

Marketers are taking advantage of the fact that Hispanics are ahead of the general market on mobile data use

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By Della de Lafuente

"Hispanics lead the way and are the No. 1 consumers on a lot of the various segments related to the mobile phone and, in text, they absolutely lead the way," said Ivan Braiker, CEO of HipCricket, a Kirkland, Wash., mobile marketing company whose clients include Spanish-language radio stations.

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To a marketer, U.S. Hispanics aren't just attractive because they are, as a population, expanding. The segment is also ahead of the curve on mobile computing. According to a 2007 survey by M:Metrics, Seattle, U.S. Hispanics are much more likely to use their mobile phones to do things beyond normal voice calls. While 3.1 percent of the general population used their mobile devices to watch videos, 6.7 percent of Latinos did and 26.8 percent of Hispanics sent a photo or video with their phones vs. 15.3 percent of the general population.

Part of this boils down to demographics: 51.5 percent of U.S. Hispanics with phones are between 18 and 34 years old while 31 percent of the general "mobile" population falls within that range.

Isaac Mizrahi, Sprint's director of multicultural marketing, said there's also a cultural component: "Latinos have an inherent curiosity and an ability to be open to new things; that contributes to the high adoption rate of technology that we see among Hispanics." Mizrahi said heavy mobile-data consumption by Hispanics helps to dispel widely-held myths that Latinos aren't tech-savvy.

"The exact opposite is true," Mizrahi said. "The wireless industry has helped to diminish or wipe out that thinking overall. Today, you can do many things with a cell phone that you couldn't do 10-15 years ago."

Some of those things include providing exclusive content related to sponsorship tie-ins (like Sprint's recent backing of Colombian pop star Juanes' tour) available first on cell phones. "Consumers react very, very positively" to that, Mizrahi said, noting other successful data-targeted marketing efforts such as Vidal-created campaigns involving the Mexican singing group Mana and the 2007 Copa de Oro (Gold Cup) soccer tournament. The knowledge that Latinos are, as a group, more sophisticated mobile users than previously thought informed Sprint's launch in June of the Samsung Instinct, which includes must-have features including GPS navigation, music download capabilities, text messaging, Web browsing, live TV, picture taking/sending and voice activation. That campaign will have a heavy Hispanic outreach component.

"A significant, integrated general market and Hispanic communications and marketing plan above and beyond past handheld launches" will roll out in various phases in the coming weeks to support the Instinct's debut via online, offline, traditional media, grass roots and other media, Mizrahi said.

Mobility also is key for Latino consumers who have a need for speed and want to connect with others instantly via text messaging or to easily access favorite TV programming and other content.

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HipCricket produces interactive mobile marketing campaigns designed to drive revenues and increase listeners, viewers and loyalty by tapping into consumer behaviors and interests of those who use text messaging regularly, per the mobile marketing shop.

"Because of its efficiency, accessibility and affordability, text is a non-intrusive, easy way to convey a message," Braiker said.

Braiker cited an unnamed Spanish-language radio station client in Houston that received 6,500 text messages from listeners after station DJs invited them to text in their names to get added to a VIP list at an exclusive nightclub. "It makes traditional media very accountable and very trackable," Braiker added.

It's also indispensable. From a programming perspective, delivering content that's engaging to the audience via their media of choice is mandatory. That's why media companies are offering more Spanish language programming via mobile devices.

Popular shows from bilingual youth network MTV Tr3s went live on March 28 via Verizon Wireless V Cast Mobile TV, which began airing popular shows from its linear cable channel via mobile phones and devices.

MTV Tr3s is the only Hispanic brand to fill the one slot on the Verizon wireless lineup, said Lucia Ballas-Traynor, svp and gm of MTV Tr3s. "It says a lot about the significance of the relationship, so it's a big indicator to me of the potential of this segment and creating new mobile-targeted content."

With some 70 percent of U.S. Latinos owning mobile phones, about 20 percent now are using their mobile devices to watch entertainment programming, Ballas-Traynor said. "But who is that 20 percent and how do they use it? The fact that we will be able to get there first and access the data is what makes this very intriguing."

Bilingual TV programs available to Verizon Wireless users via mobile TV, include: *Quiero Mis Quinces*, *Karlifornia*, *Rock Dinner*, *Sucker Free Latino* and *Pimpeando*.

"Today's youth is defined by technology, which is part of their DNA," Ballas-Traynor said. "And young Latinos are at the forefront of it all. Not only is their mobile phone ownership higher than non-Latinos, but how they are using them and the features that they are using is even higher."

Ballas-Traynor said MTV Tr3s has been working to position itself as a network with a multiplatform approach because of the way kids are using technology. She said the goal is to get the MTV Tr3s brand in front of as many Latino consumers as possible. "Mobile is a great place to reach our consumers, wherever they are."

Among young Latinos who do everything with their parents as a family, Ballas-Traynor said some "felt that what mobile entertainment provides them, is the chance to own the experience, and they don't have

to share it with their families."

In contrast, Hispanic Internet users are all about sharing the experience, said Borja Perez, alliance leader for Yahoo! Telemundo, who boasts putting Telemundo's digital offering on steroids during the past year to pump up programming and deliver content the audience wants.

All Telemundo shows and novelas are available on multiple platforms 24/7 on Yahoo! Telemundo. The Web portal has entered into partnerships with mobile and cellular carriers to broadcast the network's programs via mobile.

Yahoo! Telemundo also is developing more options for user-generated content, joining forces in February with *People en Espanol* to mount a contest to find the "51st Most Beautiful Person," as part of its annual "50 Most Beautiful" issue, which hits newsstands later this month.

Visitors to the special *People en Espanol*'s "51st Most Beautiful" site on Yahoo! Telemundo were invited to submit their own images for consideration and they were allowed to cast their vote for favorites, generating some 8,400 entries in less than a month from consumers vying (or vying on someone's behalf) for the 51st spot on the Most Beautiful list, Perez said.

The jointly produced/user-generated content program across TV, Web and wireless platforms is considered the largest and most successful Internet-based activity that's been mounted and cross-promoted in both the Hispanic and general market, according to Perez.

He said: "We're in a pretty unique situation right now because it gave us time to figure out all of the legal issues surrounding user-generated content and because we are the only ones who can generate content from the Web, then showcase them on TV with the blessing of four sets of lawyers."

Yahoo! Telemundo had the user-generated content effort in development for a long time, as it worked out the legal concerns and worked with *People en Espanol* and program sponsor Verizon, which will showcase Web and TV content featuring makeovers and behind-the-scenes videos that will be broadcast via the wireless company's V Cast Mobile.

In response to consumer demand to watch more TV programming on the Web, Yahoo! Telemundo has launched the first of several "360 pages," with the first centering on *Al Rojo Vivo* and showcasing program anchor Maria Celeste in her multidimensional role as career woman, mother and celebrity. New content from the venture will be in video format, giving viewers an in-depth look at the popular Telemundo news anchor.

"Interactive media, which is to be able to interact with the TV shows, movies and the talent, that is happening now," Perez said.

"We have the right tools at our disposal, it's up to us now to make the connection -- the real connection - between the content, and to bring a closer experience to the consumer, the viewer and the Internet user."