health food brands, along with technology and cosmetic brands, compared with 11 to 14 percent of White women.<sup>14</sup>

A separate report released in 2011 by the Center for Hispanic Marketing Communication at Florida State University supports the notion that Latinos indeed want to buy green. According to the report, “Products and messages directed to Latinos...are likely to have stronger resonance if they address how a company is doing something for the environment, and that their products are green.”<sup>15</sup>

The Latino buyer is also very loyal: in one 2010 study by The Futures Company and VanguardComm, 79 percent of Latinos said that companies who reach out to their communities deserve their loyalty and one-third of Latino respondents said they were loyal to socially responsible brands.<sup>16</sup>

Latinos are looking for greener products and want to be targeted by green companies – but no one has yet heralded the call. Who will be the first to resoundingly respond?



### Myth #3: Spanish-language Ads Are the Only Way to Reach Latinos

Sustainability marketing in the U.S. by and large exists in an English-speaking world. Consumer engagement platforms, such as Coca-Cola's Arctic Home and Procter & Gamble's Future Friendly, have provided English-speaking audiences with valuable information to help them live more sustainable lives – but these campaigns have all but ignored Latinos, not to mention other diverse audiences. The solution is not to simply press the translate button on every English-language sustainability campaign, though.

It is more important for companies to figuratively “speak the language” and build campaigns that are culturally relevant to Latinos. As with any other audience, understanding what matters to the Latino consumer segment on a deeper level is what's critical to craft effective messaging. Language is one tool to reach Latinos – it's a tactic, not the strategy that will help companies connect with this audience. And companies should know that Latinos are becoming increasingly bilingual, pointing to the fact that Spanish-language advertisements are not the only way to reach Latinos.

A 2010 *Ad Age* report on Hispanic America shows that Latinos are increasingly becoming more comfortable speaking English: 44 percent, nearly half of Latinos surveyed, were at ease speaking English, and that number has progressively risen over the past decades. This is one indicator that U.S. Latinos, 34 percent of whom

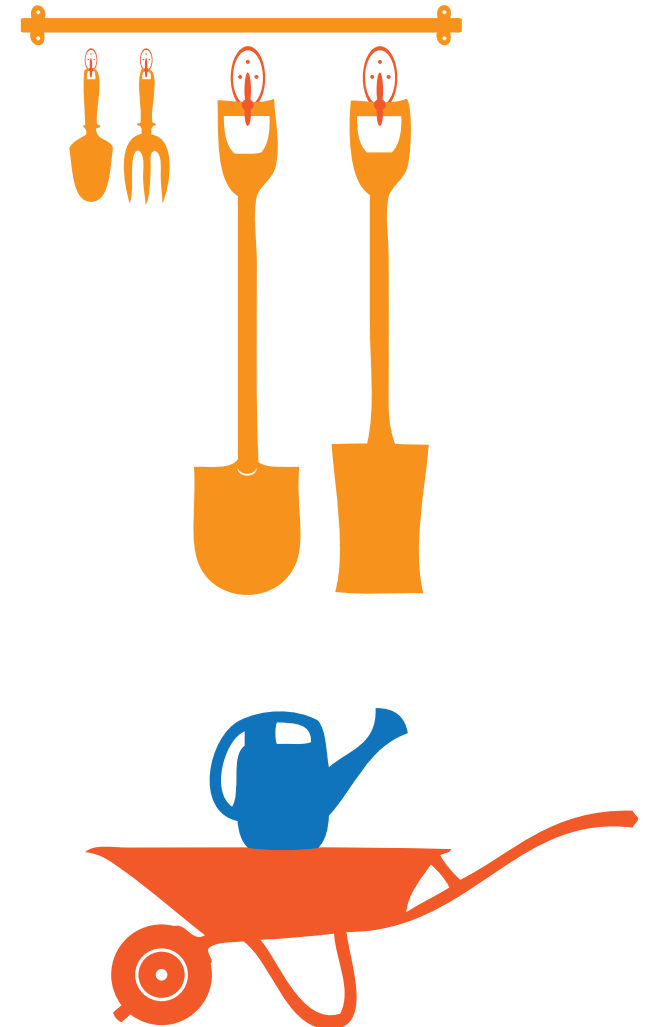
are children under the age of 18, are becoming increasingly bicultural and bilingual – comfortable speaking English and Spanish (and Spanglish), and code switching between American and Latin American cultures on a daily basis.<sup>17</sup>

Some companies are picking up on this trend. The Spanish-language television network Telemundo, women's magazine *Cosmopolitan* and even Yahoo! are targeting Latinos through a bilingual, bicultural lens. In just this year, Telemundo added a bilingual show to its programming, *Cosmopolitan* launched *CosmoLatina* and Yahoo! launched Shine Latina – all targeting the growing bilingual, bicultural group.

The internet is home to easily accessible bilingual content, and this presents another great opportunity for sustainable companies to reach this growing segment. Latinos are very connected in our digital age, partly due to the fact that the Latino population is very young: 1 in 3 Latinos is under the age of 18 and the median age is 27 years. And according to the publication *BizTech Day*, 61 percent of Latinos are online, representing 14.5 percent of the total online market, and Latinos' time online is increasing at a greater rate than the total U.S. online population.<sup>18</sup> It is also interesting to note that Latinos are more likely to shop and consume media online than the general population – as well as more likely to go online via a mobile device.<sup>19</sup> That's certainly food for thought for companies looking to reach Latinos.

In this case, the message is more important than the medium; and messages that leverage cultural values and pay homage to Latino heritage are key. A 2011 *Ad Age* report shows that English-

dominant Latinos positively perceive companies that “respect their heritage” and “appreciate their culture.”<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Latinos exhibit greater brand loyalty to companies that make the effort to connect with them culturally and reinforce their cultural relevancy.<sup>21</sup> And that does not necessarily need to be done in Spanish.



# Conclusion

As the new majority-minority, Latinos in the United States are rising giants – and they are here to stay. The more than 50.5 million Latinos in this country are not only shaping many aspects of American life, from government and society to popular culture and sports, they are also driving businesses to understand their buying behaviors and preferences. Unfortunately, that same attention is not being placed on encouraging Latino consumers to buy greener products that will help them live healthier, more sustainable lives.

Latinos' current purchasing power, which is expected to increase 50 percent in just a few years, makes this group a fundamental part of the United States' current and future economy – and, hence, an essential part of any company's sustainability strategy. Companies that want to remain relevant to consumers and grow their businesses sustainably into this century must learn how to speak to Latino consumers compellingly. And to do this, companies must learn how to understand the diverse cultures that influence the rich tapestry of Latino tastes, preferences and behaviors.

## **A MINI-GUIDE TO CONNECT WITH LATINOS + SUSTAINABILITY**

- Take the time to understand the Latino market, and don't make assumptions
- Make sustainability campaigns culturally relevant to Latinos
- Design campaigns that improve Latinos' health, environment and quality of life
- Connect sustainability to Latinos' appreciation of the family and future generations
- Leverage Latinos' affinity for socially and environmentally responsible companies
- Speak in a language, both literally and figuratively, that resonates with Latinos

If you're in business – any kind of business – Latinos should be on your radar.

We hope the insights presented in this report will stir corporate sustainability executives to begin talking to the multicultural marketing teams within their companies. We hope consulting firms and advertising agencies take this as an opportunity

to educate their clients about Latinos' connection to the environment. And we hope companies can see the opportunities in engaging Latinos around sustainability.

It's time to wake the real giant. Ya es hora...it's about time.

# References

<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of consistency, the term Latino -- rather than Hispanic -- will be used in this report to refer to anyone of Latin American origin who resides in the U.S.

<sup>2</sup>At Saatchi & Saatchi S, we define sustainability in terms of four streams: social, environmental, economic and cultural sustainability. For reasons that will be explored in this report, we focus here on environmental sustainability. Please note that in this report, we use the terms "environmental sustainability," "sustainability," and "green" interchangeably.

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