

Jerry Large

## Marketing target: Hispanics

**By Jerry Large**

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Watching what businesses do can tell you a lot about what's happening in the U.S.

On billboards, in newspapers, on radio, TV and the Internet, Latin-flavored advertising is a growing part of the mix. If you haven't already noticed, you will.

People who have something to sell are trying to get the attention of the fastest-growing segment of the population.

This year, they will have more money to spend than any other U.S. minority group.

Hispanic disposable income is expected to top \$863 billion, according to a study by the Selig Center for Economic Growth at the University of Georgia.

That's three times more money than Hispanics had to spend in 1990.

Christine Clavijo-Kish has been traveling around the country helping businesses connect with all those dollars.

Clavijo-Kish is a Miami entrepreneur who started Hispanic PR Wire seven years ago (one of five companies she helps run), before most businesses paid much attention to that market.

She led a workshop in Seattle on Wednesday, one of 17 her company is putting on this year in markets that are just starting to reach out to Hispanics.

Miami, L.A. and New York don't need any help, but she told me there are lots of places where a significant Hispanic population is a new thing.

We're one of them.

She said the Puget Sound area has more than 285,000 Hispanics with \$3.7 billion in annual buying power.

Before I moved here, I lived in New Mexico, Texas and California, where there has always been a strong Latino presence.

Up here, I'd see an occasional mention of Mexican migrant workers in Eastern Washington.

That's no longer the case.

Hispanics are a presence everywhere now. This is a different country than it once was, and the media are starting to reflect that.

Of course, it may take a while to get the hang of reaching out to these new markets.

Clavijo-Kish mentioned an airline advertisement that invited people to fly in leather (seats), but the Spanish version said fly naked. Translation is a tricky business.

And, you know the ads that ask: "Got milk?" Well, the phrase in Spanish can mean: "Are you lactating?" Combined with the photo of a person with a milk mustache, that suggests someone quenching a different kind of thirst.

Advertisers are getting more sophisticated about addressing the Hispanic market.

Money is a powerful incentive. But it's not the only reason to understand Hispanics better.

People who do outreach for social services came to Wednesday's workshop, too.

We're all affected by a changing country.

There are 43 million Hispanics in the U.S. That's about 14 percent of the population — and estimates are that will grow to 23 percent by 2030.

Beyoncé is singing in Spanish, Starbucks is selling dulce de leche-flavored coffee, New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson is running for president — the first Hispanic to do so.

And all of us are having to rethink our image of America.

*Jerry Large's column appears Monday and Thursday. Reach him at 206-464-3346 or [jlarge@seattletimes.com](mailto:jlarge@seattletimes.com).*