

# MULTICULTURAL MARKETING BRINGS DOLLARS

## Fairs targeting Hispanics, Asians and LGBTQ Communities

by Brad Weissberg

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Text Size

*"Out At The Fair", San Diego County Fair, Del Mar, Calif.*

REPORTING FROM RENO, NEV. - Look at the numbers. In the U.S., Hispanics make up 16.3 percent of the population. Asians make up five percent. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) make up anywhere from 3.5 percent to 11 percent of the population.

In San Diego, home of the San Diego County Fair (SDCF), the populations of these groups are even higher. Seventeen percent of the population is Hispanic. Eleven percent is Asian. The LGBTQ population is not counted by the census, but based on San Diego having the largest LGBTQ Chamber of Commerce in California and a thriving gay community, it's a good bet that San Diego has a higher percentage of that population than a rural area.



*Luis Valdivia, multicultural marketing specialist, San Diego County Fair, Del Mar, Calif.; Caleb Wilkins, William Zakrajshek and Daniel Castaneda all with Out At The Fair.*

"Anytime your population numbers are above the national average, it's a positive red-flag," said Luis Valdivia, multicultural marketing specialist, San Diego County Fair, Del Mar, Calif. "That means this is a target market you need to be aware of."

"The Asian community is the fastest growing market in San Diego," he said. "The per capita income of Asians is second only to the white population."

The SDCF went after the Hispanic market as early as 1994. To capture this market, the San Diego County Fair created "Día de la Familia" (Day of the Family) and started programming Hispanic concerts on the grandstand. "Data showed us that Hispanics visited the fair three-generations at a time, so we started to create content for the whole family," said Valdivia.

Partnerships are vital to the success of a multicultural campaign.

"We partner with a local Hispanic radio station," he said. "They know what's hot and what we should program. A week prior to each concert the radio station will blanket the airwaves with, 'come to the fair this Sunday.' The concerts are 99 percent sold out every week." The concerts are a mix of Mexican regional

music; rock en Español and pop music.

SDCF also has a strong partnership with Entravision, who own both Telemundo and Univision. “They do a lot of promotion on their TV stations and it’s highly effective,” said Valdivia.

The concerts were such a success, SDCF expanded the Hispanic outreach and created Fiesta Village, which has authentic Mexican artisans creating handmade art on the premises.

With all these Hispanic people coming, SDCF now has the ability to pitch to sponsors. Dos Equis beer sponsors Fiesta Village. “We do a full Hispanic marketing campaign,” he said. “Whatever our theme is each year we translate to Spanish. We advertise on print, radio and TV. In the Spanish ads, the Spanish entertainment lineup is placed on top.”

SDCF is adding a mariachi festival and a tequila festival for next year’s fair. “The goal is to have new things every year just like we do for the rest of the fair,” he said.

## HIRE A CONSULTANT

SDCF’s Asian outreach is a work in progress. “We’re just diving into this market,” said Valdivia. “One thing we’ve learned already is that if you don’t have someone on your staff from the group you are trying to reach, then hire a contractor. You can’t do this yourself.”

In SDCF’s case, they hired a Filipino consultant. “We’re bringing together a wide number of different Asian cultures. There’s Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and many more. One thing we learned already was not to separate the different Asian cultures; program them all together.”

## OUT AT THE FAIR



*Dunk A Hunk, Out At The Fair, San Diego County Fair, Del Mar, Calif.*

There’s an estimated \$9 billion spent by the gay community each year.

SDCF’s LGBTQ outreach started by accident in 2012. A number of gay men showed up and ‘checked in’ on social media, which attracted other gays to the fair that day.

SDCF saw an opportunity and decided to make it an official day in 2014. They dubbed it “Out At The Fair.”

“It was huge success,” he said. “We planned that year’s event around (out gay artist) Adam Lambert’s concert but when we looked at the grandstand it was filled with Cougars (middle-aged women), and still, the ‘Out At The Fair’ plaza was filled. You don’t need a gay artist to anchor the event.”

There's daytime entertainment, booths for local nonprofits and merchandise sales. "We sell a different colored version of our tank top each year to go along with the rainbow flag," he said.



*Diva Drop, Out At The Fair, San Diego County Fair, Del Mar, Calif.*

Events include 'Diva Drop' where SDCF sends three drag queens up to the bungee jump and push them off and 'Dunk A Hunk' which is where fairgoers can throw a ball at a target and soak a hot guy.

"This is a family branded event and nothing to be scared of," explained Valdivia. "It's all good, clean, innocent fun. We enforce a strict dress code of tank tops and shorts."

At night the Out At the Fair Plaza turns into a 21-plus event.

In 2014, SDCF won first place for community outreach at Western Fair Association's (WFA) annual awards and in 2016 SDCF won best overall campaign at International Association of Fairs and Expositions' (IAFE) awards.

## TRANSGENDER BATHROOMS



*All-Gender bathroom sign at San Diego County Fair, Del Mar, Calif.*

One place the SDCF learned needed improvement was their bathrooms. "We only had gender-specific bathrooms the first few years," said Valdivia. "The community asked us to change this."

In 2016 SDCF introduced gender-neutral bathrooms. "We turned a men-only multistall bathroom and a women-only multistall bathroom into All-Gender bathrooms," he explained. "Don't be afraid. There are people from all genders in these bathrooms and it works fine; we haven't had a single issue with it. No hate mail, no backlash."

"There's no need to be scared of any of this," said Valdivia. "We are a community fair and we need to reach all of the community. Out At the Fair takes up just a portion of the fairgrounds and the rest of the fair goes on as usual. Many people wander through the Out At The Fair section and don't even realize what's going on."

Valdivia said he is hoping to export "Out At The Fair" to other fairs and encourages fairs around the country to try it out.

"It's never a bad idea to be inclusive and get more people passing through the fair gate," said Valdivia. "As the populations of our fairs change, we as an industry need to change with them."

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