

A Study on Rainbow Marketing *Theme Based Approach-Critical Review*

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Abstract:

Despite changes in norms and laws that have brought in relating to issues of homosexual marriages and the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, and queers, the public is not easily accepting them in society. Still, they are sharply divided from the mainstream of society. Increased Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Societies made marketers involve a rainbow theme in their marketing activities. Few corporates felt this move was a part of corporate responsibility and gaining society's attention. Attitudes on the acceptance of advertisements endorsed by different sexual oriented were stereotyped. The effect was both positive and negative with few advertisements criticized by the community. Few Western countries accepted this without much fuss, but in most of the countries in Western and South East Asian countries like India, society is not ready to accept and has made strong criticism. Modifying or withdrawing advertisements after negative criticism from conservative groups was witnessed. Few audiences criticized the rainbow marketing initiative as a pink wash. In this context, this paper tries to present the various corporates who had attempted their advertisement by taking transgender to endorse and the impact. This research is based on Indian Sub-continent consumer and their opinion only. The paper aims to present how corporations can bring a positive impact on society by effectively advertising with a rainbow theme which can give mileage for marketing to impress transgender as the number in their community keeps on increasing.

Key Word: Rainbow, Marketing, Pink-washing, Inclusion, Endorsement

I. BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

Humiliation, ostracism, insult, and denouncement are some of the hateful adjectives that a community of individuals has been enduring whom society considers to have an ill fate or abnormal. We are talking about the trans-gender community whose claps annoy us while commuting in public places, and make us uncomfortable when they sneak into a wedding as unwanted guests or bless a newborn baby. The hatred towards homosexuality in Indian culture stems from the Vedic era as Shastra's prohibited the same gender relations or marriages as illegitimate relations as the couple cannot further the human offspring. Their freedom to love was prohibited until 2018 when they saw the light of day when the Supreme Court announced its historic decision of legalizing the same gender relationship by scrapping section 377.

Corporate India and start-ups have welcomed the Supreme Court judgment on Section 377. Embracing diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace leads to revenue growth and increased profitability. Corporates like - Infosys, Google, Swiggy, Flipkart, Salesforce, IBM, Uber, Ola, and Google Pay colored their logo in rainbow colors on Twitter.

But still, Society in India is not so open-minded to accept advertisements showing LGBTs or LGBTs endorsing the product and service. September 6, 2018 landmark verdict from the Supreme Court of India on decriminalized homosexuality. In a deeply traditional society like India, this was a very bold step to bring Diversity and Inclusion. But that does mean that real India is going to accept LGBTQs as normal. But the mocking of them has come down.

From a marketing perspective, this path-breaking judgment has stirred their thinking. In 2009(As per Forbes India), the LGBTQ community was at 4% of the total population; by 2014 it was 6%. Marketers are now considering the DINK (dual Income No Kids) and free of traditional family structures that require looking after the elderly and kids. This has resulted in marketers concluding that they have higher disposable income. Some progressive and bold marketing companies had gone forward and supported the verdict by small gestures either in terms of supporting hash trends or changing tagline lines.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To create a sense of belongingness and as part of corporate social responsibility, support for homosexuality has increased in the recent past (Ghazaini, Taylor, and Stone, 2016). Few corporations have initiated advertisements by taking gays to endorse through some icons like the pink triangle (Angelini and Bradley, 2010). With a rainbow theme with a pride collection. Some corporates were dared enough to collaborate with influencers on social media like Instagram for brand proliferation. Over some time, an advertisement that was earlier restricted to create awareness and to sensitize society limited to niche marketing has slowly come mainstream. Here it started targeting both homosexuals and heterosexuals (van Driel, and Potter, 2018)When the advertisement aimed at assessing the influencer's identity, the result showed that influencers elicited much-perceived credibility for them and less brand hypocrisy(Minjei Li, 2020). Some studies showed that there was neither impact of advertisement on brand proliferation nor revenue generation. Few studies recorded that there were persuasive effects of rainbow-themed advertisements. These mixed findings did not provide clear evidence as to how to consider the impact of rainbow advertisements.(Gender and Byun , 2015).

A study's independent variable is the number of LGBTQ people living in the US. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, LGBTQ stands for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (one's gender identity)". The plus sign (LGBTQ+) is used to denote a variety of inclusive ways to indicate the identities of different people when referring to one's sexual orientation and gender identity. During emerging adulthood (ages 18 to 25), people typically configure their self-identity and take on new social roles. Sexual and gender identity development also happens within social interactions, and Arnett (2000), Balsam & Mohr (2007), Frost & Meyer (2009), and McCarn & Fassinger (1996) as cited in Parmenter et al., 2020 state that the LGBTQ+ community is one of three sources of support for identity exploration and seeking support within larger non-affirming. Depending on the study, different data is reported. For example, a 2011 study estimated that 9 million Americans identify as LBGT, while other estimates range between 1.7% and 5.7% of all American adults who identify as LBGTQ (Coffman et al., 2017; Gates 2011, as cited in Eisend & Hermann, 2020). These demographic characteristics are based on self-reported data that suffers from biases due to the sensitivity of the subject matter. The LGBTQ+ Rights Movement is still going strong today, having begun in the twentieth century as the Gay Liberation/LGBT Rights Movement (History.com, 2017). "In the past few decades, the visibility of and positive public opinion toward homosexuality in society have increased considerably" describes how often the LGBTQ population is in the news around the country. The LGBTQ community had a \$1 trillion buying power in 2017 as a result of its greater visibility (Ghaziani et al., 2016; Chesney, 2017, as referenced in Eisend & Hermann, 2020). Since the LGBTQ+ community is now seen as a distinct market, more research has been conducted to focus on how members of this community differ from others in terms of their purchasing habits. According to Eisend and Hermann (2020), "We provide a more realistic portrayal of the "homosexual consumer" by highlighting differences in consumption-favoring behaviors, evaluations, and traits between homosexual and heterosexual consumers and

between lesbian and gay consumers." Social responsibility advertising strategies, like "pride collection" or special edition items targeted at the LBGTQ+ millennial population, are one method firms believe they may demonstrate empathy and support for these particular consumers (Champlin & Li, 2020).

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

Statement of the problem: Attitudes on the acceptance of advertisements endorsed by different sexual oriented were stereotyped. The effect was both positive and negative with few advertisements criticized by the community. Few Western countries accepted this without much fuss, but in most of the countries in Western and South East Asian countries like India, society is not ready to accept and has made strong criticism. Modifying or withdrawing advertisements after negative criticism from conservative groups was witnessed. Few audiences criticized the rainbow marketing initiative as a pink wash. In this context, this paper tries to present the various corporates who had attempted their advertisement by taking transgender to endorse and the impact. This research is based on Indian Sub-continent consumer and their opinion only.

Methods:

An online survey was developed to collect quantitative data with questions about Pride Month campaigns and LGTBQ+ issues to gain insights from the target market. Because of the short survey period, two primary non-probability methods—convenience and snowball—were used to sample participants. Being at least eighteen years old and exhibiting a basic understanding of Pride Month, the LBGTQ+ community, and/or recent advertisements with an LBGTQ theme were the primary qualifications for candidacy.

This research follows both descriptive and qualitative studies. The researcher has carried out a critical review and collected secondary data to explore the problem identified. The data is collected from reliable sources such as Statista, Ipsos, and Websites from organizations for transgender, published research papers, and company websites. The analysis was carried out with the help of MS Excel for further exploration. As a source of information we closely followed Pride Month, the LBGTQ+ community, and/or recent campaigns featuring an LBGTQ theme.

THEME 1: Impact of scrapping Article 377 on Corporates.

Research Question 1: Organizations positive effect of Rainbow marketing

THEME2: Impact of Rainbow Marketing

Research Question 2: Sustainable effort in addressing this LBGTQ group.

THEME 3: Do Gay customers need a special approach by companies?

How they will be traced out.

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table No.1: Table showing the reaction by Corporates on social media to the Supreme Court judgment on Section 377

Zomato	Let’s get one thing straight. Love is Love
Netflix	Today’s a good day#LovesLove
Uber India	#Moveforward, ride with #pride
Britannia’s Good day	Ridges of biscuits were splashed with rainbow colors
Starbucks in India	Pride in every cup
Café Coffee Day	A lot can happen over a coffee for everyone
Yatra.com	Limited period offers for Honeymoon package starting 377/-
Star Gold	Video showing couples expressing their love with the song Pyaar Kiya to Darna Kya

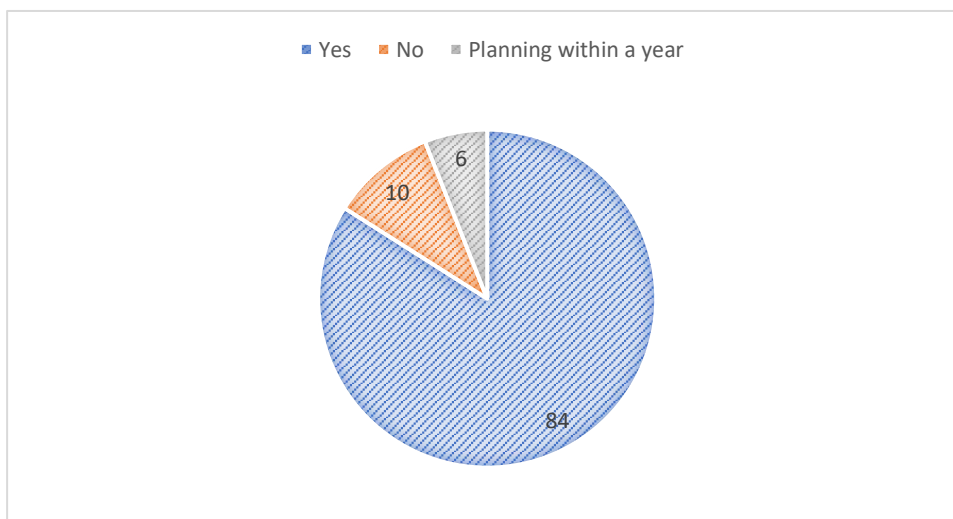


Fig 1: Global firms supporting Non- Non-Discrimination Policy for LBGQT+

Companies considering the inclusion of the LBGQT community have increased warmly, and it is a good sign for the development of the economy. Close to 85 percent of the companies globally support the non-discrimination act, which is expected to increase in the coming years.

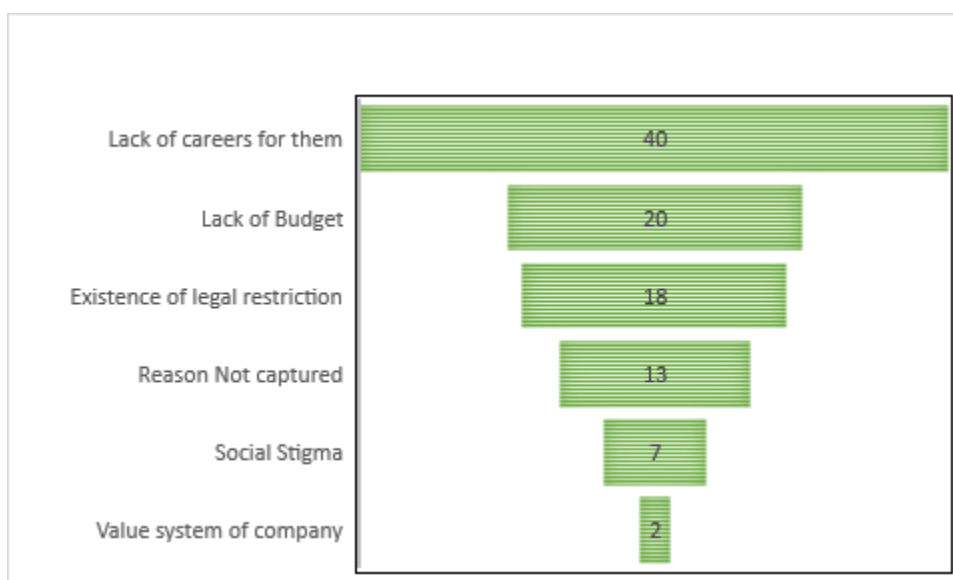


Fig 2: Reasons as Identified for Discrimination by Global Firms

The water flow chart exhibits that companies discriminate against LBGQT people because they do not have enough career opportunities and job roles for them in

their organization. Further, the presence of legal restriction would be the other significant reason. Today’s corporate culture is wide open to frame their policies, a small initiative can make a big difference. Organizations should be open enough to do the same. This clearly shows that there is a still barrier exist for the upliftment of the same, which needs to be addressed.

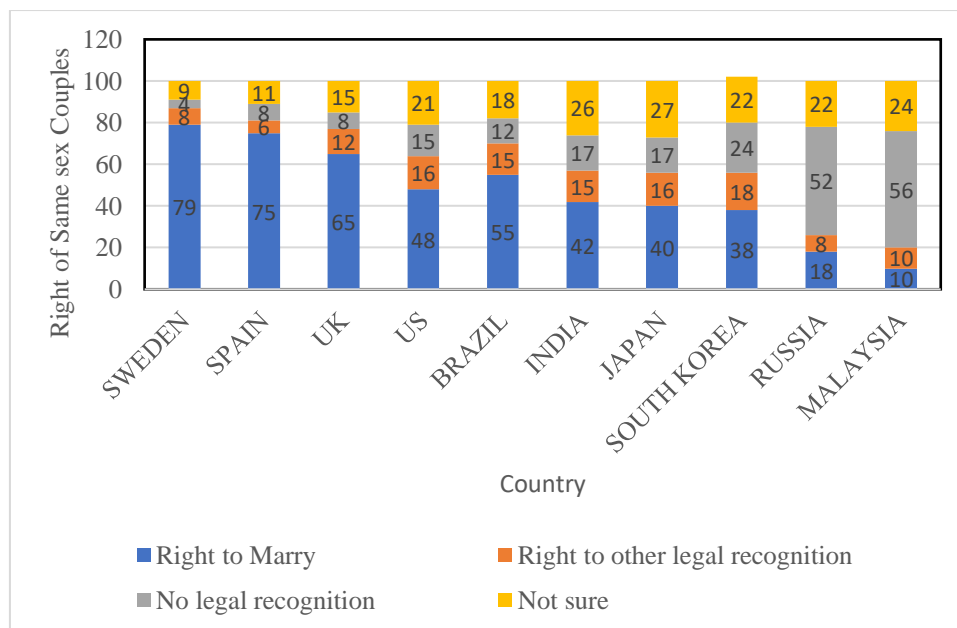


Fig 3: Opinion regarding rights of same-sex people
 Source: Statista, Ipsos

A survey conducted among 19000 respondents whose age group lies between 16 to 74 in nine countries results that Sweden has a very great openness to support the right of couples to marry of the same sex, followed by Spain, the UK, Brazil, the US, India, Japan, South Korea, Russia, and Malaysia. American and European Nations support largely. In 2005, Canada was the fourth nation to legalize same-sex marriage to address the equality of the same. The support for gay marriage is moderate in India. A developing nation like our country has a long way to go.

Table No.2: Table showing the advertisement content

Company/Brand	Year	Advertisement content	Tag line
Pepsi	2010	Potential groom projected as gay earlier	Youngistaan ka wow
Fastrack	2013	Asked people to let go of societal norms	Come out of the closet <i>Move on</i>
Dabur	2021	Fem bleach and Karvachaut	Withdrew
Ariel	2021	Aspiring journey of Dr. V S Priya - Kerala’s first transgender doctor	#Make It Possible
Brooke Bond red red-label	2016	Six transgender creating a musical band	Hum hai Happy

Brooke Bond red red-label	2020	The transgender offers her a steaming cup of tea from her tea stall	Swad Apnepan Ka campaign
Vicks	2018	Transgender adopted daughter and unfair treatment	Touch of care
Bhima Jewellers	2021	transwoman transitioning with the support of her parents as she tries on jewelry	Pure as Love
Anouk from Myntra	2015	ethnic wear for gay couples	Bold is beautiful
Urban Company	2017	mother making preparations to celebrate her daughter's 'First Women's Day, after sex-change surgery	Come Out for Love
OkCupid	2019	Individuals from the queer community aimed to highlight their dating life	#LoveAtFirstPride
Close Up	2018	gay couple and their love stories	Break the barrier
Ralco Tyres	2016	everyday life of a trans individual in India where she is not allowed to board public commuting vehicles	
RedLotus	2014	transgender models in a fashion shoot to showcase a sari collection	
Times of India	2014	inviting them to the Sindoor Khela	No Conditions Apply
Amul's	2009	two women celebrating the verdict By the Supreme Court	Out of the closet, out of the fridge
Ray-Ban	2013		Never Hide
Levi's	2019	inspiring members of the pride community who have continued	Proud to be more

		to defy the odds and accomplished	
Tinder	2020	'Pride' celebration from home	'Pride'
Dunzo	2021	queer mascots	Carelines Ringaraj (She/Her) and Jusmeet (They/Them).

Some experts feel that companies could also face blowback from those who oppose the verdict. “Certain outfits have expressed their displeasure with the judgment. They could start trolling the brands that are coming out in its support. While some can face the backlash, especially those that have been consistently associated with the cause, others who are simply flirting with the moment, may find themselves in hot water,” said a senior brand manager with a top consumer goods firm.

Experts assert that rainbow packaging alone is insufficient, as consumers are becoming increasingly critical of the products they purchase. For example, firms that have a history of giving hundreds of millions of dollars to lawmakers who support anti-trans legislation are being called out for pretending to support the LGBTQ+ community.



Source: *Spartacus International Gay Guide*, It can also accessed from Statista

Prioritizing the inclusiveness of LBGQTQ, among 27 countries in 2021 a survey was conducted to understand the opinion of respondents concerning rights of the LBGQTQ individuals. The Best-rated countries in the Gay Travel Index 2023, were resented with the help of the above world map in Figure 4. The survey exhibits that one of the safest destinations is Malta followed by European countries, which has a group strength of 12, meaning out of 27 countries surveyed 12 are European countries, which is also identified as significant in addressing the equality of gay marriage. Based on the mobility of the LBGQTQ community, rainbow marketing can be strategized particularly to have a keen focus. Brands can engage their customers, increase visibility, enhance brand value, and gain competitive advantage.

GAY-FRIENDLY BRANDS



Fig: Authors own Online Word Cloud Generator

Source: <https://marketingtherainbow.info/surveys>

The response from a survey regarding the open-ended question to list five gay-friendly brands, and the response was overwhelming and generated a vast variety of responses. From the above figure, it is known to us that strangely there were no clear winners but the top most gay-friendly brands were presented in the word cloud generator, showing that “ as more and more importance is laid on the equal rights and equality to the LBGTQ community, it will influence how gay consumer make decision which has to be hold on as prime importance in Rainbow marketing.



Burger King's Proud Whopper: Inside and Out (Target Group)

One sample of the gay-friendly product was presented here projecting the rainbow-coloured paper wrapped on the whopper as the same product but held a special message for the customers “We are all the same inside.”

Additionally, even though companies may highlight the community heavily during Pride Month, many still need to improve how they represent LGBTQ+ people in their ads during the rest of the year. As soon as June 1st arrived, companies changed their social media avatars to rainbow-colored variations, sent messages of support, and unveiled a ton of Pride-related merchandise. If a company decides to

launch a Pride campaign but has previously engaged in acts that contradict the cause, customers may perceive the company as gullible and self-serving.

Therefore, astute consumers are aware of whether a brand features the LGBTQ+ community in its advertisements year-round, whether it hires LGBTQ+ people and places them in leadership positions, and whether it provides resources and legislative support for the community when it changes its social media avatar to a rainbow version of itself or otherwise shows support in June. And the sentiment is hollow if the brand doesn't.

V. CONCLUSION

According to the study, there were more significant outcomes and interactions with brand statuses. This implies that the brand's standing and its upmarket or downscale nature are more important to customers. Upmarket brands encourage greater contact since it helps distinguish the customer. It matters more to customers how they represent a brand when they choose a particular restaurant or lodging than if the establishment accepts the LGBTQ+ community or not. If we examine the results more closely, we may observe that, among downscale firms, rainbow shed advertisements are more beneficial for public service providers like restaurants—McDonald's, in particular—than they are for Super8. This is consistent with the notion that rainbow advertisements are preferred for highly visible brands where a consumer's use won't compromise their identity or image. On the other hand, a rainbow-free advertisement is preferred for a motel or other private service provider. The upmarket results indicate that consumers prefer higher-end products because they help them project a particular image to society. Examining the data more closely, preference does not significantly differ depending on whether a luxury company supports the LGBTQ+ community. More precisely, though, the research indicates that when it comes to luxury goods, advertisements without rainbows are somewhat more popular than those with rainbows.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS & LIMITATIONS

There are still some things that may be learned from this study even though none of the hypotheses was significant. The study revealed a noteworthy association between the inclination to buy and the perception of the company's kindness after watching the Skittles commercial. Through its pride advertisements, participants perceived the Skittles brand as attempting to establish a more meaningful relationship with them. As a brand already associated with the rainbow, Skittles adopted a very different and in-depth strategy than other companies, which appears to have helped them establish a connection with the participants. This study shows marketers that a meaningful consumer appeal, like the one made by the Skittles Pride campaign, can increase sales. Given that the Skittles brand is centered around a rainbow, extending the rainbow to the LGBTQ+ community was an effective strategy for fostering a relationship with consumers, as seen by the study's substantial finding linking purchase intention to social responsibility. Adopting a structured questionnaire to measure the real importance marketers as well as companies have considered for the inclusion of LBGTQ can be studied further. This study follows a critical review and theme-based approach, further with the help of secondary data a bibliometric analysis can be carried out to identify the interest of the researchers and the importance that the countries consider the LBGTQ community as a customer potential group can be extracted. A comparative study will also help the foundation to be strong and exposed to a different culture and their perception.

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