

# Urban Trends

A quarterly newsletter published by



## Why Do Urban Youth Set The Cultural Trends?

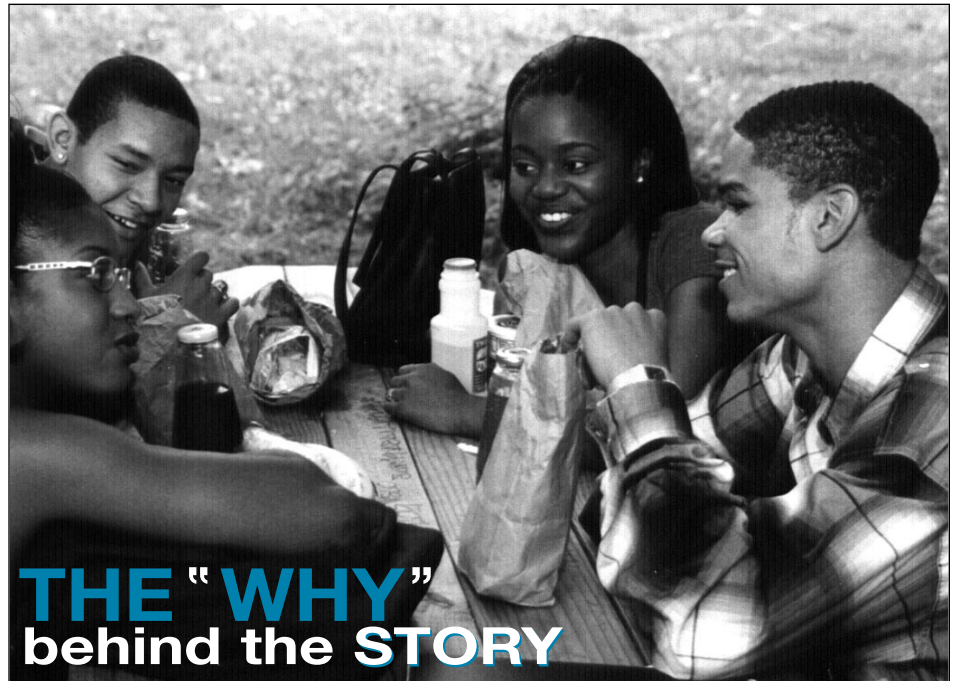
In a continuing effort to share what we have learned about today's urban youth, in this issue we provide practical information on how to reach this increasingly influential market.

In our first issue, we featured an article which outlined some of the earmarks of urban youth culture and the value system it embraces. In the last issue, we examined some of the unhealthy influences and environmental factors which help explain how those values came to be. We detailed eight environmental variables which provide the "why behind the story."

We believe that, as with any potential target audience, it is crucial to "get inside the heads" of urban youth before you can successfully market to them. That is why our campaign design process includes looking at both the traditional, internal culture and the external variables which impact young people in America's cities.

The '90s have seen the development of a vast, seemingly singular youth market that is driven by urban youth, specifically low-income African Americans. More and more we see the styles, music and lingo of urban youth reflected in mainstream advertising, marketing and life. Demographics alone don't tell the story of the disproportionate influence this group has on purchasing and social issues both here in this country and abroad.

Urban youth are a powerful consumer market. They make a big impact in two ways. Based on their relative market size, they disproportionately influence entertainment consumption patterns in this country. While African Americans make up about 13% of the nation's total population, they buy 25% of the movie theater tickets sold. In addition, as trendsetters for larger mainstream markets, they strongly influence buying patterns among teens across the spectrum. For example, rap music, was born in America's toughest inner-cities, and continues to be created overwhelmingly by urban African American youth; yet 3 out of every 4 CDs sold are purchased by suburban white youth.



### THE "WHY" behind the STORY

Teens of all cultures, who are innately rebellious, can relate to the angst, frustrations and values of urban youth culture. Whether they live in the mall-centered suburbs or small towns in rural America, the lives of many teens are touched by difficulties: the break-up of nuclear families, violence, drug, alcohol and child abuse, racism, AIDS and declining options for educational and financial success. These non-urban youth look at the environment that their urban counterparts must survive in, and can feel a similar struggle, in emotion, if not in their experiences.

As new technologies have allowed American media to be exported all over the world, what goes on in our inner-cities is now exposed internationally. That exposure to hip-hop culture, music and fashion, helps explain the worldwide popularity of ethnic music (rap, reggae and salsa) and the fascination with Black urban culture. Urban youth originate new styles and trends that dominate youth culture all over the globe. For many product categories and social issues, this audience truly defines "cool." If your message hits the mark for this audience, it will greatly increase your chance of broadening your appeal to a

much wider audience.

Savvy marketers at companies such as Pepsi, New Line Cinema and Nike are effectively using edgy, urban images, styles and sensibilities to pull in this market. They have been able to depict their brands as real, relevant and respectful of urban youth culture. What do you need to do, in order to repeat their successes?

A few general tips:

1. Use scenarios which feature the experiences of the "average" youth. For example, campaigns which show characters engaged in activities on college campuses will leave behind a substantial number of youth, for whom the post-high school education is either an unfulfilled dream or seen as a waste of time. Yet, most young people have attended high school. Even those who have gone on to college remember what their high school days were like. By finding the common denominator, which reflects the lives of both the regular guy/working class and the upwardly mobile, you have increased your chances for success.

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# From The Editor

Greetings, and thanks for your continued support of UrbanTrends! We hope that you enjoy this issue; we enjoyed bringing it to you.

UrbanTrends is moving aggressively to respond to your interests and needs, while continuing to grow as a publication. The latest technology will help us continue to serve you better. Starting with the next issue, an online edition of UrbanTrends will be available through MEE's web site, [www.meeproductions.com](http://www.meeproductions.com). The online edition will allow you access to the extended-versions of all the great articles published in UrbanTrends issues, along with archives of past issues and links to related web sites referenced in our work. Subscription holders will receive the password to access the online edition imbedded in the hard copy version, which will continue to be delivered. Two great ways to access "news you can use!" What more can you ask?

We received some calls about an article we felt was a health concern regarding our young people in the last issue. I would like to clarify our position. The article, which outlined excessive sugar consumption as a health risk for young people, was intended to highlight the importance of parental involvement and control in the lives of all youth -but especially low-income, urban youth. This is a theme that you will find presented in many of MEE's published materials. Many of our societal concerns for our youth are a direct result of the neglect of overburdened parents, many of which can not afford to or are not able to be home raising their children full-time.

The article was not designed to deal with the perceived danger of excessive consumption of any substance. Sugar is a good and valuable commodity found in many products, but in excess, it, like any other enjoyable product, is not healthy. For the purposes of our discussion, any other enjoyable substance could have been substituted for "sugar" because the focus of the article was the lack of adult and parental control in the lives of the youth population. I hope this clears up any confusion.

Thank you for your support and keep giving us your feedback..

Sincerely,



Ivan J. Juzang  
President

## Cultural Trends (continued)

2. Focus on relationships, especially intimate ones. As more young people become disenchanted with society in general, they focus their attention on the "people they can count on" -- their friends, their boyfriends/girlfriends and family.
3. Create campaigns by and for youth of color. Today's youth want to see themselves and their lives reflected in messages intended for them. Include the "insider's" perspective, provided by youth themselves, when devising communication strategies.
4. Use the music and high energy production that appeals to youth. Music remains a universal language for communicating with young people.
5. Create a consistent, positive corporate presence in the community. No matter how many snazzy, creative national ads you run, your product and company won't be seen as authentic unless it touches youth in the communities where they live. Grassroots activities and sponsorship of community programs create an ongoing sense of goodwill and "buy-in."

**Conclusion:** These tips are first steps in the right direction. However, because we believe in effective, yet socially-responsible marketing, we must include this caveat: don't take this group for granted or your efforts will backfire. Since they are already suspicious of mainstream media messages, and are savvy enough to see through attempts to co-opt their culture, without careful research and preparation on your part, a botched campaign could leave you in a worse position than when you started. Authenticity and respect for the culture are keys to success in reaching this audience. Anything less will be rejected out of hand.

**In Japan, they're bouncing to hip-hop music at health clubs and partying all night to rhythm and blues at the Soul Train Cafe'. Women are curling their hair into Afro-style haircuts - called "wafferu" hair - while their boyfriends are growing goatees or going to tanning rooms to darken their complexions. Suddenly Black is very, very beautiful for some of Tokyo's trendiest youth.**  
*(Philadelphia Inquirer)*

UT

## The Evolution of Hip-Hop: Capitalizing on Movies

Hip-hop culture, embracing the language, culture, fashion, hairstyles, and worldview of a generation of urban youth, is consistently expanding its influence.

Witness this year's Grammy Awards, where for the first time, a hip-hop artist, Lauryn Hill, won the ceremony's highest prize, "Album of the Year." She has also been featured on the covers of at least five mainstream national magazines this year.

Although hip-hop is commonly linked in people's minds to the music industry, MEE's research has shown that hip-hop culture and music are having a significant impact across the board. Fashion, advertising, and particularly movies (with the emphasis on their accompanying soundtracks) are just three of the areas that have been significantly influenced by hip-hop culture and music.

Several hip-hop artists have expanded beyond music into film acting, including

Ice Cube, Will Smith, and Queen Latifah. Sean "Puffy" Combs was interviewed about the creation and maintenance of his entrepreneurial empire in the October, 1998 edition of Forbes magazine, a bastion of mainstream capitalism. In addition, a new generation of young, African American directors, including F. Gary Grey, John Singleton, and the Hughes Brothers, maintain a powerful voice in today's movies. These directors have "much props" among today's urban youth that walk into movie theaters expecting to see their lives reflected on the big screen.

In another area of influence, many of the moguls of hip-hop music have now spread into other areas of the entertainment industry, bringing their worldviews and urban credibility with them. For example, Russell Simmons, founder of Def Jam Records, owns an advertising agency (Rush Communications) and apparel company (Phat Farm), and has been producing movies for over 5 years. No Limit Entertainment, rapper/producer Master

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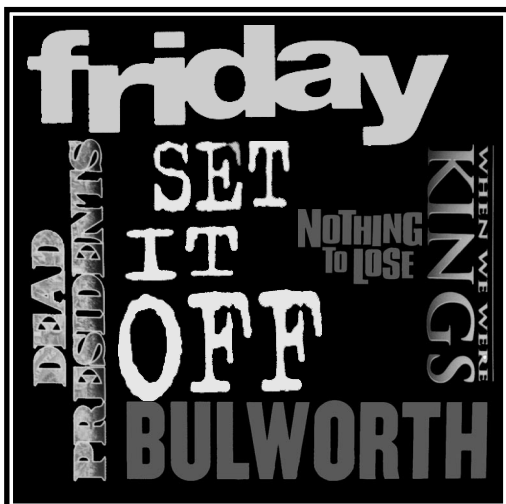
## HIP HOP & MOVIES (continued)

P's motion picture company, is financing its own films, having done \$100 million in sales in 1997 alone. Since its music division sold over 15 million records last year, it's considered to have a built-in fan base in the hip-hop market.

Urban youth are a big part of the revenue stream for the movie industry. MEE's research shows that urban youth go to the movies almost every week, and that they are also big consumers of movie rentals. Overall, African Americans make up only 13% of the population, but by some accounts, represent \$9.5 billion a year in ticket sales.

Because of its insider's knowledge about the lives of urban youth, MEE has served a select group of film companies seeking to market their movies to this audience. Since 1993, MEE has provided market research (focus group testing of ads and movie rough-cuts); designed movie trailers and print advertising; and helped to promote some of the most profitable Black films of this decade (including *Menace II Society*, *Friday*, *Jason's Lyric*, and *Dead Presidents*). Marketers must realize that movies embracing hip-hop culture and the marketing opportunities they provide are particularly powerful marketing tools when used correctly. For African Americans, movies possess the most credibility as a media channel, when compared to television, radio, and print. In addition, unlike just a generation ago, the opportunities for repetitive viewing are quite numerous. Movies now go from the big screen at the movie theater, to pay-per-view cable television, to rental movies, to regular cable, and then to broadcast television.

UT



Product placement in movies is a very effective way of marketing to African Americans. This tool provides repeated national exposure for the duration of the movie cycle, while practically guaranteeing that the intended target market is reached. One apparel company has already seen the wisdom of this option. In an effort to reconnect with 15-to-24-year-olds that have increasingly turned to other labels, Levi's entered into an agreement with MGM studios for the movie "The Mod Squad." The agreement includes a line of clothes based on the movie. In addition, Levi's will outfit the main actors in the movie in hopes to attract teen interest.

*(American Demographics)*

At this year's Grammy Awards, hip-hop musician Lauryn Hill won five Grammys, a record for a female artist. Most notably, Hill's "album of the year" award was the first of its kind for a hip-hop album.

*(Associated Press)*

According to the Recording Industry Association of America, rap alone accounts for about 10 percent of the sales in the \$12 billion record industry. Moreover, hip-hop music and its rap component have a wonderful spin-off power. Though mostly African American men perform rap music, young White males buy more than half of the records. The "crossover" trend spans further than the music scene. Now the connection between the hip-hop scene and the apparel styles is closer than ever. Hip-hop fashions generate revenues between \$750 million and \$1 billion a year - and are growing. As one executive put it: "Kids look at TV now to see how low-income urban kids wear their clothes, so they can wear theirs accordingly."

*(Emerge)*

Why might movie companies soon be able to get rid of their costume budgets? Because deals with apparel manufacturers keep proliferating. Recently two feature films and a TV show have lined up tie-in deals with clothing companies that live and die by teen consumers. The intent of these tie-in deals is to provide added exposure for the movies, while delivering the critical buzz needed to keep brands hot in the eyes of the most fickle of markets - the lucrative, teen market. Levi's, J. Crew, and Tommy Hilfiger are examples of apparel companies that have taken the step to tie-in with movies and TV shows. The top two teen habits are buying clothes and going to the movies," so the connection between the two industries is highly logical.

*(American Demographics)*

## Insights on Music

### Music and African Americans

From gathering around the fire to the rhythmic beat of drums in an African village, to the Negro spirituals sung by slaves toiling on Southern plantations and the marchers in the '60's Civil Rights Movement; from the Motown Sound to the Hip-Hop Generation, storytelling and music have always been major components of African and African American culture. Music serves as a guide to consumer decision-making, an interpreter of social issues, and a gauge of community attitudes within the African American community.

### The Power of Radio

Music is a primary form of communication for African Americans, and radio has become an extremely effective vehicle for reaching them. On average, African Americans listen to up to four (4) hours of radio per day, significantly more than other groups. Radio stations, along with individual radio programs, often have a very loyal, demographically similar listening base. From an advertising perspective, this phenomenon is beneficial because it allows a very specific form of targeting. In addition, using radio disk jockeys (DJs) to promote a message or product is an effective form of advertising, because DJs tend to carry a high level of credibility in the urban community.

The power of radio and music becomes more and more evident as the hip-hop culture and African American influence become both mainstream and international. For example, one of the most popular drive-time radio talk shows (five million listeners in over 95 markets) today, "The Tom Joyner Morning Show," combines both storytelling and music through a mix of rhythm and blues, hip-hop, humor, and social activism. Listeners to that show have proven to be engaged, activist individuals who have been responsible for major change in this country when informed about racist or unfair policies in business and government. That same power has been used to save urban/African American-themed television shows that were being considered for cancellation.

### Hip-Hop Music

Hip-hop music, in particular, has been

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expanding beyond boundaries of race and geography. The continued diversification of rap/hip-hop, combined with increased airplay on both domestic and international radio stations, has facilitated the spread of the African American culture to other cultures in America and around the world. Through hip-hop music, the social, religious, political, and economic conditions of our society are reflected, through the prism of an urban worldview. The international youth culture, in particular, has embraced this new influence, ranging from hip-hop dance classes to adopting the "urban look." For example, a Philadelphia Inquirer article, "Gangsta in the land of geisha," notes that all things African American are suddenly very beautiful and "totally cool" to the youth of Japan.

Urban music is BIG business. According to USA Today, rap, hip-hop, gospel, and jazz account for 35% of the \$13 billion generated yearly by the music industry. In an article in the Houston Chronicle, Chairwoman of Elektra Entertainment, Sylvia Rhone, said "The fact is that hip-hop music is really driving the economy of the record business these days. It's the force drawing consumers into record stores."

So how can an organization use hip-hop music and radio to help authenticate their messages to urban youth? MEE's research has revealed that using hip-hop music and artists in advertising and using radio in non-traditional ways can be very effective.



### Hip-Hop Music in Advertising

Hip-hop music in advertising attracts and keeps the attention of urban youth. For example, Sprite's use of hip-hop music in its commercials attracts urban youth to its advertisements, if for no reason other than to listen to the songs themselves. By captivating urban youth with hip-hop music, Sprite is able to then express its message of trying to get them to purchase its products.

Additionally, the use of actual hip-hop artists in advertising can better direct your message to urban youth. Hip-hop artists are seen as legitimate opinion leaders to urban youth; they are extensions of themselves, often having come from the same backgrounds. At the same time, especially among young people, the attraction to hip-hop artists has been shown to hold even across cultural boundaries.



☞ Rap music continues to grow in its third decade. In 1998, for the first time, it was the top selling genre in music. Concurrently, Hip-Hop music continues to exhibit its diversity as groups such as the Roots, Outkast and rappers such as Lauryn Hill and Common drive "The Next Movement." The Roots are in the forefront of this movement of artist that are stretching hip-hop's creative boundaries and striving to maximize the music artist's potential. "The Next Movement" in Hip-Hop music includes a range of styles, from the hip-hop informed rhythm and blues of Erykah Badu and D'Angelo to the "trippy," double-time raps of Outkast. What unites the Next Movers is their reference to old school rap, soul and funk and the desire to address subjects far beyond gangsta stereotypes. With the success of their counter parts such as Puff Daddy, Will Smith, Mase and Master P, The Next Movement may be the next hip-hop subset to explode.

*(The Philadelphia Inquirer)*

## JustTheFacts

☞ According to a U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study of youth in the Job Corps program, the number of reported AIDS cases may be declining overall, but African Americans – young women in particular – are still getting infected at startling rates. The study found that HIV prevalence among 16-to-21-year-old Black women was seven times higher than for young White women. In fact, young Black women had the highest HIV infection rate for any group, male or female. Specifically, five Black women per 1,000 were infected, compared to two per 1,000 among young people generally.

*(Heart and Soul)*

☞ From a University of Washington study of 233 juvenile cases in three Washington counties, involving 170 White youths and 63 Blacks; sociologists have found that probation officers' portrayals of Black and White juvenile offenders differ greatly, leading to harsher sentencing recommendations for Black youth.

The study, published in the American Sociological Review, found probation officers were more likely to attribute Black juvenile crimes to internal attributes or aspects of their character such as disrespect toward authority and condoning behavior. On the contrary, delinquency among White offenders was more often attributed to environmental factors such as being exposed to excessive family conflict or hanging out with delinquents.

*(Jet Magazine)*

☞ Emerge published its sixth-annual Basketball Bottom 50 report, which is a compilation of the schools with the worst graduation records for Black basketball players. It is based on the NCAA's tracking of graduation rates of scholarship athletes who enrolled as freshmen from 1988 through 1991 and completed their course work within six years. The report shows that on average Black collegiate players remain big losers in the classroom when compared to their White counterparts.

*(Emerge)*



# Who's Hot Who's Not

MEE conducts ongoing quantitative and qualitative research to find out who young African Americans think is Hot and who's Not in the entertainment and sports industries. This research has assisted MEE's clients in casting for movies, commercials, or spokes people. The following results were compiled from a national survey administered to 150 African American and Latino youth ages 15-25.

## Male Rappers

- DMX:** N.Y. based rapper with nationwide appeal  
**Jay-Z:** Did not appear in MEE's last Hot/Not (summer of 1998); Demonstrates the dynamics upon which hip-hop trends change  
**OutKast:** Atlanta based group  
**Not:** Will Smith (see Actors)

## Female Rappers

- Lauryn Hill:** Appeals to both males and females; 24 y/o; Socially conscious; High street credibility; Trans-national  
**Foxy Brown:** Sexually explicit rapper  
**Mia-X:** Master P's label

## Male R&B

- Dru Hill:** Appeals primarily to females; The "new" Jodeci;  
**K-Ci & JoJo:** Frontmen from Jodeci; Staying power  
**Tyrese:** #1 write-in; Popular with ladies; Previously in Coke commercials  
**Not:** Boys II Men

## Female R & B

- Monica:** Two years ago, MEE predicted she was on the rise, now she is here; Mentioned practically every time  
**Mya:** Young and on the rise  
**Brandy:** The next Will Smith?  
**Erykah Badu:** The next African American spokesperson?

## Male Actors

- Chris Tucker:** Overwhelmingly funny and popular  
**Will Smith:** Now seen primarily as an actor  
**Martin Lawrence:** Still popular in syndication

## Female Actors

- Vivica Fox:** Very attractive; Mentioned practically every time  
**Jada Pinkett:** Males love her  
**Jennifer Lopez:** Hispanic, but popular w/ African Americans

## Male Sports Figures

- Kobe Bryant:** Jordanesque in his demeanor; Mature for his age; Role Model?  
**Allen Iverson:** Appeals to all-important urban males (nationally); Best represents urban youth culture

## Female Sports Figures

- Lisa Leslie:** WNBA star  
**Future Stars:** Chamique Holdsclaw:  
Relatively popular & #1 pick in WNBA draft  
**Marion Jones:** Future superstar in track & field

## Male Comedians

- Steve Harvey:** Appeals to all ages  
**Cedric the Entertainer:** Side kick on the "Steve Harvey Show"  
**Bernie Mac:** African American icon  
**Chris Rock:** #1 write-in

## Female Comedians

- S'More:** Rated high for two years

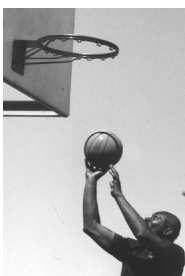
# 1999

☛ MEE's "Who's Hot" survey revealed that Will Smith is considered a highly popular movie star in the eyes of low-income African American youth. However, in a Catch-22, Smith's increased prominence as a mainstream movie icon, may be the very reason for his decline in popularity as a validated, street-credible rap/hip-hop artist in the eyes of low-income African American urban youth (see Hot/Not survey).

## What's Next...

Coming to you in the next issue of UrbanTrends...

We will focus on Spirituality, Sexuality, and Sports.  
We will explore such topics as:



**GOING INTO THE LIGHT: THE SPIRIT STILL LEADS**

**LIFE IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT**

**EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION: BLACK WOMEN WANT TO KNOW**

**BLACK COLLEGE FOOTBALL**

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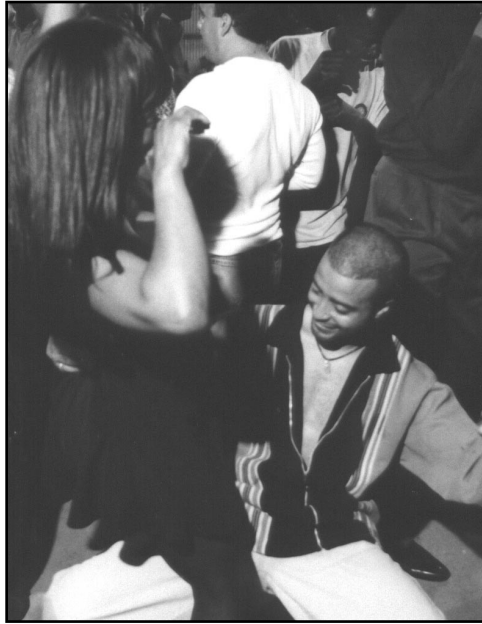
NEXT EDITION OF URBAN TRENDS

FOR THE ACCESS PASSWORD.

# More Good Stuff

✱ Will Smith was named Actor of the Year by the Daily Variety. After hits like "Independence Day" and "Men In Black," Smith has climbed to the A-list of Hollywood actors. As the latest measure of Smith's massive popularity (a past MTV poll tapping the 12-34 age group rated him as the most "exciting" movie star), a recent survey reported that 95% of American teenagers recognized Smith's name, while only 2% knew Supreme Court Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist.

*(Daily Variety)*



✱ There are currently 31 million Hispanics in the U.S., with a combined purchasing power of \$370 billion. Population shifts in the U.S. have accelerated growth in Hispanic television programming, viewership, and advertising. But the economics of content development and distribution have limited Hispanic TV to a niche player's role in a landscape dominated by titans. However, that is about to change. As technological advances shrink the globe and increase access to Hispanics - who number 300 million in North and South America - the industry's newest megaplayers will be those developing and delivering programs to Hispanic audiences worldwide, rather than to separate U.S. and non-U.S. marketplaces.

*(American Demographics)*

## UrbanTrends

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