

LATINO ADVERTISING CAN ISOLATE NON-LATINOS, BUT HISPANIC SUPPORT IS CRITICAL



Extremely popular in the Hispanic community, ballad singer Marc Anthony is doing much more than dancing and singing, but doing his bit for President's Obama reelection, come November. He exhorts the Latinos that, Obama has done a lot for us, for our jobs, our future and its time that we showed him our appreciation, "The president has our back, so it's time to let him know that we have his." In the ad he is seen saying, "My name is Marc Anthony. Latinos are a force that can and will help decide this election. We have jobs and the economy and education and immigration. President Obama is on our side. We have to make sure he gets four more years to make more progress." The ad for the Obama campaign targets English-dominant Latino voters. Like roping in the popular Latino celebrity singer, Marc, other Hispanic celebrities have also appeared in ads for President Obama, amongst them actress Eva Longoria and Cristina Saralegui more popularly known as the Hispanic Oprah. In US demographics, the growth of English speaking Latino voters is growing, especially in the battleground states and experts believe that these ads are impressive and would certainly help in influencing the new youthful English speaking Hispanic groups. They however, expressed apprehension that the ads could alienate non-Latinos, who might not like such a direct tilt towards the Hispanic community, especially since the amnesty scheme of the President has divided the country in their feelings towards the community. According to a study conducted by Ricardo Ramirez, a Notre Dame Professor along with other members of a team, Black and White test subjects, following viewing an English-language advertisement that featured a Latino endorser, felt less inclined to support the endorsed candidate. They echoed similar sentiments even when the endorser spoke in Spanish. This survey was conducted in 2008, in the election combat Obama and Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.). It is due to be published in the coming months. Strangely, it did not matter to the subjects, who the candidate was, it was the Latino endorser who was putting them off and both Obama and McCain supporters showed the "same decreased enthusiasm for a candidate after watching the Latino-aimed ad," Ramirez noted. Contrary to White and Black subjects, Asians showed a distinct preference for the candidates after watching ads targeted towards Latinos. Whilst it was not possible to pinpoint the precise reason for the White and Black voters' antagonism to the ads, Matt Barreto, an Associate Professor at the University of Washington another researcher who worked on the study, hazards a guess. He says that, "Some voters see this advertising as sort of threatening. They think, 'Where is my group? Why aren't they talking to me?'" Candidates must therefore tread advertising ground with a lot of caution, for in their haste to appeal to group of people; they run the risk of alienating the other. Barreto suggests that the ads can be made in Spanish, which is a language most, if not all Hispanics are fluent in and not have them in English, to reduce non-Hispanic viewership and increase Hispanic viewership. Gary Segura, a Professor of American Politics and Chair of Chicano/a Studies at Stanford University said in an interview that non-Latinos are not normally inclined to watching Spanish Channels, substantiating that a Spanish language ad would not attract to much non-Hispanic viewing. Moreover, nearly all surveys are showing that Obama is having a huge lead in popularity amongst the Spanish speaking Latino voters. This popularity has increased further, after his historic announcement that halted deportations and opened an avenue for non-document migrant youth to get job permits. Hispanics are America's fastest growing minority group and are normally considered to be inclined towards voting for the Democrats. An NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll released in May showed Obama enjoying a 61-27 percent lead ahead of Romney among Hispanic voters. Obama knows that his popularity amongst the Latino voters could tilt things in his favor, but the hard part, knowing their customary reluctance to turn up on voting day, is mobilizing them and ensuring that they vote. It's a huge challenge that he is facing. It is widely presumed that they could swing the election in his favor in critical states like Colorado, Florida, Nevada and North Carolina. According to Politico estimates, the Obama campaign has spent in excess of \$2 million on Spanish speaking ads since mid-April, whilst Romney has spent around \$110,000 in the corresponding period. Furthermore, there were accusations that Romney's English-language ads "Day One" and "Doing Fine" were not sloppily translated in Spanish. According to the critics, "Day One" should have been translated to "El primer día" rather than "Día Uno," and "Doing Fine?" is more accurately translated to "Las cosas están bien?" than "Van Bien?" Besides, the ads did not follow Spanish grammar rules, in which only the first letter of a title needs to be capitalized. In the ad "Día Uno" all the titles are capitalized. Such laxity and carelessness does not go down well with the voters. Although a Romney spokesperson laid the fault on the mistranslation originating from "a Democratic operative," there are many saying that the translation could have been better. Liliana Gil, a Hispanic market strategist and Co-founder of XL Alliance, a Cultural Marketing firm said that instead of just translating his English ads, Romney should prepare ads with messages tailor-made for the Latino community. She said, that he had already "ruined his first impression" with the Latino community with a blemished and error-ridden, Spanish-language ad campaign. "On a first date, you try to look your best, and tell your story in a compelling way, and take your date to a nice restaurant. He's not doing any of that," Gil said. "We feel like an afterthought. He really missed an opportunity here." She said that the candidates should not fear alienating non-Hispanics, but should increase their advertising efforts towards the community. "You can be super sensitive and not advertise to Latinos to avoid upsetting some kind of conservative base," Gil said. "Or you can do the smart thing and get your message out to the right people."