

MARKETING TO ASIANS: A Valuable But Challenging Market

Given the fact that Asians in America have the highest level of education and income few multicultural groups excite marketers more than Asian Americans. There's only one small problem, there's not such thing as the "Asian American Market".

Most marketers use the term *Asian American* to describe Americans of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Pacific Island, and South Asian descent. While some of these groups have similarities in terms of culture and philosophy the seventeen major Asian subgroups have vast differences in language, identity, and buying preferences. This is what often derails multicultural marketing efforts aimed at Asians in the United States.

The first step to effective Asian American marketing is to determine what generation they are in this country. New immigrants are *first-generation* while the first ones to be born here are *second-generation* and so forth.

Marketing to first-generation Asians is the biggest challenge because they tend to prefer their native language. On the other hand, this can enable you to target them quite effectively. For instance, let's say you survey your customers and determine that among them there is a large group of newly-immigrated Koreans. You can use a variety of relatively-inexpensive Korean-language media to reach them. Don't forget to have someone who can answer the phone and greet them in their language (Han'gul).

On the other hand, those who have been born in America or at least been here for ten years tend to be comfortable with English language advertising. However, just taking an ad designed for the general market and simply translating it into an Asian language will likely be ineffective at best, and a public relations nightmare at worst. The words, images, music and even the mood used in advertising must be adapted for Asians and sometimes for the specific subgroup you are trying to reach.

If you are targeting a specific market be aware that most Asians know the difference between images of people who are Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Southeast Asian, South Asian, etc. In addition there are distinct differences in music, dress, food, and many other aspects of Asian culture. You must be completely familiar with the group you are trying to reach and find experts who know how to reach them.

However, there are some similarities among Asians such as a strong belief in family, frugality, and community. Effective words that might be used in ads appealing to the Far Eastern cultures could include: *family, belonging, cost-efficient, investment, long-lasting, time-savings, and guaranteed*.

You can see that marketing to Asian Americans is certainly possible and potentially very profitable. Once you know which group(s) and what generations you want to reach consult a professional.