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Fingers go on walking tour of ethnic neighborhoods

Polyglot directories win diverse ad dollars

BY CARA TRAGER

Michael Radovich is half Jewish, but his family's ancestry has nothing to do with why his firm advertises in *The Jewish Israeli Yellow Pages*.

Instead, he finds the bilingual, Hebrew-English directory the best route to reaching Jewish households, businesses and synagogues within his community.

"There's a very strong Jewish

population here in Williamsburg, and we do restoration of stained glass, which makes synagogues a primary market for us," says Mr. Radovich, vice president of Interiors By Antoine, the Brooklyn renovation business his father founded 28 years ago. Mr. Radovich credits his ad in the bilingual directory with bringing in six major jobs in the last three years.

In New York, with its large and ever-changing kaleidoscope of immigrant communities, business owners today have at their disposal an increasing array of ethnic Yellow Pages that speak the language of their customers.

Late last year, for instance, Bell Atlantic Corp. teamed up with the Chinese newspaper *World Journal* to produce the *New York City Yellow Pages for the Chinese Community*. Now it is weighing the creation of a Russian-language directory for Sheepshead Bay in Brooklyn to follow up on its earlier successes with Spanish-English community directories in Harlem/Morningside Heights, Washington Heights and Jackson Heights-Corona, Queens, and a Spanish-English *Yellow Pages for the Bronx*.

In on the conversation

Not in Bell Atlantic alone. Among other players in the ethnic directory market are *The Chinese Yellow Pages*, a publication of El Monte, Calif.-based Asia System Media Inc.; the *Korean Central Daily Business Directory*, an offshoot of *The Korea Times*, both of the Korean directories are published in Long Island City, Queens.

"We find in our research that while many groups are bilingual and want to communicate into American culture, there is often a preference to conduct commerce and seek information in their native languages," says Niall Connors, director of product marketing for Bell Atlantic *Yellow Pages*.

Typically, the directories' advertisers hail from the same ethnic groups targeted by the books. Increasingly, however, major corporations such as AT&T Corp. and Sprint Corp. as well as smaller nonethnic businesses have seized upon the directories as a means to segment markets and save on marketing costs. David Peterson, for example,

A Familiar Ring

Foreign-language telephone books appeal to ethnic consumers who want to deal with companies that speak their native language, as well as assimilated English-speakers who prefer doing business with their own countrymen.



began advertising the Manhattan-based personal injury law firm that bears his name in ethnic directories in 1994. Today, his ads for bilingual legal services appear in three different Korean business directories and, starting this year, in a Chinese directory as well. In total, he spends less than \$10,000 a year on those ads, steering away from mainstream directories because of their higher ad rates.

"New York City gets its strength from its diversity, and we are responding to this diversity by employing bilingual attorneys and staff," says Mr. Peterson.

Ethnic *Yellow Pages* do have their downside, though. While their rates are cheaper than those of mainstream directories, their circulation is far smaller.

A quarter-page ad in the *Korean Central Daily Business Directory*, which has a circulation of 30,000, costs \$800; the same-sized ad in Bell Atlantic *Yellow Pages* has a distribution of 911,000 and runs \$15,825, according to Wahlstrom & Co., an ad agency in Stamford that specializes in ethnic telephone directories.

What's more, many ethnic directories, such as *The Chinese Yellow Pages*, which lists businesses in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, generally have a far wider geographic distribution than the typical mainstream book.

It's doubtful, though, that an ad for an appliance repair service in *New Jersey* could pull in a customer from Queens.

"The propensity to go out of their way to find someone who understands their needs is directly related to the size of the purchase," says Saul Gitlin, director of strategic marketing services at Kang & Lee, a Manhattan ad agency that links mainstream corporations with the Asian-American marketplace.

When it comes to bigger-ticket items, such as cars and complex financial services, Mr. Gitlin finds people more inclined to "leave their community to do business where there's no language barrier."

Even when that language barrier does not exist, many ethnic consumers still prefer to do business with their own countrymen. "These books empower a business community," says Peter Edez, vice president of client services at Wahlstrom & Co. "They allow people to patronize businesses that speak their language, even if they don't need it."

For some, part of a culture

At Dapey Assaf Ltd., which publishes the year-end *The Jewish Israeli Yellow Pages*, Assaf Ran agrees. Mr. Ran, president of the New Garden, Queens-based publisher, notes that although advertisers in his directory are bilingual, many of his readers are just as, if not more, fluent in English than Hebrew.

"There are people who want their kids to see Hebrew in the home," says Mr. Ran, who points to 100,000 copies of the directory, which promotes businesses in the five boroughs, Westchester and Rockland counties, and northern New Jersey. ■

Firms from AT&T and Sprint to noethnic law firms are advertisers

