

The Impact of Religious Beliefs on Consumer Reactions to LGBTQ+ Advertising

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Abstract:

The increasing visibility and acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community in the post-modern era has led to a rise in the use of LGBTQ+ themed advertisements by brands. However, the effectiveness of such advertisements may be influenced by consumers' religious beliefs. This study investigates the role of religious commitment and affiliations in shaping consumers' attitudes toward gay and lesbian-themed advertisements, brand perceptions, and purchase intentions. A two-study approach was employed. In Study 1, we explored whether the religious commitment of heterosexual consumers influences their attitudes toward homosexuality, gay- and lesbian-themed advertisements, as well as their attitudes toward the brands featured in these ads and their purchase intentions. In Study 2, we examined the impact of religious affiliations—specifically Christianity and Islam—on attitudes toward gay- and lesbian-themed advertisements. Both studies utilized an experimental design involving 284 participants from South Africa, representing the two major religious groups in the country: Christians and Muslims. Study 1 revealed that religious commitment negatively influenced attitudes toward homosexuality and the brands featured in lesbian- and gay-themed ads, yet positively impacted attitudes toward the ads themselves. Study 2 found significant differences between Christians and Muslims regarding their responses to ads featuring homosexual imagery. Christians showed a clear preference for heterosexual-themed ads, while Muslims displayed positive attitudes toward both heterosexual and gay-themed ads but expressed negative attitudes toward lesbian-themed ads. These findings provide valuable insights for brands seeking to engage religious communities with LGBTQ+ content and offer implications for marketers aiming to balance religious sensibilities with inclusivity in their advertising strategies.

Keywords: Religious commitment, gay and lesbian-themed ads, homosexuality

Track: Advertising & Marketing Communication