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Beware: Univision Aims to Be a One-Stop Solution for Marketers

A New Internal Agency Offers Research, but How Objective Will It Be?

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Univision announced last week the launch of its new [Univision Agency](#), which the company says "will be responsible for all cross-channel promotions as well as research and creative services for clients and internal divisions." With a media empire of more than \$500 million, including broadcast, cable and radio properties,

Univision clearly wants to ensure its place in the growing Hispanic market as the one-stop solution for U.S. marketers.

Should we celebrate or mourn this initiative? Let's look at some pros and cons.

Several trends suggest that the timing couldn't be better. The sluggish economy has placed considerable strain on corporate budgets and limited spending on advertising campaigns and research projects. Large advertisers have been shifting some of their business slowly away from ethnic to general advertising agencies, so why should Univision not join the crowd?

Marketers may find it especially enticing to save their research budget for other expenses, like Univision media. And Univision should find it easy to meet the expectations of future corporate clients, whose cultural intelligence continues to slide, with the absence of multicultural content at U.S. academic institutions. How perfect is this?

Concern has emerged, however. The Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies stated that it was looking forward to continuing its partnership with Univision, but wanted to ensure that "the Univision Agency does not negate the use of Hispanic agencies." The association has reason to be concerned about losing business to the Univision Agency. In my experience with corporate-research clients, they sometimes prefer to side-step the need to engage a Hispanic advertising agency because media companies like Univision can offer a turnkey package that is simpler and more

affordable. This may be great for Univision, but not necessarily for Hispanic advertising agencies.

Overall, I am very skeptical about this new initiative for two reasons.

Lack of objectivity. Contrary to evidence from numerous independent research studies, Univision has been relentless in telling U.S. advertisers that Spanish was the best way to reach all Hispanics in the United States. Yet, in a reversal of this ideology, Univision is now in the process of introducing a television network in English, as its immigrant audiences are eroding.

Questionable talent. It is hard to imagine that the Univision Agency staff will be able to match the creative talents of the numerous Hispanic advertising agencies that have proven their value by their credentials and campaigns. While Univision may be able to recruit research staff with the right credentials, the staff likely will remain under pressure to produce promotional, not objective, research. Says Univision's press release: "This totally self-contained Agency will define the promotional priorities and drive the creative advertising strategy and execution for the entire Univision family of networks."

To marketers with limited advertising and research budgets, and perhaps lower standards in these two areas, the one-stop Univision Agency may be the perfect solution. I anticipate, however, that the quality of Hispanic research will take a step backward, as Univision continues to flood the marketplace with self-serving research. The Hispanic market industry is likely to become "ghetto-ized" as the Univision Agency expands its reach to marketers who are looking for the lowest budget to launch their Hispanic advertising campaigns. Indeed, there is little to celebrate about the new Univision Agency.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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