

Reaching Hispanic Fans: Professional Sports' Use of Spanish Language on the Internet

by Kimberly J. Bodey, Lawrence W. Judge, Marshall Steward, and Tamara Gobel

Abstract

With buying power exceeding \$850 billion and tendencies toward brand loyalty, Hispanic consumers are a desirable market. Yet, at a time when North American professional sport leagues and teams have expanded to international territories to increase revenue, market share, and fan base, it is worthwhile to study the extent leagues and teams reach fans at home. This exploratory, descriptive study found MLB and MLS, more than other sport leagues, incorporated the Spanish language into league and team websites. There was much variability across websites particularly in big league markets with the largest as well as the fastest growing Hispanic populations.

Key words: Hispanic, Internet, marketing, professional sport, Spanish, sales

Reaching Hispanic Fans: Professional Sports' Use of Spanish Language on the Internet

With buying power exceeding \$850 billion and tendencies toward brand loyalty (Humphreys, 2006; Perkins, 2004), Hispanic consumers are a desirable market. Recent reports indicate the largest minority group tends to reside near large metropolitan areas with professional sport franchises (United States Census Bureau [USCB] – American Community Survey: Hispanics, 2004), identify themselves as fans and are attending more professional sport events (Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association's Hispanic Market Report, 2006), and combine watching television broadcasts with surfing the Internet for a more complete media experience (Yahoo! Telmundo & Experian Simmons Research, 2007). Yet, at a time when professional sport leagues and teams are spending millions of dollars to expand into international territories to increase revenue, market share, and fan base, it is worthwhile to investigate what steps have been taken to connect with this viable target group in the United States.

The purpose of this exploratory study was to determine the extent to which North American professional sport leagues and teams incorporate the Spanish language into the respective Internet sites. Specifically, this study aims to determine the number of content pages available in English and Spanish, availability of a toggle feature, and availability of Spanish language sales pages. This study provides valuable insight into the extent to which professional sport leagues and teams connect with Hispanic fans on the Internet.

Literature Review

A growing segment of the population is the Hispanic market. In order to effectively connect with Hispanic fans, sport managers must have a basic understanding of consumer demographics, be-

haviors, and interests. To this end, a brief overview of the Hispanic population, size, and location, buying power, Internet use, and interest in professional sport is provided.

Hispanic Population

Government officials recorded 22.4 million (9.8% of the total population) and 35.4 million (12.5% of the total population) Hispanic residents in the respective 1990 and 2000 Census. The current estimate indicated there are 44.3 million Hispanic persons (of any race) in the United States. This group represents 14.8% of the general population. The Hispanic population is expected to reach 60 million by 2020 and increase to 103 million by 2050; at which time, this segment would constitute 24% of the overall population (USCB – American Community Survey, 2006).

Hispanic Americans tend to be concentrated geographically. Data suggest the most dramatic growth has occurred in “non-traditional” states (National Council of La Raza [NCLR], 2005). Hispanics are the largest minority group in 22 states including Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington, and Wyoming. Fifteen of these states have greater than 500,000 Hispanic residents (NCLR, 2005).

Many Hispanic Americans reside in or near major metropolitan areas. The ten metropolitan areas with the largest Hispanic population are Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Miami, Houston, Riverside-San Bernardino, Orange County, Phoenix, San Antonio, and Dallas. Six of these metropolitan areas have more than one million Hispanic residents (NCLR, 2005).

While the Hispanic population has increased 21% between 2000 and 2005, the percentage of Hispanics who are Spanish language dominant has remained the same (USCB – American Community Survey, 2006). Approximately 96% of Hispanics use at least some Spanish at home while 86% use Spanish at work or school (Humphreys, 2004). Of the 31 million people who speak Spanish at home, nearly half reported speaking Spanish less than very well (USCB, 2000).

Hispanic Buying Power

Sixty-eight percent of Hispanics age 16 or older are in the civilian workforce. The median income of Hispanic households is \$37,800 as compared to \$48,500 for the national average (USCB – American Community Survey, 2006). Buying power is defined as the total post tax income available to residents to spend. The Selig Center for Economic Growth estimated the nation's total buying power will increase from \$9.5 trillion in 2006 to \$12.4 trillion in 2011. Hispanic buying power was \$863.1 billion in 2007 and is projected to exceed \$1.2 trillion in five years. This segment controls more disposable income than any other minority group (see Humphreys, 2006).

Hispanic consumers are intensely brand-loyal and cost conscious (Perkins, 2004). Studies in the retail environment suggest several elements are very important to Hispanic patrons including bilingual employees and signage as well as employees being knowledgeable about preferred products. Further, retailers are strongly encouraged to do more to attract and retain Hispanic customers through well designed culture specific marketing strategies (Perkins, 2004).

Hispanics and the Internet

Fifty-six percent of the Hispanic population uses the Internet. By comparison, 71% of non-Hispanic whites and 60% of non-Hispanic blacks access the Internet (Fox & Livingston, 2007). In 2007, there were almost 18 million Hispanics users. The number of Internet users was expected to grow by 33% within five years, reaching 21 million by 2010. Among Hispanics, 72% of people with income between \$30,000 and \$50,000 and 88% with income greater than \$50,000 use the Internet. Approximately 39% of individuals with an income less than \$30,000 go online (Williamson, 2006).

People of Hispanic origin, known as “media mavens”, appear to be adopting and consuming media and technology at a higher rate than the general population (Humphreys, 2006). A recent study reported Hispanics engage in 51 hours of total daily activity, including 14 hours with technology and 13.5 hours with media. This is compared to eight hours of technology and 9 hours of media for the general population (Yahoo! Telmundo & Experian Simmons Research, 2007). Further, 79% of the Hispanic market has broadband and 66% of those who do not have broadband have broadband access (Fox & Livingston, 2007). Sport websites with the largest Hispanic audience composition include NBA.com (12.3%), NBA Internet Network (12.3%), ESPN.com (7.5%), Fox Sports on MSN (7.0%), Yahoo!Sports (6.5%), CBS SportsLine.com Network (5.9%), NFL.com (5.7%), eBay Sports (5.6%), and NFL Internet Network (5.0%) (Nielsen/NetRatings, 2007).

Fifty percent of online Hispanics typically combine watching television with surfing the Internet to enrich their media experience. One third of this group says that television is more fun with Internet access (Yahoo! Telmundo & Experian Simmons Research, 2007). A problem exists, however, when Spanish language television is combined with English Internet content. Due to lack of Spanish language options, Spanish dominant respondents reported consuming two-thirds of their online content in English (Yahoo! Telmundo & Experian Simmons Research, 2007). An AOL/Roper (2004) poll of offline Hispanics found language was a key barrier. Fifty percent of respondents cited a lack of Spanish content as a reason for not going online.

Mummert (2007) reports Hispanics have a perception that a company’s English language website is better than the Spanish language version. This perception comes from a real inequity in the amount and detail of the per page content when moving between websites. The inequity extends to the number of pages offered in English and Spanish. This disparity generates frustration and a sense of being disrespected (Mummert, 2007). In this situation, a toggle feature, between comparable Spanish and English language sites, becomes an essential tool. Toggle buttons allow site visitors to go back and forth between the same webpage; so,

Spanish dominant and bilingual Hispanics are better able to obtain information written in Spanish.

Hispanics and Professional Sport

A recent poll measuring sport avidity level indicated sixty one percent of Hispanic Americans are World Cup soccer fans (Anonymous, 2007). This is followed by Major League Baseball (59%), National Basketball Association (56%), Mexican Soccer League (56%), National Football League (50%), and to a much lesser extent, National Hockey League (24%). Comparatively, the general population reported being a fan of the National Football League (69%), Major League Baseball (58%), National Basketball Association (50%), and the National Hockey League (28%). Statistics for World Cup soccer and Mexican Soccer League are not available for the general population.

The recent growth in both participation and game attendance may be related to the relatively large number of self-reported fans. The Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association’s Hispanic Market Report (2006) provided the percentage of Hispanic population who participate in basketball (14.3%), soccer (9.0%), baseball (5.2%), and tackle football (2.8%). King (2007), citing Scarborough Research, reported an increase in the number of Hispanic fans who attended professional sport events: 4.5 million attended baseball games, 1.7 million attended basketball games, 1.4 million attended football games, and 360,000 attended hockey games last year. Avidity level, participation rates, and game attendance figures suggest the largest and fastest growing minority group is interested in professional sport.

The Hispanic population is emerging as a force in the national sport economy (Humphreys, 2006). Census data reveal impressive growth in big league markets with the largest Hispanic population: Los Angeles (5.6 million), New York (3.9 million), Miami (2.0 million), Chicago (1.8 million), Houston (1.7 million), Dallas (1.5 million), Phoenix (1.1 million), San Antonio (978,000), San Diego (844,000), and San Francisco (795,000). There are an additional ten markets which have experienced between 202% and 735% growth in Hispanic population during the last 15 years: Raleigh Durham (82,580), Charlotte (80,092), Atlanta (418,888), Nashville (40,139), Indianapolis (65,060), Orlando (403,557), Portland (192,980), Minneapolis-St. Paul (131,645), Memphis (28,880), and Columbus (30,215) (USCB – American Community Survey: Hispanics, 2004). To put this data in perspective, there are 70 professional sport teams playing in these markets. Thus, about 49% of the total Hispanic population lives in an area with at least one professional team.

This growth has not gone unnoticed by marketers. Though authors contend more should be done to reach Hispanic fans (Eros, 2002; Salazar, 2007), professional sport leagues and teams have attempted to connect this group. Efforts such as promotional events which focus on Hispanic sport stars and relevant brands, support of amateur sport events (e.g., MLS’s Futbolito), various grassroots efforts (e.g., NBA’s resurfacing neighborhood courts, NFL in Espanol football clinic), special campaigns (e.g., MLB’s Month of Americas), bilingual publications, and Spanish language programming on cable television and radio have been implemented. While some teams have hired Hispanic marketing directors or contracted with Hispanic advertising firms, there seems to be little coordi-

nation of league wide marketing initiatives (Anonymous, 2007; Ayala, 2007; Cassidy, 2001; Eros, 2002).

Methodology

Experimental Design

Two researchers were trained to independently assess page content and features of professional sport websites. League and individual team websites for Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer, National Basketball Association, Women’s National Basketball Association, National Football League, and National Hockey League were independently reviewed during a two-week period in October 2007. The two week timeframe was determined to enough time to obtain a snapshot of website content. This is consistent with the exploratory nature of the study. Discrepancies in codes were reviewed and agreement was reached.

While similarity in webpage design exists within leagues, there is much variability between leagues. Given the exploratory nature of this study, it was necessary to set parameters to enhance consistency in assessment across professional sport Internet sites. Review of content was limited to homepage and secondary pages of league and team websites.

A page was operationally defined as the content available on screen (including scroll) with one click of the mouse. For each homepage and secondary page, the researchers determined if content was predominantly written in English or Spanish. Responses were coded on a dichotomous scale (English = 0 and Spanish = 1). Next, for each homepage and secondary page, the researchers determined if a toggle button was available. Responses were coded on a dichotomous scale (no = 0 and yes = 1). Finally, the researchers determined if a Spanish sales page was available. Responses were coded on a dichotomous scale (no = 0 and yes = 1).

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were generated for the variables included in this study. Data were analyzed to determine the following:

Research Question 1: To what extent do professional sport leagues use the Spanish language in league websites?

Research Question 2: To what extent do professional sport leagues use the Spanish language in individual team websites?

Research Question 3: To what extent do professional sport leagues with teams in markets with the largest Hispanic population use the Spanish language in team websites?

Research Question 4: To what extent do professional sport leagues with teams in markets with the fastest growing Hispanic population use the Spanish language in team websites?

Results

Six league and 148 individual team websites for Major League Baseball, Major League Soccer, National Basketball Association, Women’s National Basketball Association, National Football League, and National Hockey League were examined. Results indicated professional sport website content is predominantly writ-

ten in English. Further, leagues and teams vary in the availability of a toggle feature and the availability of Spanish language sales.

Spanish Language Use in League Websites

Review of league websites revealed 11.1% of pages were written in Spanish (Table 1). The availability of Spanish language pages was limited to Major League Baseball (29.6%) and Major League Soccer (14.5%). Similarly, these were the only leagues to have a toggle feature and Spanish language sales.

Table 1. Professional Sport Leagues' Use of Spanish Language in League Websites (N=6)

Leagues	N	English Pages		Spanish Pages		Toggle Feature	Sales in Spanish
		Freq	%	Freq	%		
MLB	107	107	70.4	45	29.6	Yes	Yes
MLS	100	100	85.5	17	14.5	Yes	Yes
NBA	102	102	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
WNBA	31	31	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
NFL	85	85	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
NHL	70	70	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Combined	6	495	88.9	62	11.1		

Spanish Language Use in Team Websites

Among individual team websites, 12.3% of pages were in Spanish (Table 2). Major League Baseball teams (30.9%) and Major League Soccer teams (23.1%) had the largest number of Spanish language pages while teams in the National Football League (3.3%) and National Basketball Association (0.8%) also provided some content in Spanish. All Major League Baseball teams provided a toggle feature and Spanish language sales. To a lesser extent, Major League Soccer teams (69.2%), National Football League teams (28.1%), and National Basketball Association teams (23.3%) provided toggle features. Similarly, Major League Soccer teams (61.5%), National Football League teams (6.3%), and National Basketball Association teams (3.3%) provided Spanish language sales.

Table 2. Professional Sport Leagues' Use of Spanish Language in Individual Team Websites (N=148)

Leagues	N	English Pages		Spanish Pages		Toggle Feature		Sales in Spanish	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%*	Freq	%*
MLB	30	2181	69.1	977	30.9	30	100.0	30	100.0
MLS	13	708	76.9	213	23.1	9	69.2	8	61.5
NBA	30	1768	99.2	14	0.8	7	23.3	1	3.3
WNBA	13	499	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
NFL	32	2241	96.7	76	3.3	9	28.1	2	6.3
NHL	30	1723	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Combined	148	9120	87.7	1280	12.3				

Note: * Represents percentage of teams in league.

Spanish Language Use in Markets with the Largest Hispanic Population

Teams in the ten largest Hispanic population markets provided 10.9% of pages in Spanish (Table 3). Major League Soccer (30.4%) and Major League Baseball (20.0%) had the most Span-

ish language content. The National Football League (2.4%) and National Basketball Association (1.2%) provided a limited number of pages in Spanish. All Major League Baseball and Major League Soccer teams provided a toggle feature and Spanish language sales. National Basketball Association (55.5%) and National Football League (44.4%) teams provided a toggle feature. Teams in the National Basketball Association (11.1%) and National Football League (11.1%) provided Spanish language sales. Review of composite data found five cities with at least ten percent of content available in Spanish including Houston (19.1%), San Diego (17.9%), Los Angeles (14.2%), New York (12.4%), and Dallas (10.5%). Teams in these cities varied in whether a toggle feature and Spanish language sales were available (Table 4).

Table 3. Professional Sport Leagues in Markets with the Ten Largest Hispanic Population Use of Spanish Language in Team Websites (N=48)

Leagues	N	English Pages		Spanish Pages		Toggle Feature		Sales in Spanish	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%*	Freq	%*
MLB	12	875	80.0	219	20.0	12	100.0	12	100.0
MLS	5	297	69.6	130	30.4	5	100.0	5	100.0
NBA	9	590	98.8	7	1.2	5	55.5	1	11.1
WNBA	6	187	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
NFL	9	681	97.6	17	2.4	4	44.4	1	11.1
NHL	7	420	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Combined	48	3050	89.1	373	10.9				

Note: * Represents percentage of identified teams in market.

Spanish Language Use in Markets with the Fastest Growing Hispanic Population

Teams in the fastest growing Hispanic population markets provided 6.3% of content in Spanish (Table 5). Major League Baseball (37.8%) had the most Spanish language pages. Teams in the National Football League (0.3%) and National Basketball Association (0.2%) each had a page in Spanish which was accessible through a toggle feature. Only teams in Major League Baseball provided Spanish language sales. Composite data revealed two cities with greater than ten percent of content available in Spanish including

Table 5. Professional Sport Leagues in Markets with the Fastest Growing Hispanic Population Use of Spanish Language in Team Websites (N=22)

Leagues	N	English Pages		Spanish Pages		Toggle Feature		Sales in Spanish	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%*	Freq	%*
MLB	2	148	62.2	90	37.8	2	100.0	2	100.0
MLS	1	52	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
NBA	7	423	99.8	1	0.2	1	14.3	0	0.0
WNBA	2	117	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
NFL	5	349	99.7	1	0.3	1	20.0	0	0.0
NHL	5	284	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Combined	22	1373	93.7	92	6.3				

Note: * Represents percentage of identified teams in market.

Table 4. Professional Sport Teams in Markets with the Largest Hispanic Population Use of Spanish Language in Team Websites (N=48)

Leagues	English Pages		Spanish Pages		Toggle Feature	Sales in Spanish
	Freq	%	Freq	%		
Los Angeles	418	85.8	69	14.2		
Angels (MLB)	70	90.9	7	9.1	Yes	Yes
Dodgers (MLB)	77	77.0	23	23.0	Yes	Yes
Galaxy (MLS)	72	65.5	38	34.5	Yes	Yes
Clippers (NBA)	67	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Lakers (NBA)	50	98.0	1	2.0	Yes	No
Sparks (WNBA)	32	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Kings (NHL)	50	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
New York	510	87.6	72	12.4		
Yankees (MLB)	77	73.3	28	26.7	Yes	Yes
Mets (MLB)	78	77.2	23	22.8	Yes	Yes
Red Bull (MLS)	30	62.5	18	37.5	Yes	Yes
Knicks (NBA)	58	96.7	2	3.3	Yes	No
Liberty (WNBA)	32	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Giants (NFL)	68	98.6	1	1.4	Yes	No
Jets (NFL)	36	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Islanders (NHL)	56	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Rangers (NHL)	75	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Miami	304	93.3	22	6.7		
Marlins (MLB)	67	93.1	5	6.9	Yes	Yes
Heat (NBA)	46	97.9	1	2.1	Yes	Yes
Dolphins (NFL)	127	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Panthers (NHL)	64	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Chicago	425	90.6	44	9.4		
Cubs (MLB)	68	81.9	15	18.1	Yes	Yes
White Sox (MLB)	73	82.0	16	18.0	Yes	Yes
Fire (MLS)	75	85.2	13	14.8	Yes	Yes
Bulls (NBA)	72	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Sky (WNBA)	31	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Bears (NFL)	52	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Blackhawks (NHL)	54	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Houston	297	80.9	70	19.1		
Astros (MLB)	70	64.8	38	35.2	Yes	Yes
Dynamo (MLS)	59	65.6	31	34.4	Yes	Yes
Rockets (NBA)	48	98.0	1	2.0	Yes	No
Comets (WNBA)	26	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Texans (NFL)	94	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Dallas	331	89.5	39	10.5		
Rangers (MLB)	71	89.9	8	10.1	Yes	Yes
F.C. Dallas (MLS)	61	67.0	30	33.0	Yes	Yes
Mavericks (NBA)	81	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Cowboys (NFL)	67	98.5	1	1.5	Yes	No
Stars (NHL)	51	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Phoenix	371	93.7	25	6.3		
DiamondBacks (MLB)	71	75.5	23	24.5	Yes	Yes
Suns (NBA)	108	98.2	2	1.8	Yes	No
Mercury (WNBA)	36	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Cardinals (NFL)	86	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Coyotes (NHL)	70	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
San Antonio	90	100.0	0	0.0		
Spurs (NBA)	60	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Silver Stars (WNBA)	30	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
San Diego	147	82.1	32	17.9		
Padres (MLB)	75	80.6	18	19.4	Yes	Yes
Chargers (NFL)	72	83.7	14	16.3	Yes	Yes
San Francisco	157	90.8	16	9.2		
Giants (MLB)	78	83.9	15	16.1	Yes	Yes
49ers (NFL)	79	98.8	1	1.2	Yes	No

Atlanta (15.3%) and Minneapolis-St. Paul (12.5%). Among professional sport teams in these cities, only Major League Baseball franchises provided a toggle feature and Spanish language sales (Table 6).

Table 6. Professional Sport Teams in Markets with the Fastest Growing Hispanic Population Use of Spanish Language in Team Websites (N=22)

Leagues	English		Spanish		Toggle Feature	Sales in Spanish
	Pages Freq	%	Pages Freq	%		
Raleigh Durham	61	100.0	0	0.0		
Hurricanes (NHL)	61	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Charlotte	171	100.0	0	0.0		
Bobcats (NBA)	71	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Panthers (NFL)	100	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Atlanta	250	84.7	45	15.3		
Braves (MLB)	79	63.7	45	36.3	Yes	Yes
Hawks (NBA)	68	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Falcons (NFL)	45	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Thrashers (NHL)	58	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Nashville	119	100.0	0	0.0		
Titans (NFL)	64	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Predators (NHL)	55	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Indianapolis	190	99.5	1	0.5		
Pacers (NBA)	56	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Fever (WNBA)	52	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Colts (NFL)	82	98.8	1	1.2	Yes	No
Orlando	63	98.4	1	1.6		
Magic (NBA)	63	98.4	1	1.6	Yes	No
Portland	48	100.0	0	0.0		
Trail Blazers (NBA)	48	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Minneapolis-St. Paul	314	87.5	45	12.5		
Twins (MLB)	69	60.5	45	39.5	Yes	Yes
Timberwolves(NBA)	75	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Lynx (WNBA)	65	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Vikings (NFL)	58	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Wild (NHL)	47	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Memphis	42	100.0	0	0.0		
Grizzlies (NBA)	42	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Columbus	115	100.0	0	0.0		
Crew (MLS)	52	100.0	0	0.0	No	No
Blue Jackets (NHL)	63	100.0	0	0.0	No	No

Discussion

The purpose of this exploratory study was to determine the extent to which North American professional sport leagues and teams have incorporated the Spanish language into respective Internet sites. In terms of website content, leagues and teams provided the vast majority of pages in English. Leagues with the most Spanish language content, Major League Baseball and Major League Soccer, have had the longest tradition of Hispanic fans and have been at the forefront of creating marketing initiatives for this group.

This is an interesting finding given the large scale use and access to broadband and the expected growth of Hispanic Internet users by 2010. Typically, Hispanics with higher income go online, and these “media mavens” combine watching television with surfing the Internet. If Hispanic fans are visiting sport websites, it seems reasonable to assume they are also visiting professional sport league and team websites as well. Yet, for the most part, professional sport leagues and teams have not responded by providing content in Spanish. Is this because front office personnel do not know Hispanic fans are online or is it because resources (e.g., skilled staff, server space, or budget) have not been designated for this purpose? Perhaps sport managers are simply relying on previously employed strategies to reach Hispanic fans. Authors contend these initiatives are not enough; more should be done (Eros, 2002; Salazar, 2007). A coordinated effort across leagues to enhance Spanish language content on websites may be a meaningful step

toward reaching Hispanic fans.

Professional sport Internet sites were reviewed to determine if a toggle feature was available. Again, Major League Baseball and Major League Soccer were more likely than other leagues to have this feature and there was much variability across websites. Hispanics have the perception that a company’s English website is better than the Spanish language version (Mummert, 2007). Among professional sport websites, this perception seems to reflect the current state of affairs. When toggle features were available, the number of pages and depth of content per page in Spanish was much less than in English. The absence of a toggle feature is troublesome given the percent of Hispanics who report being Spanish language dominant has remained the same in recent years. If sport managers are to reach fans, they need to do so in an accessible, if not preferred, language. Further, retail studies report the importance of bilingual employees and signage and the need for employees to be knowledgeable about preferred products. Who better than league and team personnel or their designee, knowledgeable about current events and operations, to create the Spanish language web pages? Again, in their role as retailers, professional sport managers must do more to attract and retain these consumers.

Perhaps the issue of accessibility is most relevant in terms of Spanish language sales of tickets and merchandise. Major League Baseball and Major League Soccer, more so than other leagues, have Spanish language sales on league and team Internet sites. Again, there was a great deal of variability across team websites. Census figures indicated growth in the Hispanic population and a tendency to locate in metropolitan areas such that 49% of the population lives near at least one of 70 professional teams. Residential location combined with growth trends in participation, game attendance, and disposable income suggest now is the time to make purchasing tickets and merchandise more accessible to Spanish language dominant Hispanic fans.

Conclusion

Hispanics are gaining ground in middle class America. This group controls more disposable income than any other minority group and a high percentage are choosing to reside in or near areas with professional sport franchises. When polled, Hispanics report increased participation and game attendance as well as being a fan of professional sport leagues. Yet, little has been done to connect with this group via the Internet. Certainly, sport managers would agree that capturing this vast audience, with their accompanying economic clout, is an important step toward improving revenue, market share, and fan base. Given the nature of the Internet, one would expect people to continue to incorporate it into all areas of life. A coordinated approach to include more Spanish language into professional sport league and team websites will be a significant step toward reaching Hispanic fans.

Kimberly J. Bodey, EdD, is an assistant professor and sport management concentration coordinator in the Department of Recreation and Sport Management at Indiana State University. She has a research interest in organizational justice and policy development in sport organizations.

Lawrence W. Judge, PhD, is an assistant professor and coordinator of the graduate coaching education program in the

School of Physical Education, Sport, and Exercise Science at Ball State University. He serves as the undergraduate advisor for the Sport Administration program.

Marshall Steward, MA, is a graduate of the Department of Recreation and Sport Management at Indiana State University. He is interested in marketing and advertising in professional sport organizations.

Tamara Gobel, BS, is a graduate of the Sport Administration program at Ball State University. She is currently working in the field.

References

- Anonymous. (2007, January 22). Demographics: Hispanics – Sport avidity levels. *Street & Smith's SportsBusiness Journal*, p. 19.
- AOL/Roper Public Affairs Hispanic Cyberstudy. (2004, May 1). *Half of online Hispanics now have broadband at home*. Retrieved October 8, 2007, from <http://www.hispanicprwire.com/news.php?l=in&id=4491&cha=12>
- Ayala, N. (2007). Sports toss more than soft pitches for Latinos. *Adweek*, 48(24), 8.
- Cassidy, H. (2001). Look who's watching. *Brandweek*, 42(31), 18.
- comScore. (2003, March 17). *Hispanic internet users in U.S. now exceed the total online population of many major Spanish-speaking nations*. Retrieved October 8, 2007, from <http://www.comscore.com/press/release.asp?press=306>
- Demographics: Hispanics – Sport avidity levels. (2007, January 22). *Street & Smith's SportsBusiness Journal*, p. 19.
- Eros, A. (2002, May 13). Sports marketing needs Latino flavor. *Street & Smith's SportsBusiness Journal*, pp. 35-36.
- Fox, S., & Livingston, G. (2007). *Latinos online: Hispanics with lower levels of education and English proficiency remain largely disconnected from internet*. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center & Per Internet Project.
- Humphreys, J. M. (2004). The multicultural economy 2004: America's minority buying power. *Georgia Business and Economic Conditions*, 64(3), 1-27.
- Humphreys, J. M. (2006). The multicultural economy 2006. *Georgia Business and Economic Conditions*, 66(3), 1-14.
- King, B. (2007, January 22). Leagues explore ways to make a connection. *Street & Smith's SportsBusiness Journal*, p. 25.
- Mummert, H. (2007). Reaching Hispanics online: Multi-channel strategies for tapping into this underserved market. *Target Marketing*, 30(5), 51-52, 55.
- National Council of La Raza (2005). *United States fact sheet*. Retrieved October 8, 2007, from <http://www.nclr.org>
- Neilson NetRatings (2007). *Composition of viewership*. Retrieved October 8, 2007, from http://www.nielsen-netratings.com/resources.jsp?section=pr_
- Perkins, J. (2004). *Beyond bodegas: Developing a retail relationship with Hispanic consumers*. Ithica, NY: Paramount Marketing Publishing, Inc.
- Salazar, A. (2007, January 22). Keeping Hispanic outreach relevant, and keep it coming. *Street & Smith's SportsBusiness Journal*, pp. 26-27.
- Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (n.d.) *The Hispanic Market Report 2006*. Retrieved October 8, 2007, from <http://www.marketresearch.com/product/print/default.asp?g=1&productid=1259521>
- United States Census Bureau (n.d.). *2000 census data*. Retrieved October 8, 2007, from <http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html>
- United States Census Bureau – American Community Survey. (n.d.) *The American Community – Hispanics 2004*. Retrieved October 8, 2007, from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2007pubs/asc-03.pdf>
- United States Census Bureau – American Community Survey. (n.d.). *American Community Survey - 2006 (ACS)*. Retrieved October 8, 2007, from <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>
- Williamson, D. A. (2006). *Reaching Hispanic internet users*. Retrieved October 8, 2007, from <http://www.imediaconnection.com/content/9193.asp>
- Yahoo! Telemundo & Experian Simmons Research. (2007, March 28). *The 51 hour day? Yahoo! Telemundo research shows online U.S. Hispanics consume and adopt more media and technology than general population*. Retrieved October 8, 2007, from <http://www.hispanicprwire.com/print.php?l=in&id=8328> ■