

Latino Link

Building Brands Online with Hispanic Communities and Content

Joe Kutchera



Paramount Market Publishing, Inc.

Paramount Market Publishing, Inc.
950 Danby Road, Suite 136
Ithaca, NY 14850
www.paramountbooks.com
Telephone: 607-275-8100; 888-787-8100
Facsimile: 607-275-8101

Publisher: James Madden
Editorial Director: Doris Walsh

Copyright © 2011 Joe Kuchera

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher. Further information may be obtained from Paramount Market Publishing, Inc., 950 Danby Road, Suite 136, Ithaca, NY 14850.

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

All trademarks are the property of their respective companies.

Cataloging in Publication Data available
ISBN 13: 978-0-9819869-8-2 | ISBN 10: 0-9819869-8-6

Chapter 5

Lessons in Social Media

WHEN Christopher Columbus landed in the Bahamas in October 1492, he called the natives “Indians” thinking that he was actually in the Orient. He continued exploring, making two subsequent voyages to these newfound territories, wondering whether he had indeed landed in Asia. Geographers and explorers disputed his claim, thinking that this was a completely “new world.” Sadly, instead of embracing his “discovery,” Columbus died a wealthy but disappointed and defeated man, having not discovered what he truly wanted, the riches of the Orient.

The story of Fotolog, a photo-sharing and social networking site, highlights how history can repeat itself, but with a different result. The site originally set out to offer its service to Americans, specifically in Brooklyn, and landed on a completely different geographic location. Instead of rejecting what it had discovered, the company made the best of its “new world.” It is important to consider the ramifications of this lesson for marketers like Lexicon Marketing (whose case study was featured in chapter 1) who have incorporated social networking as a key strategy for engaging Hispanics online.

What If Your Customers Take You to Latin America?

In 2002, Scott Heiferman, now famous for starting MeetUp.com, and Adam Seifer launched Fotolog as an online community for their friends in Brooklyn to post photos and share them. Instead of building up a domestic

fan base, as they thought would happen, their user base took them down an unexpected path, according to Yossi Langer, chief product officer, and Arne “Joe” Jokela, chief technology officer of Fotolog.

In 2005, Heiferman and Seifer’s friend, Cora Ronai, a journalist from Brazil, visited New York and was impressed by their site. She returned home, wrote an article about Fotolog for *O Globo*, Brazil’s leading newspaper, and within two months, Brazilian users outnumbered American users. The popularity of Fotolog spread to Argentina and Chile in 2006 and then jumped the Atlantic Ocean to Spain and Portugal in 2007. That same year, traffic took off in the North of Mexico, especially around Monterrey. In 2010, Spain became their number one country, in terms of users.

Because the site hosts user-generated content and photos, it became a Portuguese- and Spanish-language site seemingly overnight. U.S. visitors now represent less than 5 percent of its total traffic, and the site officially offers 12 languages. According to ComScore (September 2009), Fotolog saw 9.8 million visitors across Latin America, 2.4 million visitors in Spain, and only 389,000 in the United States. Alexa (June 2010) shows Fotolog as the 15th most popular site in Argentina and 11th most popular site in Chile.

In an article on the BBC Mundo, David Cuen wrote (in Spanish), “According to Insites Consulting, Latin America has the highest usage of social networks in percentage terms. And in accordance with these statistics, 95 percent of Latin American Internet users have one account in at least one social network, an important growth rate if we consider that only one year ago eMarketer reported that 87 percent of Latin Americans online used social networks.” (March 24, 2010)

Why is Fotolog still based in New York if only 5 percent of its user base lives in the United States? Langer and Jokela say that New York affords them connections to the investment, media, and technology communities and a global perspective from which they can put together deals as needed. If they were to move their corporate headquarters to the city where they had the greatest number of users at any one time, in early

2009 it would have been Madrid; in the summer of 2009 it would have been Buenos Aires; and in early 2010 it would have been Santiago, Chile. Fotolog's holding company, Hi-Media, based in Paris, has three main business units: an online advertising network, a content network, including Fotolog, where users pay for premium subscriptions, and mobile payments services, the fastest-growing area of its business

Advertising was Fotolog's main source of revenue until Hi-Media launched its mobile payment product, at which point the premium content subscriptions took off. Why? Not many young Latin Americans have credit cards. The mobile payment service enabled Fotolog users to charge their premium subscriptions to their cell phone bills.

Langer, Jokela, and Fotolog's marketing team regularly converse with their users by email, sometimes even meeting with them in person. One "flogger" (short for photo blogger on Fotolog) in particular caught their attention. Agustina Vivero, who goes by the username "Cumbio," started using the site when she was 14 and says that Fotolog provided a good platform for figuring out her identity. ("Cumbio" is a play on the word "Cumbia," a tropical-sounding dance music popular in Argentina, Colombia, and the Caribbean.) In contrast, she said Facebook felt like putting yourself in a box. She uses Fotolog to connect with friends and organize weekly get-togethers at the Abasto shopping mall in Buenos Aires. The Sunday night events have become so popular that they have spilled over to other nights of the week. Argentinean teenagers gather to socialize, but, in addition, Cumbio invites educational speakers to the events to inform her followers about sexual health.

LatinoLink

Fotolog.com/Cumbio



Cumbio became Argentina's first Internet celebrity. Nike asked her to endorse its 3DG customizable shoes, the makers of Big Brother approached her with a reality TV show series, and a local political party asked her to run for office. She accepted the deal with Nike, but the reality TV show did not work out, and she has opted to finish school instead of running for office. At left is the promo for her book.

Here is an excerpt from a *New York Times* article (“In Argentina, a Camera and a Blog Make a Star,” March 13, 2009) about Cumbio:

The Cumbio craze really took off after Guillermo Tragant, president of Furia, a marketing company, discovered Ms. Vivero and the floggers last April [2008] while scouting for fresh faces for a Nike sportswear campaign. Nike wanted “real people from the streets,” Mr. Tragant said. “The power of the image for them is so strong,” he said, noting the afternoon “matinee” parties where floggers gather and walk a catwalk posing for photos of one another. “The sensation that the famous floggers are living today is like what Hollywood movie stars experience walking the red carpet.”



To use Malcolm Gladwell’s term from *The Tipping Point*, we can call Cumbio a “connector,” or someone who brings together many people who share a common interest. Clearly, she has great influence over her followers on Fotolog, as the hundreds of mall-goers have turned into thousands, and she has written a best-selling autobiography telling the story of her rise to fame (without even having finished high school). She makes more money for a brief nightclub appearance than her father, a plumber, earns in two days.

So what does Cumbio have to do with your company? As Nike has shown, the “connectors” in a society can be a great asset. Your brand may be able to identify influencers among your target Latino audience online, as Nike has with Cumbio. What social networks do they use? What do they discuss online? What events do they organize and attend offline?

Originally, Fotolog found that about 80 percent of its users knew everyone on their “friends” list. The results of a survey in January 2010, seems to show that has changed. Langer says, “People have become more promiscuous about adding users as friends. Now, 18 percent of users say they know everyone on their list while 51 percent of them know more than half of users on the list.” So, most people on Fotolog know only half of the people on their contacts list.

This actually represents good news for companies that want to exponentially add contacts to their Facebook, Twitter, or other social networking pages. Your company can reach a vast array of users through a single influential flogger, like Cumbio, to build your audience. Then, once recommended, Fotolog's survey indicates that you can add followers that you don't know personally, but that find your content helpful and useful.

Two Types of "Connectors" Online

"Generally, on Fotolog, there are two kinds of 'popular' accounts: hubs and connectors," according to Danielle Goldstein, a longtime community associate at Fotolog. "'Hubs' are the 'superstars,' whose fame is somewhat superficial. They're the ones people want to be associated with and the ones that people will sign up for an account to keep up with, but they probably won't do much with the account otherwise. It's a one-way interest; the 'superstar' really only cares about the fans as far as they make them popular. And the fans don't really care about each other," Goldstein says.

In contrast, "connectors" are the ones that rise more slowly; they're usually longtime members, and if they don't work or function in a social group of a kind, then they're at least found on the follower list of everyone interested in that particular area or theme. These people encourage "fans" and followers to communicate, to follow each other by providing a common fandom/space that everyone can participate in. Everyone typically knows one another in a connector's circle.

Most members are a mix of these two types Goldstein finds, and users react to these two types of members differently.

"Cumbio started as a connector in a local sense and slowly turned into a hub as the number of her 'fans' increased to an unmanageable level," says Goldstein. "With regards to the reactions to these two types of users, hubs are generally polarizing: either you are a fan or you don't like them. Connectors, on the other hand, foster a community around a shared common interest and only see adverse reactions to the area of interest they focus on but are not attacked personally."

Finding people on social networks with a lot of contacts is easy. But

finding a “connector” that has actually made real, substantial connections online and offline, as Nike discovered in Cumbio, can be quite difficult. You can use a system through which you filter out “hubs” to find the real “connectors” as exemplified in the diagram below. You start by measuring the number of contacts they have. Then you analyze the quality of their connections and content through the number and regularity of the comments on the connector’s page. Last, find out where connectors attend offline events to see how many people show up, as Cumbio did at the Abasto shopping mall.



Bringing Music Fans Together on YouTube and MySpace

Larry Hernandez wears a cowboy hat when he sings his brand of Northern Mexican Ranchera music. He uploads videos to his YouTube channel from his concerts or his daily, personal life when he walks around the towns he visits, doing something funny. In this manner, he constantly keeps in touch with his audience. Fans return to his YouTube channel often to watch his videos and especially when he posts exclusive content. Erika Nuño, the Director of Latin marketing for Universal Music Group, says that Larry is a perfect example of how to manage a personal brand online via social networks.

Word-of-mouth marketing serves as his primary tactic in getting his message out about these videos and extending his fan base beyond Mexico. On top of announcing and promoting his website and his MySpace page at all of his shows, Larry tells his fans that they may be included in the upcoming videos. That encourages his fans to log onto his YouTube

channel to view the videos and thus, the buzz spreads about his online activity and his visibility grows. Most importantly, by building an online audience in Northern Mexico (where he is from), his fans spread the word



about his music online by sharing his YouTube and MySpace pages with friends and family in the U.S., thus enabling him to grow a fan base across the border in the U.S. and even other countries in Latin America.

Artists who constantly post content online and promote themselves actively during their live performances significantly increase their opportunities to reach more individuals and build a larger fan base. When artists themselves manage their presence on social networks and personally connect with their fans, it not only keeps the pages active and updated but also builds a more loyal audience.

Building Your Brand on Facebook

“To seduce almost anyone, ask for and listen to his opinion,” said Malcolm Forbes. Perhaps if Steve Forbes would have followed his dad’s advice and asked Internet users “What’s on your mind?” as Facebook asks its users, he could have grown his audience to nearly 500 million unique visitors around the world as Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, has.

Now, the question becomes, how can Facebook make lasting impressions between its advertisers and members. In order to generate new demand for products, marketers need to move up the consumer funnel, says Blake Chandlee, Facebook’s vice president of sales for Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Asia. “The power of the social graph is changing the discovery process. The network of real connections through which people communicate and share information is the most influential way to reach someone.” More specifically, marketers can tap into these networks by using a variety of targeting methods with information from Facebook users’ profiles like age, gender, interests, and marital status.

How can brands grow their fan base in a specific countries or regions? Chandlee says, “In many cases today brands, celebrities, politicians, television shows, local restaurants and businesses will most likely build a page

on Facebook where they establish a community. The advantage is that activity that takes place here has organic and viral attributes that allow brands to expand their presence through friends and families of their fans. By having the ability to publish into the newsfeeds of their fans, and delivering a message or content that is compelling enough for their fans to share, the brands can become part of the social fabric of people's lives. This requires a commitment from brands to have an ongoing relationship and dialogue with users, to be authentic, to bring value to users consistent with their expectations, and to listen as much as publish. Brands such as Starbucks, Adidas, Nike, Ben & Jerry's, AXE and others benefit from building robust, active and thriving communities."

A Formula for Developing Content Communities

Gumersindo Lafuente created an innovative community content portal that blended community, technology, and editorial when he founded SoiTu.es. Today, he runs the editorial team for ElPais.com, one of the largest Spanish-language news sites in the world. Media companies and marketers alike can follow his innovations for fostering content communities online

First, Lafuente aimed to figure out new ways to distribute and better integrate community, technology, and news editorial. Most media companies organizations, he feels, focus far too much on the editorial. This is why he hired programmers to work in-house, sit next to the editorial team, and develop all of SoiTu's own back-end systems, most notably its own proprietary micro-blogging service for journalists that scanned text, suggested tags, and created a better way to organize journalistic information. Readers appreciated the many ways to find helpful information including search tools by keyword, theme, date, and fully integrated social media-style commenting, encouraging users to register on the site.

Second, SoiTu cultivated its core community of journalists and editors by inviting its most loyal readers and fans to share news in its service called "El Selector de Noticias," or "The Selector of News," a community-powered feed where SoiTu users could recommend articles from third-party sites. By enabling readers to share what they thought was most interest-



ing or relevant to the community members, SoiTū built confidence in its own branded community, encouraging them to return to SoiTū again and again.

Third, SoiTū's "I♥Publi," or "I love advertising," blog brought together outside experts on advertising, design, and media with its advertising team to cover trends in

marketing communications. This channel integrated advertising into the community-oriented content, creating conversation between reader and advertiser, instead of dividing editorial and advertising teams as often happens within media companies.

Last, SoiTū.es cultivated relationships with its community of "prosumer" reader-contributor-promoters. These contributors developed content, shared it with friends, and invited even more new reader-writers and fans. For example, SoiTū invited the illustrator Gabi Campanario, a native of Barcelona, to write for its Urban Life channel about the goings-on in his current hometown of Seattle. He scanned drawings from his notebook documenting daily life, and explained them in accompanying blog posts. He built such a following of fellow illustrators on SoiTū, that he eventually broke off to start his own community site of illustrators who wanted to share scans of their notebook illustrations.

More than 150 writers from around the Spanish-speaking world, like Gabi Campanario, contributed to SoiTū—most of whom were unpaid—about subjects that deeply interested them such as movies, music, trends, digital life, health, food, gastronomy, design, and architecture. Writers, architects, designers, advertising professionals, students, and professors pitched their stories to the editorial staff, who would then approve and edit the stories.

A few marketers have successfully blended community, technology, and editorial, like the Nike+ site, which measures and analyzes a runner's workouts, connects runners to other runners, and enables runners to share their favorite running routes. This exemplifies how a marketer can successfully become a publisher by using the community + technology + editorial formula.

The big challenge in building communities online is how audiences spill across borders globally and then selling the ad space to support those communities in markets like Latin America where CPM's can cost four times less than in the U.S. Or, on community-driven product review sites, the challenge becomes driving shoppers to their local, country-specific e-commerce sites, accepting international credit cards, and ensuring delivery.

According to ComScore, as many as 49 percent (November 2008) and as few as 22 percent (September 2009) of SoiTU's visitors came from Latin America. Interestingly, Lafuente noticed that, when SoiTU launched an editorial product or community for Mexico, *without any advertising, promotion, or even an email to contacts there*, the traffic there would immediately spike.

While most companies do not advertise globally, the movie industry launches films globally on the same day in order to avoid problems with piracy. Warner Bros., Universal, and the other film studios now develop global advertising and marketing programs to fight this issue. In the future, virtual products like music, travel reservations, and now books (with the Kindle and other electronic readers) must consider global sales strategies and advertising plans because of demand across the web.

Because of the explosive growth of online communities and the emotional power of word-of-mouth recommendations made on social networks, marketers may want to consider developing global or pan-regional advertising and communications programs by language to better meet the needs of consumers who influence one another on sites like SoiTU or Facebook.

Beta-Testing Communities and Content

Massimo Martinotti, the founder of the boutique production agency, Mia Films in Miami oftentimes beta-tests niche content ideas on his video blog, Facebook, and Twitter to see what does and doesn't resonate with consumers in online communities. He does this in preparation for developing content ideas for his clients like Sony, Toyota, Kellogg's, and Corona. For example, he launched a number of talk show format videos where a host

and an expert discuss the “*tecnicas del beso*,” or the techniques of a good kiss. Within months, the community grew to over 30,000 users and today the content has become self-sustaining where users contribute subdued (not risqué) photos and videos of couples kissing. Both women and men participate and the community sure would lend itself to a marketing campaign for Dentyne or Wrigley’s.

Once he develops niche content ideas, he strives to tell synergic stories for marketers that cannot squeeze into a single medium but rather evolve across multiple platforms in which converging stories can live and grow. “The user’s experience unfolds across as many media as possible and every single platform makes idiosyncratic and distinctive contributions to the story,” says Martinotti. “A story will possibly start with a short webisode. However, for users to understand it, they will eventually have to follow the characters of the story on Twitter, join a group on Facebook or Flickr, visit a channel on YouTube or Vimeo, receive or send SMS texts or MMS, participate in a forum or a chat, play a game or an alternate reality game, attend an event, and so forth.”

Ten-Step Process to Managing Social Media

Of all of the self-proclaimed “social media experts,” Sally Falkow of Pro-active Report, based in Pasadena, California, brings seriousness to the social media PR business with her 10-step process to working with social media:

1. **Listen:** What is your target audience discussing online? What suggestions or complaints do they share about your company, your products, or your competition?
2. **Share of voice:** What percentage of the conversations does your company participate in for your product line, target audience, or geographic region?
3. **Set goals and benchmarks:** What do you want to accomplish in social media and once you launch an initiative what are the benchmarks to measure success?
4. **Find communities and bloggers that matter:** Who are the thought

leaders you want to connect to? What communities focus on your industry or discuss your products?

5. **Identify influencers:** Who are the Cumbios and how can you leverage them as Nike did?
6. **Create a content strategy:** What information will users find helpful that build trust with your audience? What scope of ideas should be considered and how can you focus on the most useful or relevant areas of content?
7. **Choose tools:** These might include content management systems, social media platforms, distribution (RSS feeds), search technologies, and sharing tools.
8. **Create and deliver content:** Who can you partner with to develop content?
9. **Engage in and facilitate conversations:** How can social media translate into a proactive customer service channel? Can this translate into a greater, more profitable lifetime value between your customers and your company?
10. **Measure:** What ROI metrics do you want to use to measure success? Retweeted content? Links to your site? New emails registered? Complaints received and fixed? New business ideas received?

Building Communities via Promotions on Blogs

In June 2009, the Cervantes Institute of Chicago launched a short story contest on its blog with the goal of engaging local writers and Spanish students in the Chicago area. What happened provides a perfect example of how expectations of launching a Spanish-language promotion or website do not conform to the borderless reality of the worldwide web. Salvador Vergara, of the Cervantes Institute Chicago, told me that they never expected entrants from outside of the United States. Instead, they were shocked to find that more than 70 percent of their entrants were not only from outside of the Chicago area but also from outside of the United States entirely. They received entries from countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Holland, Venezuela, Spain, and even the Ukraine. Many Hispanic

marketing managers who launch promotions online find similar experiences at their companies.

Modeled after programs like Germany's Goethe Institute and France's Alliance Française, the government of Spain created the Instituto Cervantes in 1991 to promote the study of the Spanish language and culture at 54 centers in 20 countries, with facilities in New York, Chicago, Rio de Janeiro, Tokyo, London, and Beijing, among others. Named after Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616), the author of *Don Quixote* and arguably the most important figure in Spanish literature, the Cervantes Institute has established itself as a leading resource for Spanish language and culture globally. It makes sense, then, that the contest would attract Spanish speakers worldwide who share a passion for creative writing, because participants see themselves as participating in a prestigious brand. The Cervantes Institute took advantage of this unexpected windfall of visitors and published an e-book of the short story winners online, making its blog the hub of Spanish-language writers.

The Cervantes Institute successfully tapped into a community of writers passionate about a common theme—short stories—and encouraged them to submit their own work. It did several things right in managing its local marketing initiative. The institute successfully used new technologies to highlight its editorial content including WordPress for its blog; SnapShots as a preview tool; and Issuu, a digital publishing platform for showcasing the winners of the short story contest as a virtual book.

From August to December 2009, the Cervantes Institute's Chicago blog saw visitors from the following countries:

Spain	38.6%
United States	18.5%
Argentina	13%
Mexico	10.8%
Colombia	5.8%
Chile	4%
Venezuela	3%
Peru	3%

Source: ClustrMaps tool on the Cervantes Institute's Chicago blog, August 2009 to December 2009

In hindsight, The Cervantes Institute could have improved the contest or more clearly delineated who the contest was for by explaining in its rules that the contest was for “citizens of the state of Illinois.” Larger publishers and marketers can provide a welcome mat to their visitors from foreign IPs with landing pages saying, “Thanks for coming, but this contest is only available for people in the USA.” While that filters out foreigners, you may risk coming across as overly exclusive or filtering out Americans living abroad, for example. Alternatively, you could ask foreigners coming to your site a few questions to understand how they found your site and why they came.

A marketing manager at Burger King told me that they find the same issue as Instituto Cervantes found. Its online contests and sweepstakes for U.S. Hispanics (in Spanish) are meant to target U.S. citizens, yet many Mexicans, Argentineans, and even Spaniards find the sites and enter online, mostly due to the search trends discussed in Chapter 2. The reverse is also true. When Burger King runs a promotion in Mexico, it receives entrants from U.S. Hispanics and Spain. Nevertheless, Burger King targets its online advertising for U.S. Hispanics in the United States to focus its marketing efforts on its intended market.

The Cervantes Institute turned its unexpected visitors into an opportunity by publishing its e-book. Any global brand like Burger King or the Cervantes Institute will most likely experience this challenge since their brands have locations across the Spanish-language world. Instead of randomly finding users from around the world on your website, use the localization and globalization techniques outlined in Chapter 8 to ensure that your brand funnels these users to the correct international website.

Lessons Learned

- Social networking sites that grow globally, on the upside, reflect the idea that users around the world can universally appreciate a site’s design and functionality. On the downside, users from outside of a social network’s home country can “take over” a site if they find the site to be useful.
- Influential “connectors” can help marketers reach and persuade

teenagers or other consumers, as Cumbio did for Nike. Online social networks make finding “connectors” easier than ever.

- It is important to consider the ramifications of the global nature of social media for marketers like Lexicon Marketing (featured in chapter 1) who have developed their own branded social network as a key strategy for engaging Hispanics online.
- Popular social media profiles can be categorized into either “hubs” or “connectors.” “Hubs” are superstars that everyone adds as a follower with typically superficial fame. “Connectors” can be found on the follower list of everyone interested in a particular area or theme, which encourage followers to communicate with one other by providing a common space that everyone can participate in.
- Forums or discussion groups are by their nature global.
 - Develop local voices by integrating bloggers into editorial offerings.
 - New combinations of community, technology, and editorial will foster the new wave of innovation in online publishing.
 - Invite your active readers to become contributors to your website, as we saw with the story of the illustrator, Gabi Campanario, on SoiTU
 - Establish and use a process for working with social media sites including steps like listening, analyzing share of your brand’s voice, setting goals and benchmarks, identifying influencers and connectors, creating content development and delivery strategies, choosing web tools, and measuring results.

Why U.S. Hispanics Use Social Networking Sites

***By Felipe Korzenny, Ph.D.,
Professor and Director
Center for Hispanic Marketing Communication,
Florida State University***



In 2009, The Florida State University Center for Hispanic Marketing Communication and DMS Research in collaboration with Captura Group collected online national level data about Hispanics' use of social networking sites. The main motivation of this study was to find out what reasons, attitudes, preferences, and demographics contribute to the time Hispanics spend on social networking sites online. The national online Hispanic sub-sample was composed of almost 541 Hispanics who answered the questionnaire in English and 351 who answered in Spanish.

The dependent variable of this study—that is, the behavior we were attempting to explain—is the number of hours that Hispanics/Latinos reported spending while “visiting social networking sites on an average week.” This specific study included a mix of 80 general attitudes, preferences, and reasons and behaviors relevant to online activities and participation in social networking sites.

We observed that, in general, the more time Latinos spend using the Internet, be it in Spanish or English, the more time they spend on social networking sites. Thus, online familiarity and activity appear to create a propensity for participation in social media online. The key reasons why Hispanics spend time on social networking sites is for messaging, blogging, self-expression, making new friends, and sharing cherished images. The reasons that were least important for using social networking sites

LatinoLink

HMC.comm.fsu.edu

included promoting my business, promoting causes, asking questions, answering questions, commenting on people's activities, telling stories, chatting, and using classifieds. That messaging and overall self-expression constitute central reasons for Latinos to connect online makes sense. In this and other research, we have found that self-expression is one of the strong motivators of Hispanics generally. Thus, the Internet has become a most important liberating technology that allows repressed social needs to be expressed. Hispanics, in particular, are fond of sharing their experiences.

Other factors strongly associated with time spent on visiting social networking sites included reading magazines in English, being younger, and being concerned about one's diet. That younger Latinos spend more time on social networking sites is not surprising. What is surprising is that, while age is important, it is not nearly as important as other factors and reasons as more older Hispanics get turned on to social networks online. Reading magazines in English seems to imply that the type of people who are on social networks tend to be generally "print or text" oriented and curious about the world around them. Interestingly, concern about one's diet may be partially addressed by social networks where Hispanics share issues and information of importance. Perhaps those who are more socially active are also more concerned about their health and appearance, and hence their diet is very important to them. Accordingly, food and fitness advertisers are likely to benefit from being more active and visible in social networks where Latinos share their experiences. Notably, gender was not found to make a difference in this analysis.

Marketers and service providers can capitalize on research like this by understanding that, by facilitating messaging and self-expression online, they are likely to attract the interest of Latinos. There are few reasons that are most important for attracting Hispanics to social networks online, and this research should serve as a step in that direction. Advertisers should consider embedding and linking to social networks where Hispanics participate to facilitate interaction and self-expression. Merchant websites should also consider the importance that Latinos assign to self-expression and sociability and facilitate these activities on their sites. As a corollary, I should emphasize that it seems like the age of corporate and organizational censoring is being replaced by an age of openness.