



## Case Study:

Ad Council: Mask-wearing Public Service Campaign

Year: 2021



This case study was prepared for the client Ad Council to encourage Hispanics to wear a mask by introducing Mexican wrestling masks. It was developed and designed by d exposito & Partners. In the Pro-Bono category, it won silver.

## **Executive Summary:**

Soon after the COVID-19 pandemic began impacting the U.S., several news outlets reported that Hispanics and African Americans were being impacted in significantly greater ways than other groups. By mid-April, several states announced plans to reopen by May 15, with 9 of those states accounting for 85% of the total U.S. Hispanic population.

Our core target was Hispanic adults living in working-class families composed of essential workers. They were feeling the financial set-back caused by the pandemic and grappling to adjust to a new way of life. But these were not the first struggles experienced by these families, and they had one phrase for how they approached such challenges in life, “seguimos en la lucha” (we continue in the fight/struggle). We leveraged the popular sport of Lucha Libre (Mexican wrestling), where competitors wear masks to hide their true identity and the loser has to remove his/her mask. We created a PSA campaign based on Lucha Libre and the fact that not wearing a mask would contribute to everyone losing the fight against COVID-19. The campaign was adopted by the Ad Council and aired nationwide, across 156 DMAs, including all of the top 10 in total population.

## **Definition of your challenge:**

Soon after the COVID-19 pandemic began impacting the U.S., several news outlets reported that Hispanics and African Americans were being impacted in significantly greater ways than other groups. Workers from these communities were more likely to be deemed as “essential,” having to leave their homes and expose themselves to the virus. By early April, these communities were experiencing significantly more cases and twice the death rate.

In mid-April several states announced plans to reopen by May 15, with 9 of those states accounting for 85% of the total U.S. Hispanic population. While there was a barrage of messaging from the PSAs and commercials with information and guidance, messages in Spanish were practically non-existent. People of all backgrounds were feeling a strong sense of fatigue, and given the politicization of the pandemic, many felt totally confused and did not know who or what to believe. It was clear that the Hispanic community could be hit even harder unless the spread of the virus was slowed by precautions like mask-wearing. As such, the goal of this campaign was to connect with the Hispanic community to underscore the importance of following CDC protocols and keep their families safe.

## **The Key Insight & Strategy:**

Our core target was Hispanic adults, especially those living in working-class families composed of essential workers that were not strictly following CDC protocols. They tend to live in multigenerational families in densely populated urban neighborhoods, which have been the hardest hit by COVID. While smartphone ownership and usage were nearly universal, there was still a significant divide regarding PC ownership and access to Wi-Fi. These barriers added to already high stress levels since at-home learning and many duties in daily life, such as shopping, applying for unemployment or seeking assistance, would still need to be done in-person. Families everywhere were feeling the financial set-back caused by the pandemic, and Hispanics were particularly challenged as a result of being less able to work from home and more likely to see their finances negatively impacted by COVID-19 due to lost business and layoffs.

As such, they felt a particular eagerness to get back to normalcy so that they could make a living and regain a sense of financial security without the threat of putting their families' lives in jeopardy. While no one has experienced anything like the repercussions of COVID-19, Hispanics have had to confront catastrophic challenges before, whether it be economic crises in their countries of origin or devastating natural disasters. In every case, Hispanics felt a sense of perseverance and resilience that was fueled by three compelling motivations inherent to Latino culture: the support of family, faith in a greater power and the power of acting as a community. These motivators

transcend to the challenges faced in daily life, and this culturally ingrained push to “keep on keeping on” is summed up in one widely used Spanish phrase, “sigue en la lucha” (stay in the fight/struggle). This cultural insight became the foundation of the campaign strategy, serving as a rallying cry to encourage families to continue protecting themselves.

### Execution:

From an executional perspective, we leveraged the popular sport of Lucha Libre (Mexican wrestling), where competitors wear masks to hide their true identity. At the end of each match, the loser must remove his/her mask. This was a perfect analogy and another cultural insight to deliver the campaign message, “the one who loses the mask loses the fight,” in a way that was upbeat, empowering and deeply resonated with the culture.

The “Lucha vs El Virus” campaign hit the market with a soft launch on May 20, with three augmented reality filters for use on Instagram and Facebook. Users were invited to take photos or videos of themselves using the filters and to share on their social media pages. The campaign fully launched the week of June 8th with a :30/:15 television PSA, online video (:06, :10 and :15 lengths) and display banners. To reach English-speaking Hispanics and given the popularity of Mexican wrestling in mainstream U.S. culture, all elements had Spanish and English versions. The agency funded and produced the campaign remotely and pitched it to the Ad Council, who adopted it to make it available to their media partners.



### Results:

The TV PSAs aired on several broadcast and cable networks, including Univision, Telemundo, NBC, CNN, CNN En Español, EstrellaTV, and Discovery En Español. Additionally, 205 local stations aired the PSAs in 156 DMAs, including all top 10 DMAs. Television deliveries generated 13.5 million impressions from June 9 to Aug 30, with

approximately 40% being delivered through English-language media outlets. Online video deliveries reached over 8.4 million users with video completions of over 1.5 million, generating over 14 million impressions.

**Industry Impact:**

This case shows that effectively connecting with and motivating the Hispanic consumer audience is critical to realizing overall objectives due to the impact Hispanic creative can have on the broader U.S. macrocosm. The Hispanic community and other communities of color were deemed as essential and the hardest hit related to the pandemic-and therefore moving this audience was key to being able to realize broader positive impact related to the COVID-19 pandemic. For that reason, this case helps showcase the importance of Hispanic advertising that is created with unique Hispanic insights and original Hispanic creative, even with limitations related to budgets and production, especially since this work aired equally in Spanish-language and English-language outlets across DMAs of all sizes.