

## What Language Does Marketing Speak?

By Paul Gibson



Depending on where you live in the world, you might see a number of advertisements on television, newspapers, even the internet that are beginning to use words from other languages to spark the interest and attract a bigger audience.

A great example of what we are talking about is Spanish banks. These days I have found a number of television and newspaper advertisements making reference to the business of banking as "Open", "Fresh" or "Happy". As to what these terms really mean, I am afraid we would have to interview the marketing department of the banks in question.

Would you really think of banking as "fresh" or "open"? The only news you might hear about these days would probably give you the exact opposite impression: "closed" (or closing down) and maybe even "spoiled", rather than "fresh." (We can leave the other tag of Happy for our readers to decide.)

Yet this is not the first time this has occurred. The phenomenon began in 2007 in Los Angeles, where marketing professionals discovered they had an

entirely new audience or target clientele that was not only English-speaking, but also Spanish speaking!

Even Mexican channels that were broadcasting exclusively in Spanish, decided to include English segments to cater to a demand from a growing English-speaking Hispanic or Latino audience. The fact of the matter is that there is a growing population in the States that not only speak English, but also Spanish - with great ease.

So where does the hype come from? In Los Angeles, I would venture to speak of a cultural change in which Hispanics or Mexicans have been encouraging and promoting the English language among their little ones - especially to be competitive in the job market. In the case of Mexicans in Los Angeles, it is more a matter of survival or necessity than it is in Europe or South America, however. Though, you might see a number of storefronts in the States that say "se habla Español" - to cater to the older generation of migrating Mexicans.

However, in the case of other countries, like Spain, English is used in marketing campaigns for a completely different reason. Are Spanish businesses really looking for English-speaking clients? Possibly. But I will place my bets on a different theory. English is "in"; English is the language of business. English is the second most-spoken language on Earth, right after Mandarin Chinese. But why would you label one of your businesses in English, instead of using the local Spanish language?

The practice is not limited to Spain. In the US, you will find restaurants that claim to be Mexican, Spanish or gourmet restaurants with all sorts of dishes with Spanish and other more

popular French names. If you sell food or perfume you use French. If you sell pizza, you use Italian. If you sell electronics, you throw an oriental label on it. The list goes on and on.

Ironically however, as English becomes increasingly popular even in Spanish and Chinese-speaking countries - especially for business, the film industry in Spain seems incapable of losing their bad habit of putting their own titles to films that have absolutely nothing to do with the script! Now that's not bad marketing, that's downright criminal!

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