Why Brands Should Welcome the Term Latinx

Latinx is a forward-thinking term, inclusive, appropriate and emblematic of the way younger generations expect brands to talk to them. So why is it receiving backlash of late? Why are some brands ignoring it?

It’s not widely adopted—yet

Several articles have been published as of late that cites research or references that Latinx isn’t a widely accepted way to refer to people. This misses the point a bit, as Latinx is less of a consumer-facing term than a term that specifically refers to a gender-neutral way to segment a group for marketing or research purposes.

It’s not political

The term Latinx is not a way to politicize or push the agenda of gender or LGBTQ+ rights. With the understanding that people and how we define ourselves in terms of gender have already changed, we can see that the concept of Latinx simply acknowledges that.

It is a conversation starter

Terms like Latinx are often great tools for starting conversations that although they may feel uncomfortable at first are definitely worth having. By referring to this term in marketing presentations, agency materials, my writing or speaking engagements, I have been able to discuss with many different types of people what the implications are of speaking a romance language that always defers to the male

perspective when in plural. It has also allowed for frank conversations about the importance of belonging in today's world. The term Latinx is a way to allow more people to feel like they are part of the conversation.

It's not a millennial or Gen Z specific term

I've heard and also been asked quite a bit whether the term is only for millennials, Gen Zers or young people. The reality is that although the younger generations are certainly at the forefront in terms of demanding equality and are therefore the ones who are pushing for the use of gender-neutral terminology, this word is not just about them or their peers. In the same way that it is non-gender specific, it's also not age-specific. It refers to anyone of Latin American descent, in the singular form or plural.

It is a powerful way for a brand to demonstrate they stand with today's most active generations

Consumers who demand diverse considerations and equality will absolutely pay attention to how brands communicate—with them, their peers and their loved ones. Again, this doesn't mean that your brand should be using Latinx in consumer-facing materials, and we certainly don't recommend that to our clients. We recommend that they look at their copy, casting decisions and other factors to ensure they're actively showcasing powerful cues related to diversity and inclusion. This includes not using heteronormative or male-focused language exclusively in their communications

It isn't free of controversy and confusion

These types of terms and the belief systems behind them seem to strike a nerve and drive strong opinions from multiple sides. In the case of Latinx, you have the purists, among them linguists, who simply don't believe language has gender and who also typically feel that using a term like Latinx goes against the rules of language. There are those who feel that

progressive agendas have gone too far in their beliefs that everything must be inclusive and who therefore think that the term Latinx is both unnecessary and annoying. On the other side, some believe strongly in the need for this type of more inclusive language and who feel that the belief system it imparts is more important than a need to comply with historical language norms. And of course, there are those who just don't get how to pronounce it.

It is not likely to go away

Let's be honest—the term itself might drop out of favor. Latinx may be replaced by Latines or something completely different in the near future. But the need for inclusive language and also a real, profound change in the way society speaks to and about us will remain because the majority of us who devote our lives to creating content and buying into the system of products and brands want this more inclusive version of the world to gain steam. So even if the term Latinx makes you cringe, it's a good idea to think about how you or your brand can learn from all that's behind the term.

It's not the only way to refer to people in a nonbinary, gender-neutral way

Although Latinx has caught on the most in the United States, the reality is that in Latin America and elsewhere, people are using Latin@s or Latines as options for gender neutrality. So yes, there's more than one way to approach this.

Join Adweek for a live discussion with Hispanic and Latinx leaders in marketing and advertising who will dive deep into the community's biggest challenges and opportunities in today's environment. Each leader will share their honest perspectives about hidden bias, overcoming false perceptions, leading under unique circumstances and actions we can all take to accelerate systemic change. The Hispanic and Latinx Summit — A Virtual Event on Aug. 12, noon ET.

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