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## **LGBTQ-THEMED ADVERTISING: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the past five decades, researchers from a wide variety of disciplines such as marketing, psychology, sociology, and health have produced relevant documents on advertising targeting LGBTQ consumers. Nevertheless, it resulted in a fragmented knowledge that creates a real challenge for researchers in tracing the evolution of the research focus. This focus has moved from the debate on how to present gay imagery to the comparison of mainstream and gay window ads, and later to the analysis of the effects of advertising targeting LGBTQ consumers, considering the gender of participants and actors. More recently, the research focused on the measure of attitudes toward advertising and homosexuality (Gong, 2019; Oakenfull et al., 2008; Puntoni et al., 2011) and processing advertising information (Bhat et al., 1998).

We apply bibliometric analysis to enhance the understanding of advertising targeting LGBTQ consumers. We aim to uncover research trends by closely examining thematic clusters, assessing the maturity of the research topic, and suggesting potential directions for future studies.

## METHODOLOGY

Researchers from different fields use bibliometric analysis when studying various marketing topics, such as brand relationships and comparative advertising (Donthu et al., 2021). Our paper considers the best practices that should be followed to overcome the limitations of this type of analysis (Archambault and Gagné, 2024; Donthu et al., 2021; Keathley-Herring et al., 2016; Snyder, 2019), namely potential biases in selection and interpretation associated with qualitative reviews (Montecchi et al., 2024).

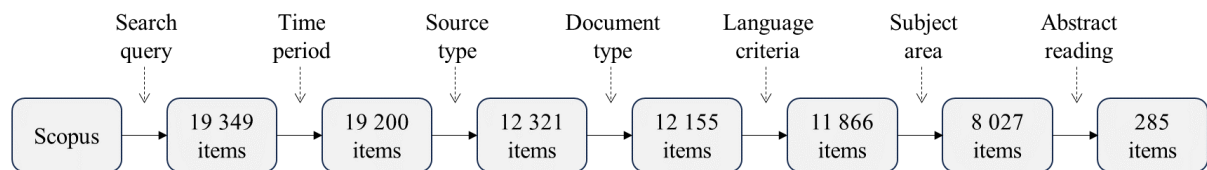


Figure 1: Summary of the screening process (authors' elaboration)

In February 2024, we obtained 19,349 papers from Scopus, the largest high-quality multidisciplinary database for peer-reviewed literature in social science research (Donthu et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2021; Veloutsou et al., 2021). We targeted focal keywords (such as lgb\*, glb\*, queer, gay, lesbian, transgender, homosexual) and contextual keywords (e.g., adverti\*) within the titles, abstracts, and keywords of documents, covering publications from 1976 to 2023. Our focus was solely on journals and conference proceedings, considering articles, reviews, and conference papers. We excluded non-English-language documents and those outside the scope of Social Sciences, Business, Management, and Accounting, Economics, Econometrics, and Finance, and Multidisciplinary subject areas.

Based on the final dataset, we scrutinized titles, keywords, and abstracts of all retrieved documents, resulting in the exclusion of 7,742 documents that were outside the study's scope. The next step consisted in eliminating duplicates and erroneous entries, such as articles without authors, and adding missing information, following the guideline that each author should have only one valid affiliation at the time of publication (Donthu et al., 2021). Additionally, we corrected misspellings in keywords, standardized words, ignored differences between singular and plural forms, acronyms, mixed wording, and variations between American and British English.

## RESULTS

We used different bibliometric techniques described by Donthu et al. (2021) that allowed us to identify the most productive countries, journals, influential authors, papers, and research clusters.

We divided the 285 documents into three periods of time, based on insights from the queer theory (Kates, 1999): 1976-2011, 2012-2019, and 2020-2023. The average yearly publications were 4, 11, and 26, respectively, suggesting a growing academic interest in the topic of advertising targeting LGBTQ consumers. Documents with North American (174) and European (56) affiliations account for 93%, 84%, and 76% of each period, respectively. Representing a quarter of the citations, 47.72% of the documents were published between 2017 and 2023.

The top 5 journals, all ranked in Scimago's Q1 category (SCImago, 2023), account for a quarter of the documents retrieved in Scopus: Journal of Homosexuality (35), Journal of Advertising (16), International Journal of Advertising (8), Tobacco Control (7), and Journal of Advertising Research (6). The 142 journal titles that published the 285 documents reflect a broad spectrum of research interests, and the high quality of these sources is assured by 89% of the journals classified as Q1 and Q2.

Among the 545 authors that contributed to the 285 publications, 105 researchers solely authored 120 items, while the remaining collaborated as co-authors. Notably, Ciszek E. and Oakenfull G.K. each have an H-Index of 6, with 7 and 6 publications, respectively. Um H.-H. and Eisend M. present an H-Index of 5, supported by 6 and 5 publications respectively. Although Grier S.A. ranks in fifth with an H-Index of 4, based in 4 articles, he is a co-author of the 2 most highly cited articles with 216 and 191 citations.

Using VOSViewer, we have identified 6 keyword clusters. The top keywords, collectively accounting for half of the occurrences, are advertising, human, male, female, homosexuality, adult, article, lesbian, gender, LGBTQ, sexuality, marketing, and United States.

## **FINDINGS**

Our study corroborates the idea that academic research focus shifted from the debate over whether to include homosexuality imagery in advertising to the study of factors influencing perceptions of homosexuality (Gong, 2019). During the 1990's, brands applied techniques like gay window advertising, using ambiguous images of sexual preferences to create ads identifiable by LGBTQ consumers while remaining vague to mainstream consumers. Another

technique involved the use of implicit gay imagery, such as iconography and symbolism (Grier and Brumbaugh, 1999; Penalzoa, 1996). However, recent studies suggest that including homosexual portrayals in mainstream advertising may be less risky than marketers expect, as it may not negatively affect consumer attitudes toward the brand and the product, nor consumer purchase intentions (Holz Ivory, 2019). The selection of keywords by authors over time reinforce this conclusion.

The analysis also unveils new focuses of research on advertising targeting LGBTQ consumers: the studies exploring representation and storytelling, considering authentic stories as tools for inclusion (Zayer et al., 2023), and the emergence of rainbow-washing topic points out the growing attention to the authenticity of LGBTQ-focused advertising efforts (Zayer et al., 2023).

## **CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

Our study is the first bibliometric analysis on the topic of advertising targeting LGBTQ consumers. We integrate publications from various disciplines, not only contributing to the broad understanding of the evolution, status, and trends of the research topic, but also proposing future research directions.

Our contribution for managers consists in the identification of contemporary concerns, namely authenticity issues, that will benefit the companies advertising strategies and the way they communicate with LGBTQ consumers.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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