

OVER THE RAINBOW: HOW BRANDS CAN TAKE ACTION WITH ADVERTISING BEYOND PRIDE MONTH

DEMOGRAPHICS 07-19-2021

Pride month is over—now what? The month that celebrates the LGBTQ+ community took a while to take root, but June has become the main time when marketers pull out their rainbow branding and feature LGBTQ+ people in their ads—all in an effort to connect with these consumers. With spending power that investment research firm [LGBT Capital estimates](#) at \$3.7 trillion globally, LGBTQ+ consumers know their worth and expect [representation in content](#) and advertisements throughout the year that reflect it. Attempts to cash in on Pride aren't only easy to spot, they're especially jarring for LGBTQ+ people, who still experience discrimination and run the risk of losing their human rights as a result of proposed legislations. Showing solidarity and support in June is great, but there's still a lot to be done year-round to advance equality for LGBTQ+ people.

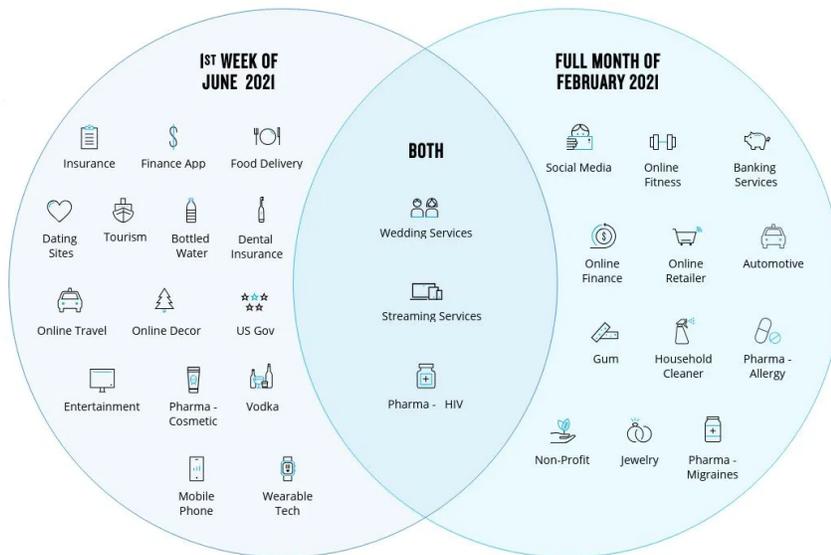
Brands engaging in “rainbow capitalism” without consistently demonstrating value to or tangible support of the LGBTQ+ community are under scrutiny by LGBTQ+ consumers and their allies. Support for a community means more than statements or parades. With more than 50% of consumers expecting the companies they buy from to support the causes they care about, they are looking for more ongoing action, advocacy and inclusion. Without that authentic support, building brand awareness and winning business from LGBTQ+ consumers and allies will prove challenging in this evolving marketplace.

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LGBTQ+ consumers are looking to brands to expand their inclusive messaging throughout the year, and these efforts are a key way that advertisers can build ongoing connections with this community. Outside of Pride Month, [Nielsen Ad Intel](#) data shows that ads with representation of LGBTQ+ people are hard to find on TV. In fact, just one week of primetime advertisements in June 2021 aired a more diverse selection of ad categories featuring or targeting LGBTQ+ consumers than the entire month of February. Naturally, brands are rushing to celebrate during the month of June, but if that is the only time they're engaging or representing LGBTQ+ people, they may be missing the mark. The lack of LGBTQ+ inclusive ads at other times throughout the year shows there's room for improvement.

Given the lack of LGBTQ+ inclusive ads outside of June, there's a significant opportunity for brands to increase representation of LGBTQ+ people in their ads without having to compete with all the other Pride-focused campaigns. Based on Nielsen Ad Intel data for February 2021, for example, just 1% of the nearly 10,000 unique ads placed in primetime linear television had LGBTQ+ representation (people, topics, themes, etc.) in their creative. While the percentage is low on its own, it becomes even more striking when you consider that many of the brands that were corporate sponsors of Pride Month festivities had no LGBTQ+ representation in their February primetime TV advertising. In fact, only two of the 48 brands running 1,000 ads or more in February included LGBTQ+ representation. When LGBTQ themes were present in ads, the brands represented were overwhelmingly in the pharma category, representing 16% of the total inclusive ad volume.

AD CATEGORIES WITH LGBTQ REPRESENTATION



Source: Nielsen Ad Intel
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The progress made since the historic Stonewall Riots that inspired Pride to the mainstream parades and marches of today are changes worthy of celebration. But the fight continues, and media has a critical role to play—from [more nuanced targeting](#) to increasingly diverse storytelling on TV. As many content creators across television embrace this opportunity for representation, it's no surprise that two of the top advertisers (based on number of unique ads) featuring LGBTQ+ representation in February were streaming services.

HOW CAN ADVERTISERS AVOID THE FLAVOR-OF-THE-MONTH APPROACH TO ENGAGING LGBTQ+ CONSUMERS AND ALLIES?

Start with a commitment to ongoing and long-term interactions with the LGBTQ+ community—not just promotions during June. Today's savvy consumers are even more wary of superficial brand behavior after a year that upended the status quo. Brand messaging once a year won't be enough if you really [want your brand to break through](#). Working with media that's focused on the community, like [Revry](#), is one way to maintain engagement year round.

“AT REVRY, WE DON'T JUST SEE THE VALUE OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY YEAR-ROUND, WE LIVE IT. WE KNOW THE IMPACT FOR QUEER AUDIENCES AND CONSUMERS SEARCHING FOR ACCURATE AND NUANCED REPRESENTATION IN CONTENT. AND WE KNOW THE VALUE OUR AUDIENCES PRESENT TO BRANDS THAT INVEST IN TARGETING OUR COMMUNITY WITH RESPECT AND HUMANITY.”

DAMIAN PELLICIONE, REVRY CO-FOUNDER AND CEO

Ensure that your brand messaging is authentic to what matters to LGBTQ+ people—like equality, community wellbeing, culture and policy. In a recent [GLAAD study](#), senior management at ad agencies supported featuring LGBTQ+ people in campaigns, but felt that their teams lacked the expertise and knowledge to get the representation “right,” a disconnect that may be driving reluctance to expand LGBTQ+ inclusive brand messaging. Agencies and advertisers can work to close this gap by engaging with organizations like GLAAD and empowering LGBTQ+ business resource groups in their companies to educate their colleagues

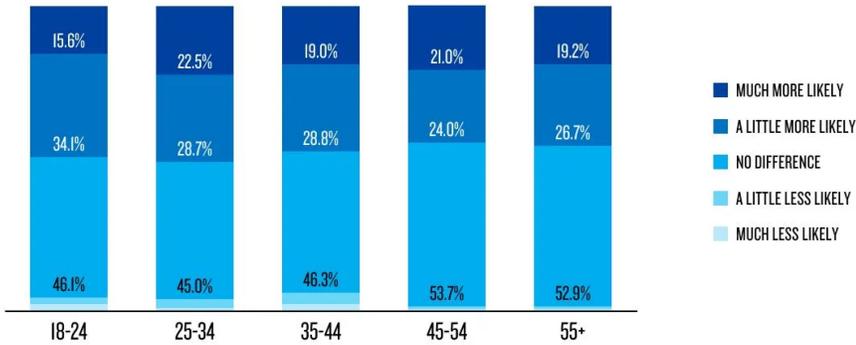
Next, build diversity into your business strategy. Brands must understand that intersectional diversity isn't a special summer event, it's our new normal. Not only is Generation Z the [most racially and ethnically diverse](#) generation in the U.S., [one in six adults](#) in the Gen Z age group identify as a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Nielsen data shows young people expect the media and brands they engage with to embrace a

standard of representation and inclusion true to their lived experience. In Nielsen's recent Attitudes on Representation on TV survey, half of the respondents aged 18-24 said they were more likely to watch content featuring someone from their identity group and more likely to purchase from brands that advertise in that inclusive content.

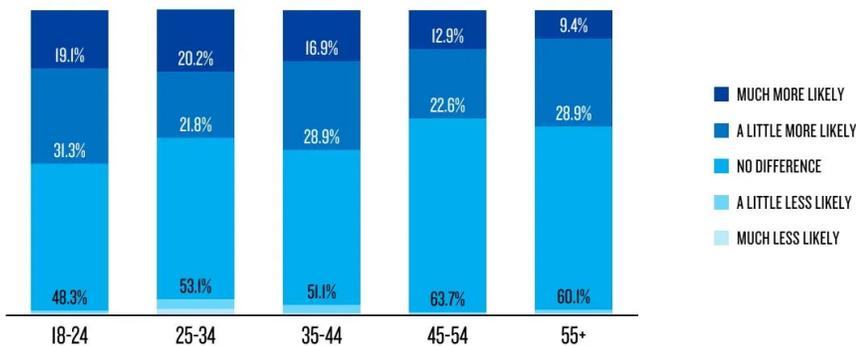


LIKELIHOOD TO BUY BRANDS WITH INCLUSIVE ADS

Q3: Are you more or less likely to watch content featuring someone from your identity group?



Q4: Are you more or less likely to buy products from brands that advertise on content featuring someone from your identity group?



Source: Nielsen Computer & Mobile Panel, Attitudes on Representation on TV Survey, May 2021
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Traditional television content and ads aren't the only place LGBTQ+ audiences are looking for authentic representation. Brands should also work to deepen digital connections—it's where LGBTQ+ people have created lasting allies and a borderless sense of community. Streaming and sharing video content makes digital engagement a must for connecting your brand to LGBTQ+ consumers. [LGBTQ+ usage of YouTube](#) alone outpaces the general population by more than a third and these consumers are more likely to be heavy social media users—particularly for visually driven ad-supported platforms like Instagram. There are LGBTQ+ people in every community every day of the year, and your ad strategy should reflect that.

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<https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/article/2021/over-the-rainbow-how-brands-can-take-action-with-advertising-beyond-pride-month/>