

# LGBTQ+ MARKETING INCLUSION

**DECEMBER 2021** 

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# **EVALUATING LGBTQ+ MARKETING INCLUSION**

This report is an initial look at the state of LGBTQ+ marketing inclusion and representation among client-side marketer members of the ANA. As more brands enter public conversations on societal movements, they are highlighting how to authentically support the LGBTQ+ community through their marketing campaigns. However, not all LGBTQ+-inclusive marketing is authentic, and some brands are still hesitant to enter the conversation.

In October 2021, the ANA surveyed its client-side marketer members to understand the breadth of LGBTQ+-inclusive advertising and support for the community overall. In total, 70 client-side marketers participated in this survey and provided perspectives on key issues. (Please use the results of this research directionally, given the sample size.) The survey focused on LGBTQ+ representation in creative, targeted LGBTQ+ media vs. non-targeted campaigns, the timing of those campaigns, the benefits and challenges of inclusive marketing, overall industry support, and campaign measurement. This report and the survey results will serve to establish the foundation of future work at the ANA on LGBTQ+ marketing inclusion.

# About the respondents:

- Fifty-seven percent have been working in the marketing/advertising industry for more than 15 years.
- Fifty-two percent work at organizations that had a 2021 media budget of \$100 million or more.
- For 31 percent of respondents, their businesses are primarily business-to-consumer, 14 percent are primarily business-to-business, and 55 percent are both.
- Ten percent of the respondents self-identify as LGBTQ+.

The complete survey questionnaire is **here**.





# **EVALUATING LGBTO+ MARKETING INCLUSION**

This work is an important initiative for the Society and Sustainability priority, and the Talent and Marketing Organization priority of the ANA Growth Agenda, which provides a guide for the industry to leverage marketing as a sustainable growth driver. Marketers today must adapt their brand and marketplace strategies to leverage demographic changes and champion diversity. At the heart of any diversity discussion are inclusion and equity — a state of mind that must be continually nurtured, whether by providing unquestionably fair and equal opportunities for all, ensuring accessibility across all aspects of the organization, or employing more diverse and representative agency partners.



# **Statistics on the LGBTQ+ Community:**

- 18.5 million (5.6 percent) estimated adult LGBTQ+ people in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>
- One in six generation Z adults (born 1997 to 2012) identify as LGBTQ+.<sup>2</sup>
- 980,000 same-sex couple households in the U.S.<sup>3</sup>
- \$1.0 trillion purchasing power in U.S.4



<sup>1&</sup>quot;LGBT Identification Rises to 5.6% in Latest U.S. Estimate." Gallup.com. (2021). Retrieved November 11, 2021, from https:// news.gallup.com/poll/329708/lgbt-identification-rises-latest-estimate.aspx

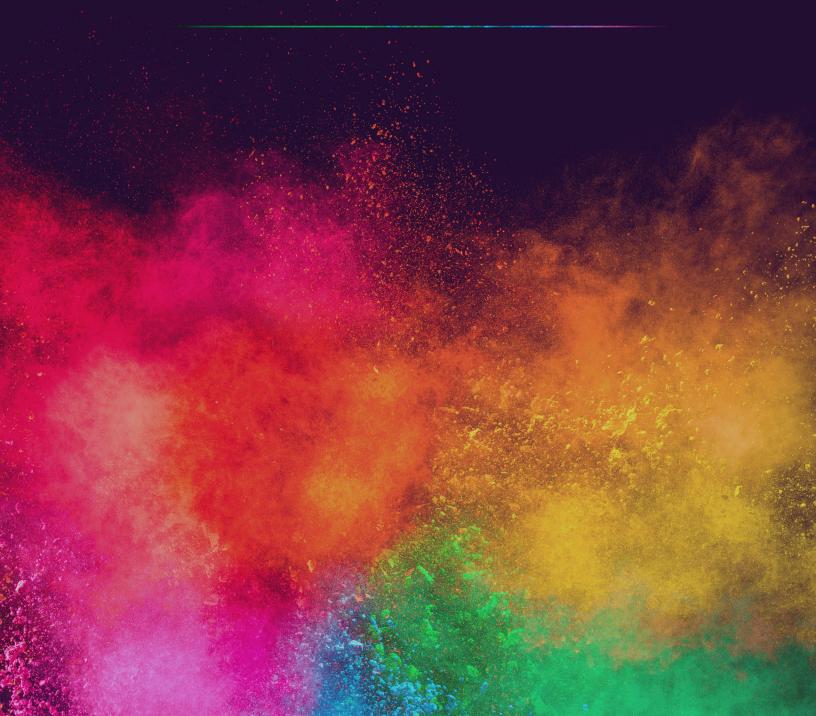
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Schmidt, Samantha. "1 In 6 Gen Z Adults Are LGBT. and This Number Could Continue to Grow." The Washington Post, WP Company, February 24, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2021/02/24/gen-z-lgbt/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>"Census Bureau releases report on same-sex couple households." Census.gov. (2021, October 8). Retrieved November 11, 2021, from https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2021/same-sex-couple-households.html.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>LGBT Capital, "Estimated LGBT Purchasing Power: LGBT-GDP" (2018).

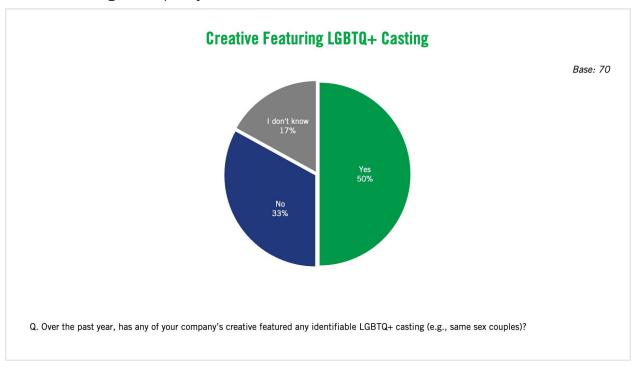
# **Section 1**

# MARKETING TO THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY



# **LGBTQ+ INCLUSION IN ADVERTISING**

At least 50 percent of respondents had advertising creative that featured identifiable LGBTQ+ casting in the past year.



Although we do not have previous survey data to compare, 50 percent of respondents is a positive indicator for LGBTQ+ marketing inclusion overall. If this survey was taken 20 years ago, or even 10, the results would look quite different, with LGBTQ+ casting much lower.

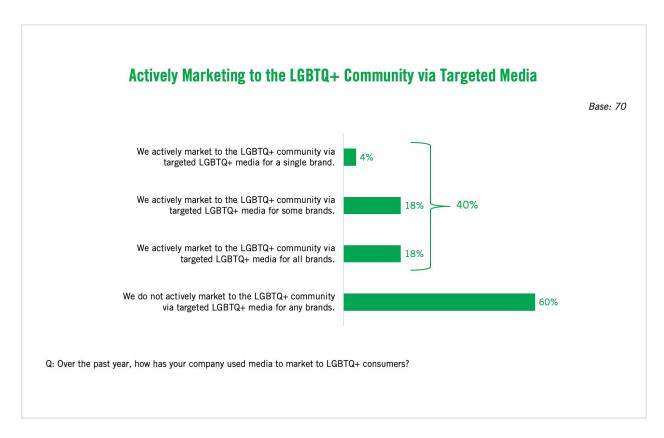
We also asked respondents to provide some context as to how their creative featured identifiable LGBTQ+ casting. The following is a selection of their responses:

- We have a photo library featuring same-gender couples, as well as non-binary and transgender.
- We are reviewing the copy on our website and other assets to foster gender neutrality.
- We have had obvious gay men in our TV ads. They appear as parents in one and are cuddly on the couch in another.
- Photo shoots with ambiguous partner pairings.
- In addition to running in LGBTQ+ media, we ran LGBTQ+-targeted ads in network primetime.
- When showing pictures of families or couples, we include imagery that spans all types of families heterosexual, same-sex, single-parent, cross-generational, all abilities, etc.



# **ACTIVELY MARKET VIA TARGETED LGBTQ+ MEDIA**

Forty percent of respondents actively market to the LGBTQ+ community via targeted LGBTQ+ media for at least one brand.

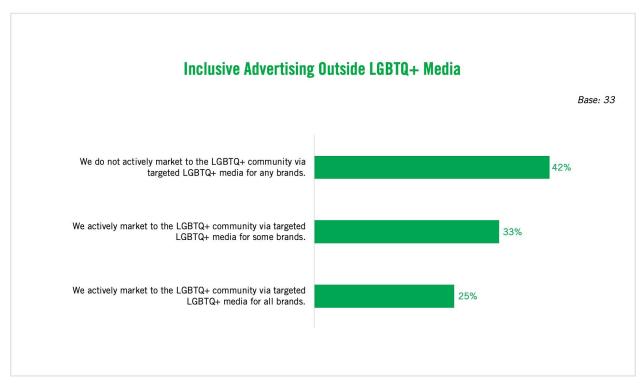


A majority of respondents (60 percent) do not actively market to the LGBTQ+ community via targeted LGBTQ+ media. Many of these brands may still market to the LGBTQ+ community through non-targeted media. Per the previous question, we know there is an overlap between respondents who feature LGBTQ+ casting in their creative and those who do not actively market to the LGBTQ+ community via targeted LGBTQ+ media.



# **INCLUSIVE CREATIVE: LGBTQ+ MEDIA VS. NON**

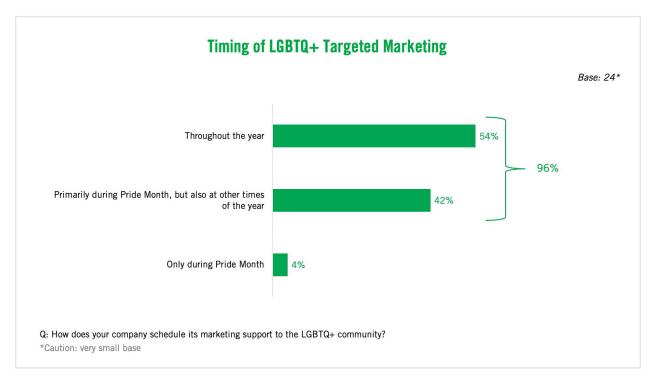
Forty-two percent of respondents had advertising creative that featured LGBTQ+ casting which was not placed in LGBTQ+ media.



Looking at the first question in this report, specifically just the 50 percent of respondents who reported featuring LGBTQ+ casting in their creative, almost half (42 percent) are not using LGBTQ+ media to target their campaigns. This indicates that brands are still targeting inclusive creative to the LGBTQ+ community through other methods. However, this could also indicate less reliance on using LGBTQ+ media to reach the community. No respondents reported inclusive advertising creative and also actively marketed to the LGBTQ+ community via targeted LGBTQ+ media for just a single brand.

# WHEN LGBTQ+-TARGETED MARKETING OCCURS

Almost all (96 percent) respondents who actively market to the LGBTQ+ community via targeted LGBTQ+ media are scheduling marketing support year-round.



More than half (54 percent) of respondents who actively market to the LGBTQ+ community via targeted LGBTQ+ media schedule marketing support to the LGBTQ+ community throughout the year, with 42 percent running campaigns year-round but with a focus on June (Pride Month).

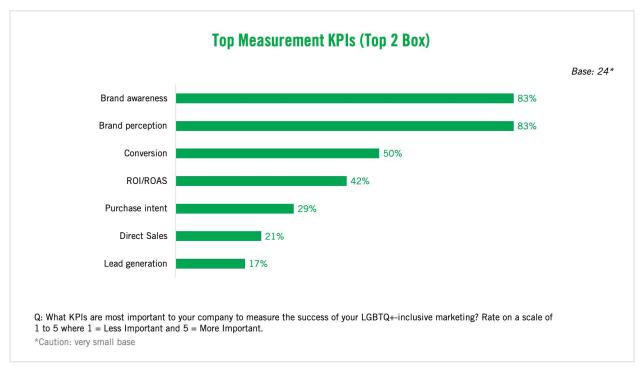
# Spotlight on Timing

Embrace the LGBTQ+ community year-round in marketing and advertising campaigns. Identify other dates and events of importance to the LGBTQ+ community to provide support year-round, such as International Transgender Day of Remembrance (March 31) and World AIDS Day (December 1). It is great to see brands change their logos and release rainbow-themed products during June, but support should go beyond Pride Month.



# **IMPORTANT MEASUREMENT KPIS (TOP-TWO BOX)**

Brand Awareness and Brand Perception are the most important key performance indicators of success when measuring LGBTQ+-inclusive marketing.

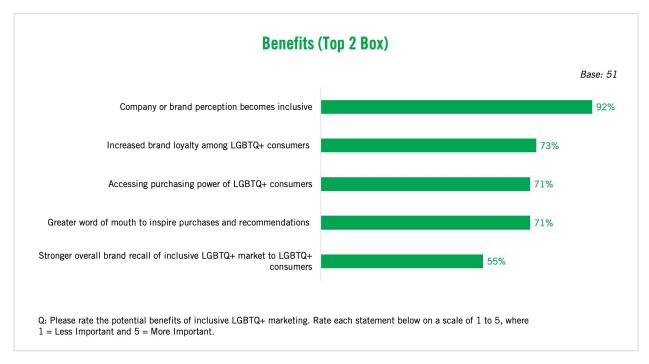


Brand Awareness and Brand Perception are identified as the top measurement KPIs (83 percent each); Conversion (50 percent) and ROI/ROAS (42 percent) are top KPIs for more than a third of respondents.



# **BENEFITS OF LGBTQ+-INCLUSIVE MARKETING (TOP-TWO BOX)**

Almost all (92 percent) respondents rated "company or brand perception becomes inclusive" as the top benefit of LGBTQ+-inclusive marketing.



These results align with the previous question, which identified brand perception as one of the top measurement KPIs. Increased brand loyalty, accessing purchasing power of the community, and greater word of mouth rounded out the top benefits.

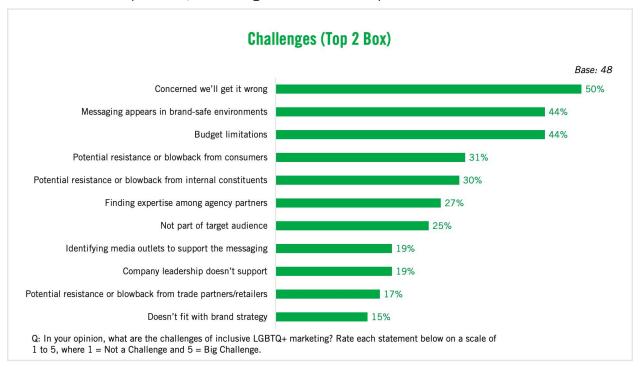
"Advertisers want to reflect the values of gen Z, and inclusivity is one of this generation's most defining attributes. Giving visibility to LGBTQ+ people in media and advertising is one of the strongest and most symbolic ways this can be communicated. Additionally, for every LGBTQ+ person, there is an exponentially greater number of straight and/or cisgender parents, grandparents, siblings, best friends, co-workers, and neighbors who love them and want to see them reflected in advertising. At our agency we call this the Amplifier Effect."

— Matt Tumminello, CEO and Founder, Target 10



# **CHALLENGES TO LGBTQ+-INCLUSIVE MARKETING (TOP-TWO BOX)**

The three biggest challenges to LGBTQ+-inclusive marketing are a general concern of getting it wrong (50 percent), making sure the messaging appears in brand-safe environments (44 percent), and budget limitations (44 percent).



Less than a third of respondents felt that potential resistance or blowback from customers or internal partners was a big challenge. In addition, even fewer respondents felt finding the right agency partner or identifying media outlets was a challenge.



# Spotlight on Overcoming the Top Three Identified Challenges

# Concerned we'll get it wrong.

Additional perspectives often lead to better communications. A key step to overcoming the challenge of "getting it wrong" is to reduce the risk of doing so. You can do this by ensuring you hire a diverse marketing team, including LGBTQ+ community members. You can also tap into internal LGBTQ+ Employee Resource Groups or use an external LGBTQ+ specialized agency to help reduce the risk of getting it wrong.

# Messaging appears in brand-safe environments.

Ensuring your messaging appears in a brand-safe environment is a challenge for all digital marketers, but also uniquely so for LGBTQ+ marketing inclusion. One approach is to work with your media agency and identify sites where you do not want messaging to appear. You may also want to limit your media buy to premium inventory, employ contextual targeting, or otherwise optimize your media buying to ensure the messaging appears in a brand-safe environment.

# **Budget limitations.**

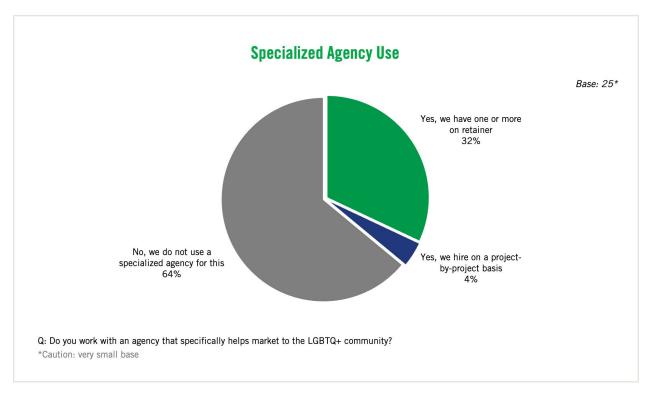
According to recent reports, the LGBTQ+ community has more than \$3.6 trillion in purchasing power globally and more than \$1.0 trillion in the U.S. alone.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, one of the key benefits of LGBTQ+ marketing inclusion identified in this survey is accessing the purchasing power of the community. Although a brand's budget may be limited, reducing risk and taking strategic advantage of targeted marketing that includes the LGBTQ+ community can be key factors in capturing LGBTQ+ purchasing power. Minimally, consider casting that reflects LGBTQ+ inclusion.

<sup>4</sup>LGBT Capital, "Estimated LGBT Purchasing Power: LGBT-GDP" (2018).



# **USE OF SPECIALIZED LGBTQ+ AGENCIES**

Thirty-six percent of respondents use a specialized LGBTQ+ agency for their LGBTQ+targeted marketing.

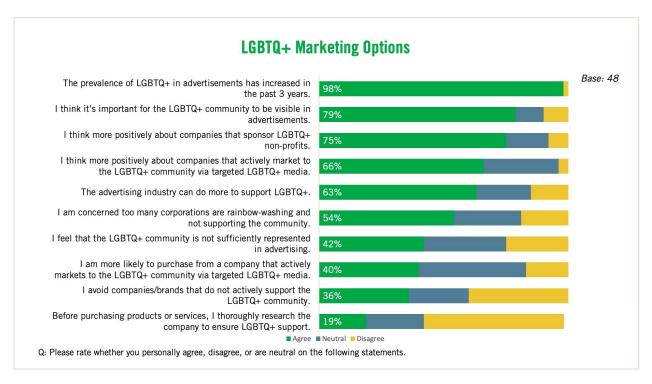


However, a majority (64 percent) of respondents do not use a specialized agency for their LGBTQ+ marketing. Of those who do, we asked if their agency was a certified LGBT-owned agency, and 75 percent of respondents indicated they were. The National LGBT Chamber of Commerce is the key certification body for LGBT-owned businesses.



# **LGBTO+ MARKETING INCLUSION OPINIONS**

Almost all (98 percent) respondents agree that there has been an increased presence of LGBTQ+ casting in advertising in the past three years, and 79 percent agree that it is important for the LGBTQ+ community to be visible in advertisements.



Three-quarters of respondents think more positively about companies that sponsor LGBTQ+ nonprofits (see the appendix for a list of LGBTQ+ non-profits). Additionally, two-thirds of respondents think more positively about companies that actively market to the LGBTQ+ community via LGBTQ+-targeted media. Both align with previous responses highlighting brand perception and brand awareness as top KPIs and brand perception as the key benefit of LGBTQ+ marketing inclusion.

Sixty-three percent of respondents felt the advertising industry could do more to support the LGBTQ+ community. We asked respondents to provide some insights into how the advertising industry can do more to support the LGBTQ+ community. A selection of their responses:

- The industry needs to be more active in recruiting LGBTQ+ talent, supporting causes and nonprofits, and taking the expertise of the community into account when building advertising campaigns and messaging.
- Think way beyond Pride Month and rainbows all over your products and ads, think beyond the L and G of LGBTQIA+, don't just market LGBT+ content to LGBT audiences but think broader inclusivity especially with gen Z, think intersectionality,



# **LGBTO+ MARKETING INCLUSION OPINIONS**

focus on authenticity in messaging and wherever possible empowering voices in the community. "These models are clearly intended to be interpreted as L or G, buy our product to reward us for representation" was cutting-edge a while ago, the bar is much higher now.

- Rainbow-washing is a problem. Year-round inclusion is important. Inclusive claims have become a trend, but if a company's actions do not match those claims, then there could be consumer blowback. Also, representation beyond cisgender couples is important. Advertising should reflect diversity within the community, not just commercially attractive gay and lesbian couples.
- Share data of business opportunity to inform all advertisers and be sharable with executives.
- Monetary support for engaged nonprofits.
- Show inclusion, don't say inclusion.
- Show same-sex relationships in advertising more often. Showcasing LGBTQ+ actors in advertising. Donating to nonprofits.
- Take efforts beyond advertising and marketing. It's great to show inclusivity but what work is being done to further the cause behind the scenes? The work that nobody sees.
- Authentic stories to include people who don't fit heteronormative personas.
- Supplier review, inclusive measurement.

# Spotlight on Rainbow-Washing

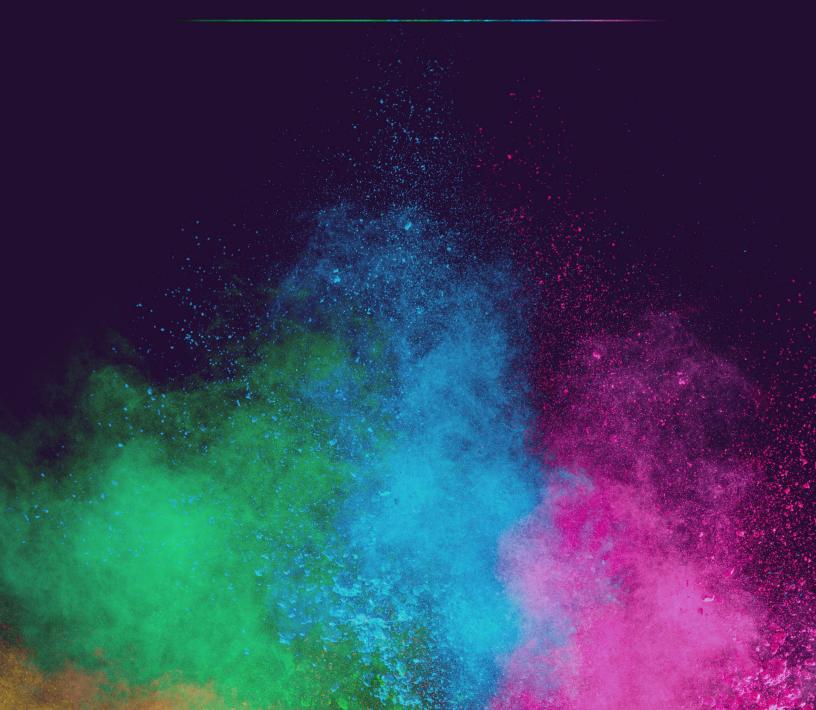
"Rainbow-washing" is when a brand purports to support the LGBTQ+ community and puts rainbow colors and/or LGBTQ+ imagery in advertising and products in hopes of increasing LGBTQ+ sales, but without a tangible effort to support the community. Rainbow-washing is damaging to the community and to a brand's perception, because it misleads consumers into thinking they are supporting the LGBTQ+ community. Brands can avoid rainbow-washing by collaborating with an LGBTQ+ nonprofit, increasing diversity and acceptance within the company, working with an LGBTQ+ specialized agency, and lifting up the LGBTQ+ community. The key factor in avoiding rainbow-washing is authentic support for the LGBTQ+ community through action.

The next section of this report will go into more detail regarding support for LGBTQ+ community and staff.



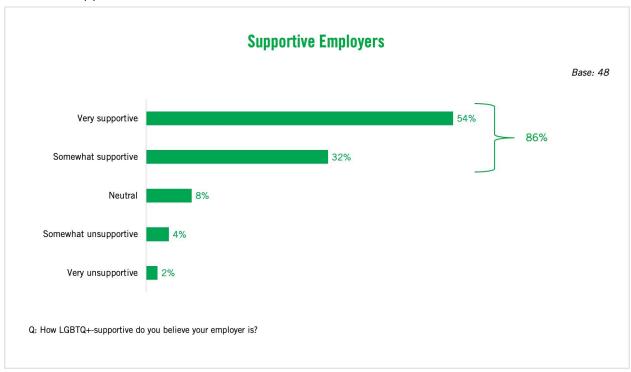
# **Section 2**

# SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY AND STAFF



# **SUPPORT FOR LGBTQ+ PEOPLE AMONG CLIENT-SIDE MARKETERS**

Eighty-six percent of respondents believe their employer is very or somewhat LGBTQ+-supportive.

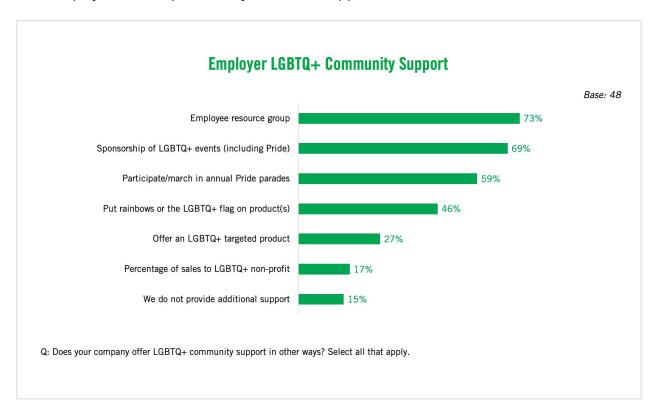


This is an incredibly positive indicator, as only 6 percent of respondents believe their employer is somewhat or very unsupportive of the LGBTQ+ community. (Please note there is some potential for self-selecting bias, as client-side marketers who produce inclusive advertising are more likely to work at LGBTQ+-inclusive and supportive employers.)



# **HOW CLIENT-SIDE MARKETERS SUPPORT LGBTQ+ STAFF**

Overall, 85 percent of respondents report their company offers LGBTQ+ community support in one or more of the ways identified in the chart. Only 15 percent of respondents reported their employer doesn't provide any additional support.



Seventy-three percent of respondents have access to an Employee Resource Group at their employer. More than half of respondents' employers provide LGBTQ+ support through sponsorship of LGBTQ+ events and/or participate in annual Pride parades.

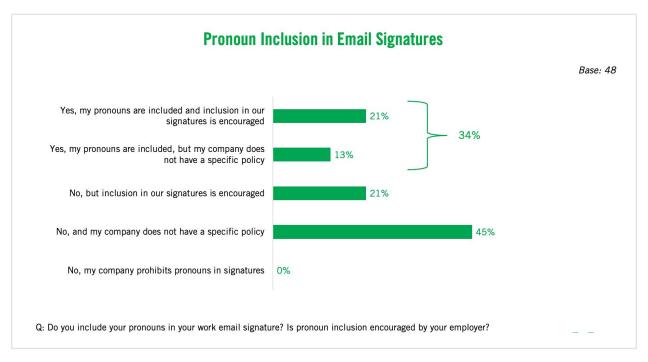
# Spotlight on Employee Resource Groups

Establishing employee resource groups can be a great way to foster a diverse and inclusive workplace. ERGs are voluntary, employee-led groups who share a characteristic, such as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so forth. The groups exist to provide support and help in personal or career development and to create a safe space where employees can bring their whole selves to the table. They are often open to allies as well. ERGs can also serve as an internal resource to reduce the risk of improper messaging.



# BUILDING INCLUSIVITY WITH PRONOUNS

Slightly more than a third of respondents report including their pronouns in their work email signature.



While a majority of respondents (66 percent) do not include their pronouns in their signatures, 42 percent work for a company that encourages pronoun use. Including pronouns in email signatures and encouraging their use in meetings is a first step toward respecting people's identity and creating a more welcoming space for people of all genders.

# Spotlight on Pronouns

It is important never to assume a person's pronouns. By assuming a person's pronouns, it is possible to send an unintended message that people must look a certain way to be able to use their pronouns. Using the wrong pronouns can be offensive or even harmful. By using a person's pronouns correctly, people can reduce the adverse effects of social oppression. When you use a person's pronouns correctly, you are showing respect and forming an inclusive environment. Encouraging the inclusion of pronouns in email signatures fosters a safe and inclusive workplace.



# **CONCLUSIONS AND BEST PRACTICES**

The importance of inclusive marketing cannot be understated, as tailoring marketing efforts toward certain demographics continues to be a significant component of successful advertising. When consumers identify with your brand's values, they are more likely to purchase from your brand. It continues to be important to consumers that their purchases represent who they are and their values. Inclusion and diversity are paramount.

Brand perception is the most important metric when measuring LGBTQ+ marketing, according to respondents. Brand perception is also the key benefit of LGBTQ+ marketing inclusion. Additionally, respondents indicated that for a marketer to increase positive brand perception among the LGBTQ+ community and allies, the brand should:

- actively market to the LGBTQ+ community via LGBTQ+-targeted media
- feature identifiable LGBTQ+ casting in creative
- avoid rainbow-washing
- partner with LGBTQ+ nonprofits

The following key action items can further enhance positive brand perception within the LGBTQ+ community.

#### **Best Practices:**

### Cast LGBTQ+ People

It is important for the LGBTQ+ community to identify with and see themselves in your brand and your brand's marketing. Casting identifiable LGBTQ+ community members (e.g., samesex couples, out celebrities, LGBTQ+ social settings) fosters positive brand perception about inclusivity. Additionally, casting LGBTQ+ people is important for further growth and acceptance of the community, as consumers who are exposed to LGBTQ+ people in the media are more likely to be accepting and supportive of their issues.

#### Utilize LGBTQ+ Media

A majority of LGBTQ+ media outlets were created out of necessity and activism, and remain an integral part of their local communities today. Advertising in, and thereby supporting, LGBTQ+ media is a clear way to further enhance brand perception. LGBTQ+ people are more likely to purchase from brands that advertise in and support LGBTQ+ media. The ANA/AIMM list of Certified Diverse Suppliers includes a number of LGBTQ+ media entities as well as various marketing solution providers (e.g., agencies).

### Partner with LGBTQ+ Nonprofits

One of the most beneficial ways your brand can make a significant impact in the community is by donating to LGBTQ+-established nonprofits. This could be as simple as giving a portion



# **CONCLUSIONS AND BEST PRACTICES**

of the profits that come from Pride-themed products to nonprofits. Collaborating with an LGBTQ+ nonprofit is a great way to authentically improve your brand perception. A shortlist of LGBTQ+ nonprofits is available under the resources section.

#### Advertise 365

Embrace the LGBTQ+ community 365 days a year in marketing and advertising campaigns. While a majority of Pride events happen in June, not every city or community celebrates then. There are many other dates and events of importance to the LGBTQ+ community to provide support year-round. It is great to see brands change their logos and release rain-bow-themed products during June, but support should go beyond Pride Month.

# **Embrace Diverse Perspectives**

Having a marketing team of diverse perspectives and backgrounds, including ethnic and sexual orientation diversity, is a great way to ensure your brand is speaking authentically. Incorporating diverse perspectives into your marketing can help you get the messaging correct, avoid backlash, and show authentic support for the LGBTQ+ community. Look to Employee Resource Groups or other parts of your company if you do not have enough diversity on your team yet. Alternatively, your brand may want to look to an LGBTQ+-owned agency, which can bring additional diverse perspectives and ensure your LGBTQ+ marketing does not miss the mark.

# **Avoid Rainbow-Washing**

"Rainbow-washing" is when a brand purports to support the LGBTQ+ community and puts rainbow colors and/or LGBTQ+ imagery in advertising and products in hopes of increasing LGBTQ+ sales, but without a tangible effort to support the community. Rainbow-washing is damaging to the community and to a brand's perception, because it misleads consumers into thinking they are supporting the LGBTQ+ community. Brands can avoid rainbow-washing by collaborating with an LGBTQ+ nonprofit, increasing diversity and acceptance within the company, working with an LGBTQ+ specialized agency, and lifting up the LGBTQ+ community. The key factor in avoiding rainbow-washing is authentic support for the LGBTQ+ community through action.

### **Create and Leverage Employee Resource Groups**

Employee resource groups can be a great way to foster a diverse and inclusive workplace. ERGs are voluntary, employee-led groups who share a characteristic, such as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so forth. The groups exist to provide support and help in personal or career development and to create a safe space where employees can bring their whole selves to the table. They are often open to allies as well. ERGs can also serve as an internal resource to reduce the risk of improper messaging.



# **CONCLUSIONS AND BEST PRACTICES**

# **Build Inclusivity with Pronouns**

It is important never to assume a person's pronouns. By assuming a person's pronouns, it is possible to send an unintended message that people must look a certain way to be able to use their pronouns. Using the wrong pronouns can be offensive or even harmful. By using a person's pronouns correctly, people can reduce the adverse effects of social oppression. When you use a person's pronouns correctly, you are showing respect and forming an inclusive environment. Encouraging the inclusion of pronouns in email signatures fosters a safe and inclusive workplace.

# **Identify Brand-Safe Environments**

Ensuring your messaging appears in a brand-safe environment is a challenge, for all digital marketers, but also uniquely so for LGBTQ+ marketing inclusion. One approach is to work with your media agency and identify sites where you do not want messaging to appear. You may also want to limit your media buy to premium inventory, employ contextual targeting, or otherwise optimize your media buying to ensure the messaging appears in a brand-safe environment.

# Access LGBTQ+ Purchasing Power

According to recent reports, the LGBTQ+ community has more than \$3.6 trillion in purchasing power globally and more than \$1.0 trillion in the U.S. alone. Additionally, one of the key benefits of LGBTQ+ marketing inclusion identified in this survey is accessing the purchasing power of the community. Although a brand's budget may be limited, reducing risk and taking strategic advantage of targeted marketing that includes the LGBTQ+ community can be key factors in capturing LGBTQ+ purchasing power.

#### LGBTQ+ Forum

Beginning in early 2022, the ANA will launch a new LGBTQ+ Forum to provide a regular meeting place for peer-to-peer learning, benchmarking, and discussion of issues related to advertising/marketing inclusion.



# **APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

### **ANA**

- Resource List of Certified Diverse Suppliers for Marketing/Advertising
- LGBT-Owned Diversity Fair Supplier Participants
- Alliance for Inclusive and Multicultural Marketing
- Multicultural Marketing & Diversity Committee

# **LGBTQ+** Nonprofits

- The Ali Forney Center
- Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
- Family Equality Council
- GLSEN
- It Gets Better Project
- Lambda Legal
- National Center for Transgender Equality
- Point Foundation
- SAGE Advocacy and Services for LGBT Elders
- The Trevor Project

#### Other

- The Visibility Project (GLAAD)
- UCLA School of Law Williams Institute
- National LGBT Chamber of Commerce



# **ABOUT THE ANA**

The ANA (Association of National Advertisers)'s mission is to drive growth for marketing professionals, for brands and businesses, and for the industry. Growth is foundational for all participants in the ecosystem. The ANA seeks to align those interests by leveraging the 12-point ANA Growth Agenda, which has been endorsed and embraced by the ANA Board of Directors and the Global CMO Growth Council. The ANA's membership consists of over 1,400 domestic and international companies, including more than 900 client-side marketers and nonprofit fundraisers and 500 marketing solutions providers (data science and technology companies, ad agencies, publishers, media companies, suppliers, and vendors). Collectively, ANA member companies represent 20,000 brands, engage 50,000 industry professionals, and invest more than \$400 billion in marketing and advertising annually.



# LGBTQ+ MARKETING INCLUSION

**DECEMBER 2021**