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Latinas & Fashion by: Michele L. Verdugo

When I was five, I was a folklorico dancer. Today, I often relive my childhood experiences by dreaming about the polka dot flamenco dresses, with lace trim and bright colored skirts we wore to practice. I always admired our dance instructor's daughter who was experienced enough to show off the brilliant white Aztec dress with the all white feather headdress to match. I couldn't wait until I was old enough to be just like her. Those are the visions I hold dear and influence my choices when I am in search of clothing for myself. My favorite motto is "taste life" and what I mean by that is...enjoy life and savor the good and bad times...taste it, feel it and bank every memory in your mind so you can relive the beautiful experiences that have molded you to become the strong woman you are today which automatically holds true to our fashion decisions as well.

While I was brainstorming for this article, many topics entered my head, as I put the two keywords together, "fashion" and "Latina".

Multifaceted we are, influenced by life events; we are mothers, entrepreneurs, inventors, scholars and overall passionate about life.

We are driven by our children, our careers, our professional and personal growth, but always molded by our family values and traditions. It is a well known fact that we are always with family at Quinceañera, baptisms and birthday parties which allows us to exercise our ability dress up and see which cousin shows up wearing the latest most up-to-date fashion trend...you know what I mean.

It is apparent that Latinas have invaded the marketplace as fabrics depicting the Virgen de Guadalupe and Día de los Muertos are now top sellers. Those are icons of our religious background and we feel that it is an honor to wear the Virgin Mary in all her essence.

Lately, the day of the Dead influence is seen everywhere with skulls, roses and sacred hearts saturating the print and fabric market place. Another strong influence would be the images portrayed on television, videos and movies such as 'Bandidas' featuring Salma

Hayek and Penelope Cruz, this movie beautifully depicted two Latinas in many adventures; glorifying them with rich colors and textures

in every scene. Hair sometimes up and sometimes down but strong, sexy Latina was definitely the overall theme.

Statistics show that we have very substantial buying power in the marketplace as well. We take longer to shop! If we were given \$500

to spend, we would spend \$305.33 on fashion; considerably more than an African American or a Caucasian woman would under the

same circumstances. We are inspired by color, flair and flirty. All of which are common themes for the Latina. And for the record,

we are NOT big supporters of the color "khaki". It's just not something we do, especially when there are many other alternatives out

there. We like metallic, sequins, lace and we love to be the center of attention. We often are the ones setting trends. We are like

walking showcases! Whenever we are present in a corporate environment we can rock a

[Back](#)

tailored business suit, but we might add a flower to our hair, lapel or an accent “pop” color.

To sum it up, Latinas have just begun to be recognized as substantial consumers’. Our buying dollars have spoken on our behalf. It is now up to us to become verbal. We need to start asking for the styles that we want. So we can continue seeing them in the marketplace. Whether it be color, textures, or style lines, we need to demand it! All because WE are WORTH it and following our heart comes natural...besos!

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