



2022 Outlook and Trends: Year of the Multicultural Marketing Renaissance By Liz Castells-Heard, CEO & Chief Strategy Officer, INFUSION

Welcome to the Multicultural Marketing Renaissance. Last year, I said ‘the collision of the census, Covid and technology would accelerate the MCM business imperative’. Progress was made, albeit tepid with influx client budgets, Covid’s sequel, the grand resignation, economic uncertainty, and supply issues. Now, we see Multicultural media YOY growth, and demand from both new advertisers investing where the growth is, and lapsed MCM advertisers seeing what it’s cost them in sales. This will start to narrow the gap between Multicultural ad spend and population share (7% vs. 42%), and Fortune 500 box-checking to bar-setting. Consumers demand culturally authentic marketing, while brands are challenging traditional perceptions of cultural messaging. Why? Over 70% of Multiculturals are ‘deeply connected to their culture’, ‘feel and act differently than the average American’, and ‘feel marginalized’. They recognize and reject box-checking efforts, and want to be properly understood, represented, and marketed to.



Multiculturals’ impact reflects a watershed moment to a profoundly and forever changed America. They account for 100% of all growth in U.S. jobs, HH formations and population, rising to 48% by 2030 while NH-Whites keep declining. They drive the growth in top categories, shape the cities driving our economy, lead digital trends, and decide which brands win. While it’s been shifting gradually for years and fueled by the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, coupled with today’s social justice rally cry, it’s a seismic shift affecting consumers, businesses, and even regional migration tantamount to feminism, the New Deal, or Affirmative Action. We’ve permanently moved to a racially and ethnically diverse, heterogeneous consumer base with a much broader and varied set of demands and needs. Countless studies prove cultural efforts increase brand persuasion and ROI, most consumers think cultural diversity is one of America’s major sources of strength, and even NH-Whites find unique ethnic ads relatable and justified.

In this changed America, business growth will be difficult without effective Multicultural marketing. My conversations with peers and prospective clients echo this sentiment, and the harm to businesses from lack of Multicultural marketing, hiatus, deficient spend, or force-fit strategies, mistaking DEI and BIPOC mainstream casting for effective marketing. Whether a result of the ‘Total Market’ myth, lack of C-suite support, VP turnover, scarce resources, or flawed plans, they know it’s time to change. Multiculturals are their target sweet spot as the majority of all age 44 or younger, with rising education and income, more kids and longevity, thus more revenue-generating years. Brands need to work harder to connect and earn consumers’ trust, including Multiculturals. ‘Why do we need marketing for Whites?’ – said no one ever.

Multiculturals long-held community and family values re-emerge across all shaken-up Americans. Covid fueled isolation, destabilized classic success markers, and desynchronized society, lessening once-reliable, tandem daily human interactions like 9-5 work or commuting (now remote), the 7pm news or 8pm novela (now streamed 24/7), or trips to the grocery or gym, or post office (virtual convenience). Our society found meaning focused more on empathy, connections, family, and community well-being – values always prioritized by Multiculturals. We should all take a page from the ‘Multicultural Experience’ book: resilient families and communities who faced major upheaval and adversity, adapted, and moved forward. These central values have kept generations whole and optimistic, even amidst Covid’s disproportionate impact.

Covid pushed us all into digital life, but it is not homogenous, rather it is ever-more personalized. The interconnected digital village gave everyone access to the same information, ideas, stories, content, and mega-brands, which some presume influences people the same. That practice prompted a depiction of culture that’s bland in its sameness at the cost of cultural diversity, and blended ‘Benetton’ ads not highly effective to anyone. In fact, wider digital access strengthened Multicultural media, social voices, unique spaces, and cultural ties. Each segment’s access to unique cultural media, people, experiences, codes, references, and language sets them apart. In turn, this shapes their identity, values, family, influencers, and ways to process that ‘same information, ideas, or mega-brands’, to make their own distinct choices.

Multiculturals lead the digital trends driving marketing today. They over-index on video, mobile, social, streaming, virtual experiences, micro-influencers, gaming, the Metaverse, and ‘joyning’ platforms where people connect, share passions, and are supported. They’re the highest users of crypto, NFTs, flexible subscriptions, rent-a-services, shop-streaming, and C2C – all part of the new ‘people economy’ redefining brand value. They’ve driven small business growth since 2010 and lead the new wave of digital ‘creators’. Brands can add value as connectors, enablers, empathizers, and Digital ‘Butlers’ ready to serve, being cognizant that cultural preferences take us to different rabbit holes, and hyper-personalization is expected.

Our cultural lens also impacts hierarchy of needs, purchase triggers, media, and inflection points. Diverse media/digital behavior affects the importance of marketing platforms. Often, category lifecycle and brand development vary, altering product and messaging priorities, and level of education needed. Culture influences the brand value prop and attributes driving choice. Ironically, brand trust, always Multiculturals’ #1 purchase factor, is now #1 to all consumers with the heightened distrust from digital misinformation, political polarization, inequality, et al issues. The need for brand transparency, information quality, and values alignment has never been higher. The key is that knowledge-based Multicultural strategies weigh all the factors and identify the differences that matter to drive affinity, response, sales, and loyalty.

Fortune 500 – Be part of the Multicultural Marketing Renaissance (aka MMR). Establish a Multicultural center of excellence team with expertise, leadership and accountability that works with cross-functional teams to be effective across the P’s, define the framework and success metrics. Benchmark competitors, seek best-in-class practices, and hire a knowledgeable Multicultural agency to guide you from getting the house in order to the marketing activation. Assure proper research, sample sizes, and MCM representation in all metrics to guide strategic planning, sizing, optimization, and budget allocation based on contribution and upside. Audit customer-facing, marcomm, or operational processes/programs to assess, recalibrate, and apply nuances as needed. Prioritize your products, offers, targets, messaging, and media. Create cultural work that connects, empowers, provides value and support, fuels their spirits, and tells their stories. **Sit back and enjoy the business growth.**

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INFUSION is a full-service, WMBE agency that gets results for Fortune 100 clients, led by dynamic Stanford MBA Liz Castells and a powerhouse team with ‘brains, heart and grit’, and diverse General market, Multicultural and Client experience. They are known for infusing analytics and insights for deeper strategies, first-in-kind thinking, and ROI-Powered ideas. Their Transculturation™ model helps Clients profitably integrate Multicultural across the P’s factoring both ethnic needs and GM commonalities.

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