Beyond targeted advertising: Representing disenfranchised minorities in 'inclusive' advertising

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Abstract   The authors compare the responses of non-distinctive majority viewers (ie 'straight') and distinctive minority viewers (ie 'gay') to majority-targeted ads, minority-targeted ads and inclusive ads, which juxtapose majority and minority characters in a compatible manner. The study further investigates gay representation in inclusive ads. The results reveal that the non-stereotypical gay images in inclusive ads induce a less negative attitude among straight viewers. In addition, gay viewers' responses toward gay ads and inclusive ads are equally favourable. The results highlight the potential of inclusive ads with non-stereotypical images of minorities to communicate effectively with minority consumers without alienating the majority.

KEYWORDS: inclusive advertising, multicultural advertisement, LGBT, stereotype, minority-targeted ads

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s, scholars have increasingly recognised a multicultural trend in the United States' evolving mass market, which today encompasses a kaleidoscope of subcultures — including disenfranchised minority groups.[1,2] In response to the highly fragmented and diversified multicultural marketplace, targeted advertising that directs marketing communication efforts to appeal to consumers based on their common characteristics or shared needs[3] has been embraced as a crucial and indispensable strategy.

The practical economic challenge of creating customised targeted ads for each niche market, however, presents strategic difficulties for advertisers. Furthermore, concerns have been raised about the non-target market effects, usually negative, from consumers not in the intended target market who may feel isolated or excluded. What makes minority targeted advertising a more risky strategy is the heightened political tension associated with targeting controversial minorities, as illustrated by various boycotts against companies targeting the gay and lesbian community.[4,5]

Within the multicultural market in the United States, one important but under-researched social minority group is the gay and lesbian community.[6,7] Considering the longstanding stigma attached to homosexuality, many marketers have embraced the cautious 'gay window' or 'gay vague' advertising as a 'win–win' solution (p. 197).[8] The strategy advocates using ambiguous gay symbols and subtext in advertising to appeal to gay consumers. Puntoni *et al.*,[9] however, reported negative non-target effects in straight consumers' response to gay window ads, suggesting the limited effect of the ambiguous strategy. Furthermore, the evasive gay window strategy has also been criticised for perpetuating gay invisibility to the heterosexual majority since gayness is merely hinted at and only recognisable to gay viewers.[9,10]

With recent advances in the gay rights movements and an increasing visibility of gay people in the mass media, many gay consumers are now likely to prefer seeing explicit messages that unequivocally validate their target audience status. Marketing commentators have argued that, as the gay culture goes mainstream, so must advertising to gay consumers. Targeted campaigns in gay media are no longer considered the most cost-efficient way to reach gay consumers.[11] Specifically, gay rights organisations have advised advertisers to reach gay consumers by integrating gay

characters into mainstream campaigns instead of merely creating gay-targeted messages for gay media.[12] Tsai[7] similarly reported that assimilationist ideologies may predispose gay consumers to prefer multicultural campaigns that depict the gay community as coexisting harmoniously and equally with their straight majority. Furthermore, the latest Gallup poll found that the majority of Americans (55 per cent) now support gay marriage,[13] indicating an increasing acceptance of gays and lesbians and the possibility of targeting gay consumers as well as straight consumers in a universal campaign on mainstream media. Indeed, such an integrationist approach that celebrates the diversity and individualism of the modern multicultural consumer market has become an emerging trend.[14]

As an identifiable niche market known for its consumer loyalty and advocacy, and with its spending power valued at US$830bn in 2013,[15,16] the gay community has attracted growing marketing dollars. Despite the ongoing boycott threats from anti-gay organisations, brands that have unequivocally recognised the gay experience in their advertising messages have enjoyed vocal and powerful consumer support — both socially and economically — from the gay community and the expanding straight population that supports gay rights. This study thus offers a timely evaluation of various ways to target gay consumers in advertising while taking into account the non-target effect from straight consumers. Additionally, the study seeks to understand the level of persuasion on both gay and straight audiences of using an inclusive appeal based on juxtaposing gay and straight characters in the same ad.

How can advertising achieve the desired targeting effect by depicting gay characters while minimising the negative non-target effect from the straight consumers? Moving away from the ambiguous gay window strategy, the inclusive appeal emerges as the most recent trend of representing gay characters in advertising on mainstream media. For example, Honey Maid's 'This

is Wholesome' 2014 campaign featured families of various racial and cultural backgrounds, including a gay male couple with their two sons, to reflect the evolving family dynamics. The multiculturalism of such ads serves to reduce the salience and distinctiveness of minority images while focusing on a shared consumer need and the commonality of the characters.[17] By communicating with majority and minority consumers simultaneously via the same ad, marketers may benefit from the economies of a universal campaign and use of mainstream media, while also gaining the loyalty of minority consumers without weakening the bond with the majority constituency.[17,18] This approach also frames minorities within the context of a multicultural society, inspiring and validating those who hope for an assimilated status and a mainstream membership. Strategic insights on the effects of such inclusive appeal will be particularly valuable in planning advertising campaigns befitting the evolving sociopolitical environment in today's multicultural and politics–laden marketplace.

Despite the potential usefulness of this inclusive strategy, however, little knowledge has been gained about majority and minority audiences' responses to inclusive advertising — ads that juxtapose both majority and minority characters in a compatible manner. To bridge the research gap, the authors compared straight and gay audiences' responses to inclusive ads with ads that are exclusively straight-targeted and gay-targeted. In order to explicitly depict gay characters, this study focuses on the images of gay male couples, and further examines the effect of gay stereotypes in inclusive ads on straight audiences' responses. Specifically, given media's gendered portrayal of gay male couples (p. 68)[19] where one man is often portrayed to take the feminine role and the other plays the masculine role,[20] the authors operationalise stereotypicality by varying the combination of gender expression of the gay couple in the ads. Based on prior

research, the authors hypothesise that the targeting effect of gay ads is stronger for gay viewers than that of straight ads for straight consumers. Moreover, the non-target effect of gay ads on straight consumers is expected to be more pronounced than that of straight ads on gay consumers. Regarding the study focus of inclusive appeal, compared to gay-targeted ads, inclusive ads are predicted to mitigate negativity from straight consumers. Lastly, the authors tested the notion that stereotypicality of gender performance of gay couples decreases the persuasiveness of inclusive ads.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
The psychology of target market and non-target market effects

The rich literature has documented the effectiveness of target marketing.[21–23] Target advertising works to increase ad persuasiveness by matching the characteristics of the viewer,[24] as the target market effect is mainly driven by the perceived congruence between the ad characters and the consumers themselves.[21,25] In addition, a viewer's belief about being the intended audience for the ad (ie feelings of targetedness) also contributes to the positive target effect. Although the feeling of similarity with the ad characters can partially explain the targetedness viewers perceived,[24] feelings of being targeted by an ad can also stem independently from creative cues such as songs, language and media placement with which viewers can identify.[26] When viewers do not feel they are the targeted audience, the non-target effect is reflected in the less favourable ad evaluation.

Since sexual orientation is a core part of one's self-construct, straight viewers should prefer ads that exclusively feature straight characters (ie straight ads) than those with gay characters, whereas gay viewers should respond more favourably to gay ads than to straight ads. Furthermore, straight (versus gay) viewers should feel more similar with the characters in the straight (versus gay) ad and feel more targeted by the ad.

Distinctive theory and magnitude of the target and non-target effect

Specific to the study focus on the effect of matching (versus mismatching) of ad character and consumer on the target and non-target effect, distinctiveness theory[27,28] suggests that an individual's numerically rare, distinctive traits (eg Hispanic ethnicity, homosexuality), are central to his or her self-identity and are more salient than common traits such as age, and that distinctive viewers tend to be more sensitive to their distinctive traits. For example, racial and ethnic consumers are more likely than whites to note their race and ethnicity in self-descriptions.[28] Distinctive viewers thus tend to favour ads that highlight traits important to them more intensely.[24,27]

Research indicates that contextual and situational factors can influence perceived distinctiveness.[1] The authors consider two social-contextual dimensions for advertising — viewer distinctiveness and ad source distinctiveness[24,29] — as key factors in predicting ad responses from target and non-target consumers. Viewer distinctiveness refers to the extent of numerical rarity a viewer's identity trait is[29]; ad source distinctiveness addresses whether an ad includes members from a distinctive minority group. Because gay characters have not been widely featured in mainstream advertising, explicitly depicted gay characters constitute a salient dimension of ad distinctiveness. Likewise, gay viewers, compared with straight viewers, are regarded as distinctive viewers.

Additionally, an asymmetry exists in ad response strength from distinctive and non-distinctive viewers when they view an ad source in accordance or discordance with their distinctiveness. Aaker *et al.*[24] showed that distinctive viewers (eg gay viewers, Hispanic viewers) respond more favourably than non-distinctive majority groups (eg straight viewers, Caucasian viewers) to ads that highlight traits of the distinctive viewers. Distinctive viewers also perceive a higher degree of similarity between themselves and the ad's characters, and are more likely to believe that they are the intended audience for the ad.

In terms of the non-target effect, non-distinctive viewers, who are not accustomed to feeling excluded from advertising in mainstream media, generate stronger unfavourable responses including decreased perceived dissimilarity and felt targetedness to ads that feature only distinctive characters.[24,30] By contrast, the negative non-target effects including ad attitude, perceived dissimilarity and felt non-targetedness on distinctive viewers — who are used to seeing ads featuring only majority characters — are weaker than those on non-distinctive viewers.

Based on Distinctiveness theory, the following hypotheses regarding the target and nontarget effect of straight and gay ads among straight and gay viewers are proposed:

H$_{1a}$: *Straight viewers will form more positive attitudes toward straight ads, perceive themselves to be more similar to the characters in these ads, and feel more targeted by these ads, as compared with gay ads.*

H$_{1b}$: *Gay viewers will form more positive attitudes toward gay ads, perceive themselves to be more similar to the characters in these ads, and feel more targeted by these ads, as compared with straight ads.*

H$_{2a}$: *The positive targeting effect in terms of attitudes toward ads, perceived similarity, and felt targetedness will be stronger among gay viewers for gay ads than straight viewers for straight ads.*

H$_{2b}$: *The negative non-target effect in terms of attitudes toward ads, perceived dissimilarity, and felt non-targetedness will be stronger among straight viewers for gay ads than gay viewers for straight ads.*

Using inclusive advertising to reduce the non-target effect

Given that the non-target effect is driven by the dissimilarity consumers perceive between themselves and ad characters, inclusive advertising featuring both straight and gay characters might serve to reduce the perceived incongruence from consumers of either sexual orientation.

A sense of commonality may be evoked to direct consumers' attention to the shared consumption need regardless of sexual orientation to diminish the non–target effect. The limited literature on diversity appeal based on ethnicity[18,31] has provided indirect support for the effectiveness of inclusive advertising. For instance, Avery's (2003) study[31] examined how black and white college students responded to recruitment ads that featured racial diversity of both white and black models. His findings suggest that black viewers are more attracted by ads that depict racial diversity than those with all–white models, while white jobseekers are unaffected as long as white employees remain the numerical majority. Notably, in the context of sport marketing, Cunningham and Melton's[32] experiments revealed that LGBT-inclusive appeal in advertisements (ie 'welcoming environment for persons of all sexual orientations and gender identities') not only enhances consumers' perception that the company offers a diverse and inclusive environment for various minority groups beyond just sexual orientation, but more importantly the inclusive appeal did not produce any negative responses even on straight males with high levels of social dominance. This was noteworthy because this group generally holds negative attitudes to sexual minorities. Hence, the authors predicted that inclusive adverting works to decrease the negative non–target effect.

H₃: *Compared with gay ads, inclusive ads improve straight viewers' response, including ad attitude, perceived similarity, and felt targetedness.*

H₄: *Compared with straight ads, inclusive ads improve gay viewers' response, including ad attitude, perceived similarity and felt targetedness.*

Stereotype versus normalised images of minorities on the non-target effect

This study takes a further step to evaluate how minority stereotypes in inclusive advertising influence the non-target effect. Stereotype has been defined as the set of attributes believed to be associated with a particular social category.[33] One key characteristic of stereotyping is the exaggeration of intergroup differences.[34] Research also suggests that the features that become most associated with a minority group are the characteristics that distinguish the minority the most from the majority.[34] Therefore, stereotypes of minority groups are often distinctiveness based, while the connection between distinctive characteristics and minority groups is often exaggerated or can even be fictional. This phenomenon, known as 'distinctiveness-based illusory correlation' (p. 11),[35] contributes to the misconception of enlarged intergroup differences[36] and becomes the cognitive foundation of stereotypes of social minorities.

Prior research on social identity theory[37] and self–categorisation[38] further suggests that stereotypicality of gay images may inhibit the positivity straight viewers may feel about the ad. This stream of research shows that people constantly categorise themselves based on their prominent group membership,[39] such as gender, race and sexual orientation. Evaluations of the ingroup members tend to be more positive than the outgroup members.[40]

Mummendey and Wenzel[41] suggested that intergroup discrimination is predominantly driven by the greater prototypicality of the superordinate category the ingroups believe their attributes and characteristics have than that of the outgroups. For instance, following the unification of East and West Germany, West Germans might consider typical West German attributes, such as efficiency and diligence, as the prototypical traits of Germans. They would also be more inclined to use these traits as the standard based on which East and West Germans are compared against each other. Consequently, West Germans, the ingroups, would conclude that they were superior to East Germans, the outgroups, and any characteristics deviating from these central traits would lead to the conclusion of inferiority of the outgroups.[41]

Along this line of reasoning, if the ingroups believe a certain trait is prototypical of the superordinate group, the stereotypical portrayal of the outgroups using the same trait as differing from the ingroups should lead to heightened social discrimination against the outgroups.

In the study context of gay representations, one prevailing gay stereotype is the connection between homosexuality and unconventional gender performance and behaviour, such as the stereotypes of effeminate gay men and butch lesbians. The gendered stereotype also extends to straight viewers' perceptions of same-sex couples in which one person must play the feminine role while the other plays the masculine role.[42,43] Such butch–femme gendered stereotypes about gay couples have been found to be prevalently applied to lesbian and gay male couples.[44] Media scholars also indicate that gay male couples are predominantly represented in gendered 'jock/queen' roles on television (p. 175).[20] Based on this operationalisation of gendered stereotypes of gay relationships, the following hypothesis is formed:

H₅: *Stereotypical (versus non-stereotypical) gay images decrease (versus increase) straight viewers' perceived similarity, targetedness, and attitudes to inclusive ads.*

Due to the limited literature on gay consumers' response to their own stereotypes in mass media, no predictions are formulated regarding how gay viewers respond to stereotypical versus non-stereotypical gay images in inclusive ads. On the one hand, minority consumers who are often concerned about invisibility and stigmatisation may appreciate the non-stereotypical images that render them 'just like everyone else', reflecting their aspiration for social acceptance and assimilated mainstream membership.[7] On the other hand, according to dual-identity theory,[45] when minority and majority people are grouped together, the minority individuals prefer keeping their

own unique culture identity by retaining some distinctiveness, and thus may favour stereotypical images that differentiate them from the majority.

METHOD
Ad stimuli

Print ads for a fictitious dental service were created for the study. Three types of advertisements were created to manipulate ad source distinctiveness: (1) straight ads featuring two straight couples; (2) gay ads featuring two gay couples; (3) inclusive ads featuring one stereotypical gay couple and one straight couple; and (4) inclusive ads featuring one non-stereotypical gay couple and one straight couple. In the inclusive ads, images of gay and straight couples were featured in equal prominence and represented in a similar manner.

Different levels of stereotypicality of the gay characters in the ad were created by varying the perceived femininity–masculinity contrast among the gay couples.[42–44] In the ads, one of the stereotypical gay couples included a character wearing a t-shirt in a gender–neutral colour (ie white) and the other wearing a t-shirt in a conventionally feminine colour (ie pink). The other stereotypical gay couple featured one character exhibiting feminine body language by closely hugging the other character, nestling against his partner's waist, while the other character exhibited a more masculine body language by embracing his partner by the shoulders (for examples of the ad stimuli, see the Appendix).

In order to decrease demand effect and lower participants' suspicion about the study purpose, filler ads were used in addition to the focal ad embedded with manipulations. Checking manipulation in the main study, however, either prior to or after the dependent measure in the main experiment, may cause demand effect and create inconsistency with the measures used in the filler ads, and thus may heighten participants'

suspicion.[46] Therefore, we relied on separate pretest studies to test the manipulation.

A pretest was conducted to ensure that the ad stimuli portrayed the femininity–masculinity contrast in the stereotypical gay couple as intended. Eighty-five non-student participants (41 males, median age 41; sexual orientation unidentified) were recruited for an online pretest. Participants were told that the research purpose was to study the changing gender roles in American society. One of the four inclusive ad stimuli portraying one gay couple and one straight couple was randomly presented to the participants, together with four filler ads. Participants were asked to rate the level of masculinity for each character on a seven-point scale, ranging from 1 (extremely feminine) to 7 (extremely masculine). Next, the participants were asked a series of questions to determine the reasons behind their responses. Last, to verify whether the gay couple was perceived as a couple, participants were asked if they thought the male characters were involved in a romantic relationship.

Results of the pretest confirmed that participants perceived a contrast of femininity and masculinity among the stereotypical gay couples. Such a contrast was not perceived in the non-stereotypical gay couple images. Specifically, the male character in a pink t-shirt was rated to be more feminine than the male character in the white t-shirt (M_{pink} = 3.08 versus M_{white} = 3.80, $t(19)$ = 2.82, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, the male character closely hugging the other male character was perceived to be more feminine ($M_{hugging}$ = 1.9 versus $M_{shoulder}$ = 3.2, $t(24)$ = 4.1, $p < 0.005$). Participants' explanations for their responses were further analysed. Participants who detected the femininity–masculinity contrast focused on clothing, body language and facial expression as the key indicators of the gender role played by each character. Finally, 81 per cent of the participants perceived the relationship between the gay characters as a romantic one.

Additionally, to ascertain that the perception of stereotypicality among gay consumers does not differ from straight consumers, the authors conducted another pretest among 65 self-identified gay participants (median age 38) using the same stimuli. The stereotypical gay couples both demonstrated the femininity–masculinity contrast (M_{pink} = 4.15 versus M_{white} = 4.75, $t(19)$ = 3.04, $p < 0.001$; $M_{hugging}$ = 3.5 versus $M_{shoulder}$ = 4.7, $t(13)$ = 5.10, $p < 0.0001$), whereas neither of the non-stereotypical sets showed the pattern.

Participants and design

Two hundred and thirty heterosexual (113 males and 117 females, median age 47) and 261 self-identified gay and lesbian (132 males and 129 females, median age 44) non-student respondents participated in the online experiment. Samples of non-student gay adult respondents were recruited from online consumer panels in the United States in late 2012. The gay consumer panels queried for this study consisted of web users with diverse demographics and were an opt-in, informed-consent, privacy protected participant pool sustained by an international marketing research firm (Survey Sampling, Inc.). To achieve a representative sample, we applied stratified sampling strategies to solicit gay respondents from different age groups, incomes and education levels.

Three (ad source distinctiveness: straight ad versus inclusive ad versus gay ad) × 2 (gay stereotype: stereotypical versus non-stereotypical gay image) between-subject design was employed. Gay stereotype was included in the inclusive and gay ad conditions. Two images of a gay couple were balanced in the inclusive ad condition.

Procedure

Participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to understand attitudes from a diverse group of consumers toward various social issues and different advertising designs.

Each respondent received a set of five ads, including one experimental ad and four filler ads, presented in a random order. After reading each ad, participants were asked to rate their attitudes on three seven-point scales.[24] Next, they were asked to indicate how similar they felt they were to the characters in the ad based on overall lifestyle, cultural background, appearance and basic values on five seven-point scales.[24] They then answered two questions regarding perceived targetedness.[24] Finally, all respondents provided demographic questions at the end of the survey.

RESULTS
Attitudes toward the ad

The authors summed up the scores for participants' attitude to the ad (three-item, $\alpha = 0.98$), perceived similarity (five-item, $\alpha = 0.94$), perceived targetedness (two-item, $\alpha = 0.93$) and created a composite score for each dependent measure. We first performed a 2 (viewer distinctiveness: straight versus gay viewers) × 3 (ad source distinctiveness: straight versus inclusive versus gay ad) × 2 (gay stereotype: stereotypical versus non-stereotypical gay image) analysis of variance (ANOVA) attitudes toward the ad. Viewer distinctiveness was a factor determined by participants' self-reported sexual orientation. The results revealed a significant main effect of ad source distinctiveness, $F(1, 481) = 6.44$, $p < 0.05$, and a main effect for viewer distinctiveness, $F(1, 481) = 137.44$, $p < 0.0001$. More importantly, a two-way interaction between viewer distinctiveness and ad source distinctiveness, $F(1,481) = 10.8$, $p < 0.005$, and a three-way interaction was found, $F(1,481) = 8.23$, $p < 0.005$.

To evaluate whether more positive ad attitudes will be formed when viewer distinctiveness matches ad source distinctiveness (H_{1a}, H_{1b}) and whether inclusive ads improve ad attitudes among straight and gay viewers (H_3, H_4), the authors

decomposed the two-way interaction and performed a simple effect analysis. The results revealed that straight viewers favoured the straight ad over the inclusive ad ($M_{straight/straightad} = 16.29$, $M_{straight/inclusive} = 12.86$, $t(127) = 3.37$, $p < 0.005$), and favoured the inclusive ad over the gay ad ($M_{straight/inclusive} = 12.86$, $M_{straight/gayad} = 9.74$, $t(193) = 3.89$, $p < 0.0001$). Similarly, gay viewers demonstrated a more positive attitude toward the inclusive and gay ads than the straight ad ($M_{gay/gayad} = 18.72$, $M_{gay/straightad} = 15.27$, $t(151) = 5.82$, $p < 0.0001$; $M_{gay/inclusive} = 18.46$, $M_{gay/straightad} = 15.27$, $t(155) = 5.26$, $p < 0.001$), thus confirming H_{1a} and H_{1b}. The results also confirmed H_3 and H_4, which predicted that compared with the straight ad, the inclusive ad elicited fewer negative responses from straight viewers and gay viewers. No significant differences, however, were observed between gay viewers' attitudes toward the gay ad (M = 18.72) and the inclusive ad (M = 18.46) (N.S.).

Moreover, the results confirmed H_{2a}, which predicted that the magnitude of gay viewers' preference for the gay ad and the inclusive ad was greater than straight viewers' favouritism over the straight ad ($M_{gay/gayad} = 18.72$, $M_{straight/straightad} = 16.29$, $t(137) = 3.91$, $p < 0.0001$; $M_{gay/inclusive} = 18.46$, $M_{straight/straightad} = 16.29$, $t(142) = 3.37$, $p < 0.005$). H_{2b} also received support because the negative non-target effect among gay viewers for the straight ad was less than that among the straight viewers for the straight ad ($M_{gay/straight} = 15.27$, $M_{straight/gay} = 9.74$, $t(140) = 6.14$, $p < 0.0005$). The finding was consistent with prior findings that favourable targeting effects are stronger for distinctive viewers, and unfavourable non-target market effects are stronger for non-distinctive viewers.

To assess the moderating role of gay stereotype on the inclusive ad (versus gay ad) (H_5), the authors split the data based on

viewer distinctiveness and examined straight and gay viewers' data separately. We performed a 2 (ad source distinctiveness: inclusive versus gay ad.) × 2 (gay stereotype: stereotypical versus non–stereotypical gay image) ANOVA for each group. Because the straight ads did not have the variation of stereotypicality of gay images, we did not include cells involving straight ads in the data analysis.

The data of straight viewers revealed a main effect of ad source distinctiveness, $F(1, 191) = 9.43$, $p < 0.005$, and a marginal two-way interaction between ad source distinctiveness and stereotypicality of gay image, $F(1, 191) = 3.57$, $p = 0.06$. By decomposing the two-way interaction and conducting a planned comparison, we found that among straight viewers, the non–stereotypical inclusive ad was rated better than the stereotypical inclusive ad ($M_{straight/nonstereotype} = 13.44$ versus $M_{straight/stereotype} = 11.35$, $t(93) = 1.63$, $p < 0.05$ (one-tailed), while the difference induced by gay stereotype was not found on attitudes toward the gay ad (not significant). These suggest that normalised rather than stereotypical gay images in inclusive ads indeed significantly improve straight viewers' attitudes toward the ad (see Table 1), confirming **H₅**.

A post hoc analysis was performed on the gay viewers' data, which revealed a two-way interaction between ad source distinctiveness and stereotypicality of gay image, $F(1, 209) = 2.89$, $p < 0.05$. Although

gay viewers did not show any difference in response to the stereotypicality of gay images in the inclusive ad, however, when responding to gay ads, gay viewers favoured non-stereotypical (versus stereotypical) gay characters ($M_{gay/nonstereotype} = 19.43$ versus $M_{straight/stereotype} = 18.09$, $t(102) = 2.24$, $p < 0.05$). This result may be explained by prior research that individuals tend to demonstrate higher differentiation of personality and behaviour characteristics to in–group members as compared to out-group members.[47–49] In other words, in the gay-exclusive context, because gay viewers are cognisant of the heterogeneity within the gay community, an invariant, skewed stereotype may have resulted in negative responses.

Perceived similarity

A 2 × 3 × 2 ANOVA was performed on participants' perceived similarity ($\alpha = 0.95$) with the ad characters. The authors found a main effect of ad source distinctiveness, $F(1, 481) = 31.86$, $p < 0.0001$, a main effect of viewer distinctiveness, $F(1,481) = 162.23$, $p < 0.0001$, a two-way interaction between ad source distinctiveness and viewer distinctiveness, $F(1, 481) = 18.35$, $p < 0.0001$, and a three-way interaction across viewer distinctiveness, ad distinctiveness and stereotypicality of gay image, $F(1, 481) = 9.9$, $p < 0.005$.

Table 1: Attitudes toward the ad

		Straight participants		Gay participants	
		Mean	**S.D.**	**Mean**	**S.D.**
Straight ad		16.29	3.37	15.27	3.95
Gay ad		9.74	5.56	18.72	3.11
	Stereotypical gay image	10.34	5.51	18.09	3.65
	Non-stereotypical gay image	9.22	5.61	19.43	2.18
Inclusive ad		12.86	5.65	18.46	3.30
	Stereotypical gay image	11.35	4.91	18.72	2.46
	Non-stereotypical gay image	13.44	5.84	18.13	4.13

The authors found that, in line with H_{1a} and H_{2b}, straight viewers felt that they were more similar to the ad characters in the straight ad than those in the inclusive ad ($M_{straight/straightad}$ = 21.94, $M_{straight/inclusive}$ = 17.00, $t(127)$ = 3.31, $p < 0.005$), and more similar to the characters in the inclusive ad than to those in the gay ad ($M_{straight/inclusive}$ = 17.00, $M_{straight/gayad}$ = 10.10, $t(193)$ = 6.97, $p < 0.001$). Likewise, gay viewers demonstrated higher perceived similarity to the characters in the inclusive ad and gay ad than to the straight ad ($M_{gay/inclusive}$ = 25.43, $M_{gay/straight}$ = 19.43, $t(155)$ = 6.63, $p < 0.0001$; $M_{gay/gay\ ad}$ = 24.39 versus $M_{gay/straightad}$ = 19.43, $t(150)$ = 5.05, $p < 0.0005$). As expected, inclusive ads increased perceived similarity among straight viewers as compared with gay ads, while inclusive and gay ads induced higher perceived similarity among gay viewers than the straight ad ($M_{gay/gay\ ad}$ = 24.39, $M_{gay/straight\ ad}$ = 19.43, $t(147)$ = 4.86, $p < 0.0005$; $M_{gay/inclusive}$ = 25.43, $M_{gay/straight\ ad}$ = 19.44, $t(208)$ = 8.03, $p < 0.0001$), supporting H_3 and H_4. Furthermore, consistent with H_{2a} and H_{2b}, the magnitude of perceived similarity among gay viewers for the inclusive ad and for the gay ad was stronger than that among straight viewers for the straight ad ($M_{gay/inclusive}$ = 25.43 versus $M_{straight/straightad}$ = 21.94, $t(142)$ = 3.3, $p < 0.005$; $M_{gay/gayad}$ = 24.39 versus $M_{straight/straightad}$ = 21.94, $t(137)$ = 2.16, $p < 0.05$). No significant differences were observed between gay viewers' felt similarity toward the gay ad (M = 24.39) and the inclusive ad (M = 25.43) (N.S.).

The authors examined the straight and gay viewers' data separately. Among the straight viewers, we found a main effect of ad source distinctiveness, $F(1, 191)$ = 34.79, $p < 0.0001$, and a marginal two-way interaction, $F(1, 191)$ = 2.65, $p = 0.10$. A planned comparison test revealed the moderating effect of stereotypicality, which again confirmed H_5. As shown in Table 2, non-stereotypical gay images in the inclusive ad moderated the perceived similarity among straight viewers to a more positive end ($M_{nonstereotype}$ = 17.90 versus $M_{stereotype}$ = 14.65, $t(92)$ = 1.81, $p < 0.05$ (one-tailed).

Among gay viewers, the authors found the moderating effect of stereotypicality in the context of gay ads such that the non-stereotypical portrayal of gay images enhanced the perception of similarity ($M_{nonstereotype}$ = 25.61 versus $M_{stereotype}$ = 23.31, $t(102)$ = 2.15, $p < 0.05$). The inclusive ad with stereotypical gay images, however, enhanced gay audiences' perceived similarity with the ad characters but not with non-stereotypical gay images ($M_{nonstereotype}$ = 24.25 versus $M_{stereotype}$ = 26.36, $t(107)$ = 2.24, $p < 0.05$). This result suggests that, in the inclusive context, gay viewers may prefer retaining a certain degree of distinctiveness signified by gay stereotypes.

Table 2: Perceived similarity

		Straight participants		Gay participants	
		Mean	**S.D.**	**Mean**	**S.D.**
Straight ad		21.94	6.53	19.43	5.77
Gay ad		10.11	5.83	24.39	5.54
	Stereotypical gay image	10.19	5.50	23.31	6.30
	Non-stereotypical gay image	10.03	6.15	25.61	4.29
Inclusive ad		17.00	7.88	25.43	5.03
	Stereotypical gay image	14.65	7.13	26.36	2.09
	Non-stereotypical gay image	17.90	8.01	24.25	5.96

Perceived targetedness

A $2 \times 3 \times 2$ ANOVA was also performed on participants' perceived targetedness ($\alpha = 0.97$) toward the ad. A main effect emerged for viewer distinctiveness, $F(1, 479) = 155.81$, $p < 0.0001$, and for ad distinctiveness, $F(1, 479) = 19.10$, $p < 0.0001$. A two-way interaction emerged between viewer distinctiveness and ad source distinctiveness, $F(1, 479) = 21.01$, $p < 0.0001$, as well as a three-way interaction among ad distinctiveness, viewer distinctiveness and stereotypicality of gay images, $F(1, 479) = 10.43$, $p < 0.005$.

The authors decomposed the two-way interaction and performed a simple effect analysis. In accordance with H_{1a} and H_{1b}, straight viewers felt they were more targeted by the straight ad ($M_{straight/straightad} = 10.6$) than by the inclusive ad ($M_{straight/inclusive} = 7.43$, $t(127) = 3.75$, $p < 0.001$), and the gay ad ($M_{straight/gayad} = 3.75$, $t(193) = 6.84$, $p < 0.0005$). Consistent with H_{2a} and H_{2b}, gay viewers felt more targeted by the gay ad and the inclusive ad than by the straight ad ($M_{gay/gay\ ad} = 12.23$, $M_{gay/straight\ ad} = 8.31$, $t(153) = 6.63$, $p < 0.0005$; $M_{gay/inclusive} = 12.23$, $M_{gay/straight\ ad} = 8.31$, $t(153) = 6.86$, $p < 0.0005$). Notably, the inclusive ad boosted the perception of targetedness for the straight viewers as compared with gay ads, while gay viewers felt a similar level of targetedness toward inclusive and gay ads ($M_{gay/gayad} = 12.23$ versus $M_{gay/inclusive} = 12.23$, $t < 1$).

Consistent with H_{2a} and H_{2b}, the magnitude of perceived targetedness was stronger among gay viewers for gay and inclusive ads than among straight viewers for straight and inclusive ads ($M_{gay/gayad} = 12.23$ versus $M_{straight/straightad} = 10.6$, $t(137) = 2.62$, $p < 0.01$; $M_{gay/inclusive} = 12.23$, $M_{straight/straightad} = 10.6$, $t(140) = 2.74$, $p < 0.01$). No significant differences were observed between gay viewers' felt targetedness toward the gay ad ($M = 12.23$) and the inclusive ad ($M = 12.23$) (N.S.).

By separately examining the data of straight viewers and gay viewers, we found a two-way interaction between ad source distinctiveness and stereotypicality, which revealed the moderating role of gay stereotype on felt targetedness for straight viewers, $F(1,191) = 5.66$, $p < 0.05$, providing additional support for H_5. Specifically, when responding to inclusive ads, straight viewers felt more targeted by the non-stereotypical (versus stereotypical) gay image in the ads ($M_{nonstereotype} = 8.07$, $M_{stereotype} = 5.77$, $t(92) = 2.25$, $p < 0.05$).

Lastly, for gay viewers, a post hoc analysis revealed that gay viewers demonstrated a significant two-way interaction between ad source distinctiveness and stereotypicality, $F(1, 207) = 5.25$, $p < 0.05$. The authors found that gay viewers demonstrated a marginally greater extent of perceived targetedness in the gay ad when images featured were non-stereotypical (versus stereotypical) ($M_{nonstereotype} = 12.63$, $M_{stereotype} = 11.87$, $t(102) = 1.27$, $p = 0.10$) (see Table 3). Again, we found a higher

Table 3: Perceived targetedness

		Straight participants		Gay participants	
		Mean	**S.D.**	**Mean**	**S.D.**
Straight ad		10.60	3.54	8.31	4.07
Gay ad		3.75	2.87	12.23	3.06
	Stereotypical gay image	3.96	2.96	11.87	3.34
	Non-stereotypical gay image	3.57	2.81	12.63	2.68
Inclusive ad		7.43	4.52	12.23	2.88
	Stereotypical gay image	5.76	4.29	12.73	2.09
	Non-stereotypical gay image	8.07	4.47	11.63	3.55

degree of perceived targetedness among gay viewers to the inclusive ad featuring stereotypical (versus non-stereotypical) gay images ($M_{nonstereotype}$ = 11.63 versus $M_{stereotype}$ = 12.73, $t(107) = 1.94$, $p < 0.05$ (one-tailed).

DISCUSSION

As one of the earliest studies that empirically examined the effects of inclusive advertising on majority and minority consumers, this study advances existing knowledge on target marketing and multicultural advertising. The study results expand existing knowledge with inclusive advertising. Across the three dependent variables (attitudes toward ad, perceived similarity and felt targetedness), a consistent pattern emerged such that straight viewers formed a more positive attitude toward the straight ad than toward the gay and inclusive ads. By contrast, gay viewers rated inclusive and gay ads equally well but better than the straight ad. In addition, the positive targeting effect was found to be stronger among the distinctive gay viewers, both in terms of felt targetedness and perceived similarity.

With regard to the study's focus of evaluating inclusive advertising as a potential tool for appealing to minority viewers while retaining majority viewers' interest, results confirmed that straight respondents indeed preferred inclusive ads over exclusively gay-targeted ads. For the heterosexual majority who are unaccustomed to being left out from mainstream advertising, incorporating them as one of the target groups through integrated appeal has proved to make them feel less isolated and in turn moderate ad-disliking.

The effectiveness of inclusive advertising to communicate with minority viewers without alienating majority viewers is further evidenced by the fact that gay consumers find inclusive ads equally as appealing as gay-targeted ads. Contrary to straight consumers' preference for straight-targeted messages over inclusive ads, it is important to note that gay respondents rated inclusive ads equally as favourably as gay-targeted ads. The inclusive appeal not only explicitly recognises minority consumers' status as one of the target consumer groups, but also incorporates them into an all-embracing mainstream culture — a social status many minorities have strived for. Gay consumers as a distinctive minority that are hypersensitive to advertisers' targeting efforts[7] appear to enjoy the recognition and validation of being *one* of the desirable targets. This significant finding thus supports the idea that inclusive messages appeal to gay consumers while retaining the interest of straight consumers, particularly when the message is conveyed via mainstream media.

In regard to minority representations in advertising, the results confirmed that the stereotypicality of minority portrayals moderates straight viewers' attitudes, perceived similarity and felt targetedness toward the inclusive ad. The result thus highlights the potential of using non-stereotypical portrayals of stigmatised minorities to reduce the perceived intergroup differences that often hinder social acceptance of minorities.[41] In particular, straight viewers rated the ad more positively, felt more similar to the characters, and felt more targeted by ads showcasing non-stereotypical gay couples. The inclusive context and the non-stereotypical treatment of the minority characters serve to underscore the featured commonality and decrease the distinctiveness of the minority image. By avoiding stereotypes that enunciate minority distinctiveness[34] and consequently magnify the salience of category boundaries and hinder recategorisation,[50] the inclusive strategy effectively improved majority viewers' felt similarity with the ad characters and produced more positive evaluation. Thus, this study advances the theoretical knowledge on advertising stereotyping by testing the effect of gay stereotypes on consumer response.

The results did not provide a conclusive view regarding gay viewers' preference

toward various types of gay representations in inclusive ads. In the experiment, gay viewers exhibited a higher degree of felt similarity and targetedness with gay stereotypes. Although the heightened perceived similarity and targetedness did not fully translate into more favourable ad attitude, the pattern of results suggests that, when juxtaposed with straight people, gay viewers may prefer retaining and communicating their unique identity by means of stereotypes. Future research should address the question of how advertising can retain the distinctiveness of minority characters without alienating the majority audience.

The result findings also provide valuable strategic insights on the benefits and trade-offs of employing targeted advertising as opposed to using a more inclusive strategy that communicates to minority and majority consumers alike. Previous research has suggested that mainstream media remain an important channel by which to reach minority consumers.[51,52] Therefore, instead of creating campaigns that feature only minority models and risk estranging majority viewers in mainstream media, inclusive ads that incorporate both majority and minority characters can be an effective strategy to appeal to minority viewers without alienating the majority. Specifically, gay-inclusive ads not only increase gay visibility in popular media and explicitly validate gay and lesbian consumers — a significant improvement from the gay window advertising criticised as perpetuating gay invisibility — but may also appeal to the growing population of straight consumers who support gay rights, especially among the younger generation which predominantly favours legalising gay marriage.[53,54] The findings also suggest that minority stereotypes should be avoided in multicultural advertising — a common mistake in niche-targeted advertising[55,56] — when attempting to appeal to multiple segments. The results thus provide empirical support for the effects of normalised,

non-stereotypical advertising representations of social minorities on breaking down the perceptual barrier of intergroup difference to increase the social acceptance of marginalised groups. Consequently, the finding calls for further empirical investigations to determine the persuasive power of advertising on changing social misconceptions and reducing the stigmatisation and stereotyping of minority groups.

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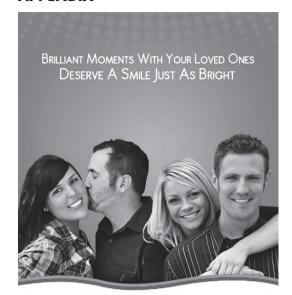
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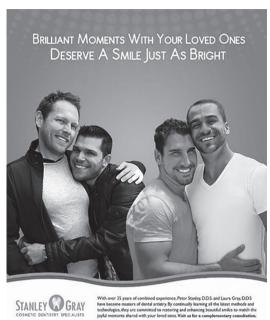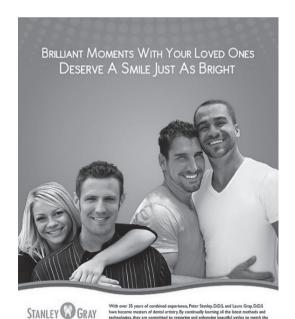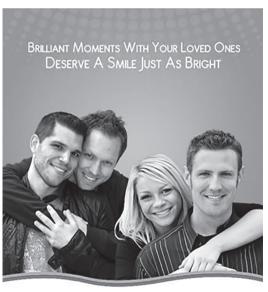
APPENDIX

(a) Sample majority-targeted ad

(b) Sample minority-targeted ad with stereotype

(c) Sample inclusive ad with stereotype

(d) Sample inclusive ad without stereotype