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The Ethnic Media in America: The Giant Hidden in Plain Sight

Conducted by Bendixen & Associates
For New California Media (NCM)
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Executive Summary

New California Media (NCM)
www.ncmonline.com
Tel: 415-503-4170
Fax: 415-503-0970

This executive summary summarizes the findings of the first-ever comprehensive survey of ethnic American adults on their media usage. The poll surveyed 1895 African American, Hispanic, Asian American, Arab American and Native American adults in the United States, representing some 64 million ethnics overall. The interviews were conducted in 10 languages: Arabic, Cantonese, English, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. 29 MILLION ETHNIC ADULTS ARE “PRIMARY CONSUMERS” OF ETHNIC MEDIA

The study reveals the striking impact of ethnic media in the United States. Forty-five percent of all African American, Hispanic, Asian American, Native American and Arab American adults prefer ethnic television, radio or newspapers to their mainstream counterparts. These "primary consumers" also indicated that they access ethnic media frequently. This means that a staggering 29 million adults (45 percent of the 64 million ethnic adults studied), or a full 13 percent of the entire adult population of the United States, prefer ethnic media to mainstream television, radio or newspapers. More than half of all Hispanic adults are primary consumers of ethnic media. Approximately two-fifths of African Americans and Arab Americans and a fourth of Asian Americans and Native Americans prefer ethnic media to mainstream media.

2. ETHNIC MEDIA REACH 51 MILLION ADULTS – ONE FOURTH – OF THE ENTIRE U.S. POPULATION

In addition to the 29 million people classified as "primary consumers," ethnic media reaches another 22 million ethnic adults on a regular basis. These adults prefer mainstream media, but they also access ethnic television, radio, newspapers or websites on a regular basis. Therefore, our study indicates that the overwhelming majority (80 percent) of the ethnic populations studied (64 million adults) is reached by ethnic media on a regular basis. The 51 million Americans reached by ethnic media represent about a quarter of the entire U.S. adult population.

3. GROUPS SURVEYED SHOW DIFFERENT CHARACTERISTICS IN ETHNIC MEDIA CONSUMPTION

Hispanics:

The reach of Spanish-language media is almost universal in Hispanic America. Eighty-seven percent of all Hispanic adults access Spanish-language television, radio or newspapers on a regular basis. The success of the major television networks (Univision and Telemundo) is well documented but this study also indicates that Spanish-language radio and newspapers are rapidly increasing their penetration in this market. For example, one-fifth of Hispanic adults report that they now prefer Spanish-language newspapers to their English-language counterparts. There are only small variations in the media usage of the Hispanic groups studied but the poll indicates that Cubans watch Spanish-language television and listen to Spanish-language radio more often than the other Hispanic groups studied while a higher percentage of South Americans read Spanish-language newspapers. This study also reveals that Hispanics have very low access (24 percent) to the Internet.

African Americans:

African American radio - stations that focus on African American themes and content - is the most popular ethnic medium among Blacks in the United States. A substantial majority of African American adults listen to ethnic radio stations on a regular basis. African Americans that are 40 years of age or older and those with annual incomes above \$40,000 listen to ethnic radio more often than those that are younger or poorer. It should also be noted that the reach of African American newspapers is impressive. Even though African Americans read mainstream daily newspapers more often, African American newspapers - mostly weeklies - reach one quarter of all African Americans. Almost half of African American adults have access to the Internet.

Asian Americans:

Asian American newspapers reach a substantial percentage of the nine million Asian American adults in the United States. More than half of all Chinese and Vietnamese adults read an ethnic newspaper on a regular basis. Nearly half of all Korean adults also read a Korean newspaper frequently. The reach of Filipino newspapers is smaller but still significant – one-fifth of the adults in this group read a Filipino newspaper a few times a month or more. The poll also indicates that Korean and Chinese television stations are rapidly increasing in popularity - a quarter of those interviewed reported watching Korean and Chinese-language television more often than English-language television. Access to the Internet is very high (67 percent) among all Asian Americans and half of them prefer ethnic websites to mainstream websites. Asian Indian adults access the Internet more often than other Asians.

Arab Americans:

The Arabic media reaches three-quarters of all Arab Americans. Television is the preferred medium. Internet access among Arab Americans is higher than it is for any other ethnic group studied. Three-quarters of all Arab American adults have access to the Internet and a majority of them visit Arabic websites.

Native Americans:

One-fifth of all Native Americans are primary consumers of ethnic newspapers. They read tribal newspapers more often than their mainstream counterparts. Native American television and radio stations have much smaller audiences. Nearly half of the Native American adult population has access to the Internet and 16 percent access websites with a focus on Native American issues.

4. OTHER MAJOR FINDINGS

** Even though the ethnic populations studied tend to rely on the ethnic media for information about their communities and countries of origin, they prefer the mainstream media when it comes to information about politics and the U. S. government.

** Primary consumers of ethnic media differed from consumers of mainstream media in their voting patterns in the 2004 presidential election. Support for President George W. Bush was stronger among primary consumers of Spanish-language television and Asian newspapers than among primary consumers of mainstream media. Senator John Kerry received greater support among primary consumers of African American radio than among primary consumers of mainstream radio.

** Four of the five ethnic groups studied trust CNN more than Fox News to deliver accurate news and information. Arab Americans and Asian Americans prefer CNN to Fox News by more than a 4 to 1 ratio. Hispanics (by 2 to 1) and African Americans (by 4 to 3) also trust CNN more but by smaller ratios. Native Americans are evenly divided in their opinion about the objectivity of two major cable news networks.

** The quality of education is the most important concern of Hispanics, African Americans, Arab Americans and Native Americans. The economy is the most important issue among Asian Americans. Only one-tenth of ethnic adults consider the war in Iraq or terrorism as the "issue of greatest concern."

** The reach of the "national" newspapers among ethnic adults is limited. Only about 5 percent of Hispanics read USA Today, the New York Times or the Wall Street Journal frequently. One-tenth of Asian and Arab Americans and one-seventh of African Americans reported reading one of the "national" newspapers every day or a few times a week.

METHODOLOGY

The findings of this report are based on a poll of 1895 African American, Hispanic, Asian American, Arab American and Native American adults in the United States. The total sample is comprised of 14 sub-samples, which break down as follows:

<i>Sample group</i>	<i>Sample size</i>
African American	300
Arab American	100
Asian American (Total)	601
Asian Indian	100
Chinese	100
Filipino	100
Japanese	100
Korean	100
Vietnamese	101
Hispanic (Total)	780
Central American	102
Cuban	111
Mexican	316
Puerto Rican	118
South American	101
Native American	114

Each of the samples is representative of that specific ethnic population in the United States. Interviews for the study were conducted in the following languages: Arabic, Cantonese, English, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. All of the interviews were conducted between April 26th and May 26th of 2005. The margin of error varies between ± 3.5 and ± 9.9 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence depending on the size of the sample. The polling project was commissioned by New California Media in partnership with The Center for American Progress and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund and was designed and coordinated by Bendixen & Associates of Coral Gables, Florida.