

Marketing Messages



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Marketing plans need to pay attention to Vancouver's growing Asian immigrant component

Vancouver is the most ethnically diverse city in Canada. According to the 2001 Canada Census, 36.9% of residents are members of a visible minority. Since 1981 Vancouver's population has grown by 700,000. According to David Baxter, demographer, much of our growth has been through immigration and that trend is likely to continue. 59% of Richmond residents, 49% of Vancouver residents, and 48% of Burnaby residents have neither English nor French as their mother tongue. Have you given much thought to what these statistics might mean to your marketing strategy? If you haven't, you should. This is the changing face of Vancouver.

The new immigrant Chinese market in Vancouver is appealing to many marketers because of its relative affluence and liking of luxury items. But says *Victor Chan, Principle at The Chinese Agency*, "The Chinese market in Vancouver is very diverse. You need to understand the differences and nuances in cultural background to truly be effective in targeting this group." 53% of Chinese in Vancouver are from Hong Kong, 18% are from Taiwan and 25% are from Mainland China. While the Hong Kong group is significant in numbers, the number of immigrants from there has declined since 1998, while immigration from Mainland China has increased. Most Hong Kong immigrants speak Cantonese, but Mandarin is the dominant language of newcomers from China and Taiwan. Not only do these immigrant groups speak a different language, but they also have different consumption habits and preferences for North American culture. Hong Kong immigrants tend to have had more first hand experience with western culture, while Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese have received most of their exposure to the west through movies. These differences become important when adapting or choosing creative that will connect with the target audience. Notes Chan, "We work with many ad agencies to transcreate their English ads to Chinese. We've done work for **BMW Vancouver, Richmond Center, BC Honda Dealers, Northshore Auto Mall, The Volvo Dealer Group and Cathay Pacific**. We also create ad campaigns from scratch for many clients. Being familiar with the market, we are frequently asked for our opinion on the suitability of creative." While some clients clearly understand the importance of versioning their ads, others do not. Chan notes, "I watched an ad for Rona in 100% English being aired on **Fairchild TV**. Fairchild features programming for a Cantonese speaking population. Just what were they thinking?" While Fairchild TV targets the Cantonese market exclusively and Talentvision TV targets the Mandarin market, they are both subscription based TV. **Channel M**, launched in June 2003, is a relative newcomer, and is available on basic cable. In addition to strong news programming in Cantonese, Mandarin and Punjabi, the station also reflects a diverse mix of cultural programming. *Bruce Hamlen, VP Sales at Channel M* notes, "Our Punjabi news broadcast is watched by 70% of the South Asian community in Vancouver. 50% of Vancouver's Mandarin community watches our Mandarin news broadcast and we capture 45% of Vancouver's Cantonese speaking community with our Cantonese news broadcast." While many immigrants speak English, when given the option the majority prefer to communicate in their mother tongue. This was the finding of an April 2004 **Ipsos Reid** study commissioned by Channel M. Hamlen notes that advertisers such as Walmart and Rogers Wireless have created specific creative for the Chinese and South Asian target market, while companies such as **Telus, Chrysler, The Brick and KFC** have run English style ads versioned in various languages.

Of course TV is not the only way to reach the Asian market. **Ming Pao, Sing Tao and World Journal** daily newspapers reach a significant Chinese market through print media. And **1470AM, 1320AM and 96.1FM** radio stations target the Chinese market exclusively. Each of these media has attracted mainstream English advertisers.

And it's not just the utilization of paid media being used to reach out to this market. Since the 2003/04 season, **Vancouver Opera** has printed the synopsis for each opera in Chinese characters, which can be read by those who speak both Cantonese and Mandarin. "We've just finished our 5th opera printing the program this way", notes *Jonathan Harrison, Marketing Director for Vancouver Opera*. "It's part of our Pacific Rim initiative, and an attempt to reach out to this significant community in the Lower Mainland."

Of course ancestry and language are a useful foundation for marketing strategy, but they are not the only things to consider. And it is not enough to convert the characters in a print ad or voice over a broadcast campaign. Just like you can not define an English audience by language alone, to reach the Asian community you must consider the target market's age, income, education, values, interests, lifestyle, beliefs and aspirations along with the cultural and language foundation of the market.

The 2001 **Canadian Census** reported the Chinese population in Vancouver as 342,665 or 17.2% of the population. And according to the **AC Neilson 2000 Vancouver Chinese Media Index**, over 286,990 people in the lower mainland speak Chinese at home. Depending on what you sell, this could be a market of significance when planning your marketing strategy.

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