

## Global user experience report: Latin America region profile.

This free report provides a brief introduction to Latin America for information architects and user experience designers planning to use a "Latin America" locale.



### *Introduction.*

"Latin America" is generally considered to consist either of all the countries south of the US, or of the Spanish speaking countries in the Americas. The Caribbean islands are sometimes included. As Wikipedia [says](#): "There are several definitions of Latin America, none of them perfect or necessarily logically consistent."

### *Selecting a locale.*

The "Latin America" locale is popular with companies who want to provide some level of service to users in these countries, but don't want to customize their service for individual countries. The locale is almost always in Spanish, and it is, in that case, better referred to as "Spanish speaking Latin America". Brazil (a big market) is often an additional locale, with Portuguese as its language.

"South America" and "Central America" are not commonly used as locales - neither is "The Americas".

US companies regularly provide separate "US Spanish" (or "Hispanic US") and "Spanish speaking Latin America" locales (both in Spanish) because the content, products and services offered within the US can be quite different from those offered to Latin American countries. The Spanish speaking market within the US is very large, often warranting its own locale.

### *Internet usage.*

Internet penetration is still low in Latin America. However, people find creative ways to get access: shared computers and internet cafes are popular. Broadband access penetration is also low, although growing fast. Broadband speeds are often relatively low.

"Tier 1 countries" - countries with higher internet adoption - are considered to be Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile and perhaps Colombia. According to Comscore

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([source](#)): "[in 2007] Brazil had the largest online population with 15.8 million users--or 11% of the country's total population. On average, Brazilians viewed 40% more pages in June than other Latin Americans."

Even though overall penetration is low, there is a large and hungry market for many consumer applications in Latin America. Brazil specifically is considered to be an early-adopter of internet services.

## *User experience.*

**Language.** Support Spanish for most of Latin America, Portuguese for Brazil. There are small differences in the Spanish used in the different countries of Latin America, in a similar way that American English and British English are different. Other languages spoken in Latin America include French, Haitian Creole (based on French), Quechua (a Native American language), and many more.

**Connection speed.** Support slower connection speeds. The positive side of slower connection speeds is that user expectations of response speed aren't as high as in the US. However, users do expect "polished" websites, not bare-bones low-speed alternatives.

Slower connection speeds affect usage patterns. For example, users on slow lines paid by the hour often log out to read their email offline, write their responses and then log back in to send the email.

**Culture.** We can't describe Latin American culture in a paragraph, but in short: family and group identity are more important than in Europe or the US. Telenovelas (soap operas) are very popular, and football (European style) is the most popular sport.

Even though cultural identity is mostly defined by country, there are also many strong local cultural identities: regions or indigenous groups can have a strong sense of identity, separate of the country that they live in. There is also a vague sense of cultural identity that is "Latin American": an identity shared between the countries of South America.

**Emigrants.** Many Latin American countries (Mexico, Colombia) have seen a large percentage of their population emigrate to the US and other countries, and remittances (money sent back home) from these immigrants are reported to add up to 54 billion US\$ a year. Services that support communication between emigrants and locals (VoIP, send flowers, ...) are in demand.

## *Resources.*

A good [podcast](#) interview with Luis Larnal about doing user research in Latin America.

Interesting paper ([PDF download](#)) on mobile user experience in Latin America.

Alexa provides useful lists of [the most popular websites by country](#).

## *Local experts.*

The following people and companies are recommended if you need user experience help in Latin America.

In/Situm is (<http://www.insitum.com/> - see Luis Larnal from the podcast mentioned above) is a research consultancy specialized in Hispanic and Portuguese speaking markets.

Jorge Arango (<http://www.jarango.com/en/>) is a recommended information architect based in Central America and is the director of Bootstudio (<http://www.bootstudio.com/en/>).

The IA Institute lets you find [information architects by location](#).

Finally, if you need information architecture or user experience help for Latin America, don't hesitate to contact [290.com](#).

## *About 290s.com.*

290s is a small consulting company specialized in [global user experience](#) and [information architecture for startups](#).

We provide **workshops, training and consulting** to companies that have to organize websites in many countries and languages.

We also **help startup companies develop consumer products** (with wireframes and functional specifications), including internal "startup" projects in larger companies.

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### **Get in touch:**

[petervandijck@gmail.com](mailto:petervandijck@gmail.com) | Skype ID: peterkevandijck  
US: (+1) 201 467-5511 | Belgium: (+32) 03/325 88 70