

Erasing the line between homosexual and heterosexual advertising: A perspective from the educated youth population

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ABSTRACT

The 'pink dollar' or 'dream market' is a relatively untapped market that is idealised by marketers for its profit potential. As a result, it is of significant interest to marketing practitioners who aim to invest in this billion dollar industry. However, marketers face challenges in reaching this market through mainstream advertising due to the 'stigma' attached to homosexuality, which often results in the marginalisation of heterosexual consumers. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of consumers' tolerance of homosexuality on their attitudes toward homosexual advertisements, and ultimately how these attitudes influence on purchase intention. Data collection was conducted by means of self-administered questionnaires involving 312 university students aged 19 and 24. The results of this study indicated that tolerance to homosexuality does influence attitudes formed by various advertisements, thereby influencing purchase intentions. Furthermore, the results indicated that gender influenced the attitude and purchase intention towards brands that use homosexual models in their advertisements. The findings of this study provide marketers with a better understanding of how to advertise to the homosexual market without marginalising the heterosexual consumer. Developing improved understanding of such an important market segment is significantly meaningful, especially in South Africa, a developing country that researchers often neglect.

Keywords: advertising, homosexual, heterosexual, purchase intention, attitudes

South Africa has one of the most liberal constitutions in the world, and was the first country to integrate sexual orientation in its Bill of Rights in 1996 (Cock, 2002; Francis & Msibi, 2011; Traeen, Martinussen, Vitters & Saini, 2009). As a result, homosexuality in South Africa has become more visible (Ncanana & Ige, 2014) and recreational activity has become the focus for homosexual consumption (Livermon, 2014). Homosexuals proudly participate in forms of self-expression, such as the Gay and Lesbian Pride parades, and they openly engage in homosexually-orientated township events (Livermon, 2014).

Furthermore, Cape Town is often referred to as the gay capital of South Africa, and has become a tourist attraction for primarily white homosexual consumers (Visser, 2010), thus contributing largely to South Africa's economy and actively participating in local consumption practices.

Homosexual consumers express their sexuality through consumption and their purchasing power is valued at \$835, 30 billion in the USA (Peters, 2011). In research dominated by American theoretical ideologies, homosexual consumers are depicted as having high

disposable incomes, are considered to be more brand-loyal, and are early adopters of new products and services (Pinho, Loureiro & Kastenholz, 2012). As a result, marketers have increased marketing expenditure in order to target the homosexual market, but marketers are challenged in finding appropriate ways to advertise to this market without marginalising a portion of the heterosexual market (Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2004). This marginalisation is evident in current literature, and reveals an undercurrent of hostility against homosexuals in South Africa that often leads to violence (Reid & Dirisuweit, 2001; Theunick, 2000). Therefore, regardless of the fact that the South African constitution has extensive human rights protecting gender diversity, negative attitudes and low levels of social acceptance still exist towards homosexuals (Ncana & Ige, 2014).

Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of consumers' tolerance of homosexuality on their attitudes toward homosexual advertisements, and ultimately how these attitudes influence on purchase intention.

Although several studies on homosexual advertising have been conducted in an American context, shortcomings exist in these studies. For example, Oor, van Oudtshoorn, and Kotze (2005) conducted a study investigating the influence of sexual tension on consumer attitudes and purchase intention, but this study only focussed on the use of lesbian imagery. This warrants future research to investigate the influence of sexual tension in both male and female homosexual imagery. With this in mind, the role of product sectors, such as the technology and fashion categories, can also influence behaviour. Homosexual consumers are known for following innovative trends and tend to be fashion and technologically savvy (Fejes & Lennon, 2008; Sha, Aung, Londerville & Ralston, 2007). There appears to be an increase in the acceptability of homosexual advertising, more evident in fashion than in other product sectors (Bhat, Leigh & Wardlow, 2010). Thus, varying the product sectors researched is advisable so that the differences in attitudes and purchase intentions of consumers in relation to the product itself can be ascertained (Bhat et al., 2010). Another limitation of previous

research was the generalisability of findings. For example, Hooten, Noeva, and Hammonds, (2009) explored brand perceptions and purchase intention, but made use of a sample that was too small to be generalised, providing an opportunity for future research, particularly in an African context. Conducting this research in a South African context is beneficial to uncover insights into different consumer mind-sets. Furthermore, it implies that determining a respondent's characteristics in terms of tolerance to homosexuality and their gender needs to be included in research (Bhat et al., 2010).

Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the influence of a consumer's tolerance to homosexuality on their attitudes towards homosexual advertisements (varying in the level of intimacy, gender, and product sector), and its influence on purchase intention. Furthermore, this research aims to provide marketers with a better understanding of feasible advertising methods that can be used to target the homosexual market without marginalising the heterosexual consumer. The first objective of this research was to determine whether or not consumers' tolerance towards homosexuality influences attitudes and purchase intentions of brands that target the homosexual consumer. The second objective was to investigate whether or not the level of intimacy, the product sector, and the gender of the models in the advertisements have an influence on consumers' attitudes towards advertisements. The third objective was to determine if a respondent's gender influences their attitude towards the advertisements, and the fourth objective was to determine whether or not attitudes towards an advertisement influence purchase intentions. The fifth objective sought to determine the influence of an individual's gender as a moderator of attitudes and purchase intention.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Segmenting and targeting the homosexual consumer

Psychographic segmentation occurs through consumer clustering based on similar psychological predispositions, such as a consumer's lifestyle (Cant, Strydom, Jooste, du Plessis, 2006; Joubert, 2010). A particular

lifestyle can be reviewed in terms of a consumer's sexuality, where this segmentation approach is gaining more popularity as homosexual consumers are more openly displaying their sexuality (Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2004).

Targeting the homosexual consumer is directly related to whether or not homosexual consumers show open acceptance of their sexual orientation (Hsieh & Wu, 2011). Research shows that a male homosexual will alter his purchasing behaviour depending on the level of acceptance he cultivates for his own identity, which is further influenced by the level of acceptance realised by his referent groups (Hsieh & Wu, 2011). As a result, more overt behaviour is elicited by homosexual consumers who are more accepting of their lifestyles (Hsieh & Wu, 2011). Thus, from a marketing perspective those consumers who openly identify with the homosexual community are referred to as a dream market to be exploited because marketers can then customise their marketing messages to overt consumer identities (Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2004).

Positioning decisions when targeting the homosexual consumer

Positioning is a fundamental aspect in ensuring a brand can differentiate itself effectively from its competitors in order to entice consumers to purchase the product or service (Joubert, 2010). When opting to target homosexual consumers particularly in advertising, brands are in effect positioning themselves as a risqué, liberal, and progressive brand in order to acquire more attention from consumers (Oor, Van Rheede Van Oudtshoorn & Kotze, 2005; Tsai, 2013). Sabaru, Ford, Volvo, Land Rover, Volkswagen, and Walmart are known to have put marketing strategies into place that specifically target the homosexual market (Hooten et al., 2009). Adopting this position can, in effect, increase brand recall and recognition (Angelini & Bradley, 2010). However, brands may run the risk of marginalising their current heterosexual consumers (Bhat, Leigh & Wardlow, 2010).

Advertising to the homosexual consumer

Advertising is a powerful tool used to persuade consumers to purchase a product or service (Malmelin, 2010) and evolves with time. When directing advertising to the homosexual consumer, gender and racial identity become factors to consider. Oakenfull & Greenlee (2004) proposed that within the homosexual market there is growing consensus that in order to target female homosexual consumers, female visual imagery should be used. Similarly, targeting male homosexual consumers should make use of male visual imagery. Contrary to this finding, Dotson, Huatt, and Thompson (2009) found that female homosexual consumers do not prefer to see female homosexual imagery, but rather male homosexual imagery. These findings can be explained by the fact that female homosexual consumers are unable to identify with more feminine female imagery, and find it easier to connect to androgynous imagery depicted by male models in the advertisements. This notion is indicative of Queer theory, which proposes that one's gender is not always in line with of one's gender identity, where a male does not necessarily have to identify with masculine identity and females do not necessarily need to identify with feminine identities (Kates, 1999). Within a South African context, homosexual advertising is dominated by white homosexual imagery, which imagery fails to represent black homosexual identity in advertising (Sonnekus & van Eeden, 2009). An example of strong usage of white homosexual imagery is evident in Gay Pages, a longstanding glossy South African magazine that has successfully targeted the homosexual niche market who fall within LSM 8 to 10, and has a readership base of 45 000 people (Gay Pages, 2014).

Male and female homosexual advertising

Recently, gay window advertising that uses androgynous styled imagery has been adopted frequently by organisations as a method to advertise to male homosexual consumers

without marginalising heterosexual consumers (Borgerson, Schroeder, Blomberg & Thorssen, 2010; Puntoni, Vanhamme & Visscher, 2011). This form of advertising does not overtly represent homosexual imagery in the advertisements, but depicts the sexual orientation of the persons ambiguously in the advertisements, increasing the difficulty for heterosexual consumers to decode the advertisements (Borgerson et al., 2010; Puntoni et al., 2011). However, homosexual consumers manage to interpret the implicit homosexual representations encoded in the advertisements by marketers (Borgerson et al., 2010).

Lesbian chic advertising is used to target female homosexual consumers, which depicts varying degrees of sexual tension between two females and the females are not necessarily viewed as a lesbian couple (Richert, 2012). The variations of sexual tension can be subtle and undetected, or overt and obvious. However, lesbian chic advertising has been developed in accordance with heterosexual male sexual fantasies, and does not in actual fact target the lesbian consumer effectively (McKeena, 2002).

The influence of product sectors on homosexual advertising

Research shows that homosexual consumers are more fashion conscious than their heterosexual counterparts (Schofield & Schmidt, 2005). As a result, gay men focus more on their physical appearance than heterosexual men are inclined to (Ahmad & Bhugra, 2010). Therefore, consumption patterns are a useful means for defining consumers according to their sexuality (Hsieh & Wu, 2011). Homosexual consumers prefer to see their lifestyle within fashion advertisements as a means of self-expression (Dotson et al., 2008). The consumption of clothing contributes to a consumer's identity. This is because fashion becomes a non-verbal communicator for homosexual consumers to identify themselves and others as homosexual (Schofield & Schmidt, 2005; Sha et al., 2007). Clothing particularly enhances a homosexual's distinct qualities and is used as a means to embody confidence in the homosexual lifestyle (Sha et al., 2007). An increase in self-expression through consumption is further

supplemented by the increase in open homosexual forums (Hsieh & Wu, 2011). As a result, homosexual consumers are reported to spend more time and money in apparel stores in order to affirm their social standing that can be provided by clothing, rather than the basic need that the apparel industry offers (Sha et al., 2007). Subsequently, the technology product sector can be considered in conjunction with the market diffusion of innovation (Trott, 2012). This model consists of five sectors, namely innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards (Smith & Taylor, 2010).

Homosexual consumers in particular are analysed as being part of the early adopter segment that are defined as consumers who focus their buying decisions on whether or not a technology product or service is technologically advanced and has a high performance potential, and are thus viewed as trend setters for other consumers (Vandecasteele & Geuens, 2009). Thus, advertising to homosexual consumers is an avenue to pursue for technology brands since homosexual consumers are enticed by technology brand messages, and can act as lead users for other consumers (Fejes & Lennon, 2008).

A heterosexual perspective to homosexually themed advertising

South Africa has a liberal constitution that acts as the foundation for homosexual acceptance. However, there is still prejudicial behaviour towards homosexuality by heterosexual people (Herek, 2004). For instance, research has shown that many citizens view homosexuality as the erroneous transfer of gender qualities. Male homosexual people are viewed as being feminine and weak, whereas female homosexuals are viewed as females attempting to be regarded as men (Francis & Msibi, 2011).

However, within the younger population more acceptance of homosexuality is being realised (Keleher & Smith, 2012). Two theories are considered to explain the social changes in accepting homosexuality. The first is the generational-replacement explanation, which proposes that a shift in homosexual acceptance is as a result of the human lifespan, that is, the

older, more conservative population are being replaced by a younger population with a higher tolerance of homosexuality (Keleher & Smith, 2012). Thus, in effect, tolerance of homosexuality does not change over time, but rather is replaced in accordance to the human life cycle. The second theory is the period-effects explanation, which attributes the shift in homosexual acceptance to the changes in politics, social norms, and religious beliefs that influence society's tolerance levels (Keleher & Smith, 2012). Tolerance to homosexuality further influences a consumer's response to homosexual imagery. A consumer that is more tolerant of homosexuality will develop more positive attitudes to homosexual imagery than consumers who are less tolerant of homosexuality (Bhat et al., 2010).

Moderator of the formation of attitudes and purchase intention.

Heterosexual consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions vary, depending on their gender. Previous research shows that the gender of the heterosexual consumer influences their attitude toward homosexual imagery. However, there is a level of disparity as to the influence gender has on attitude formation. Oakenfull & Greenlee (2004) found that male heterosexual consumers formed less negative attitudes to female homosexual imagery than male homosexual imagery. However, female heterosexual consumers reported to have consistent attitudes towards both male and female homosexual imagery.

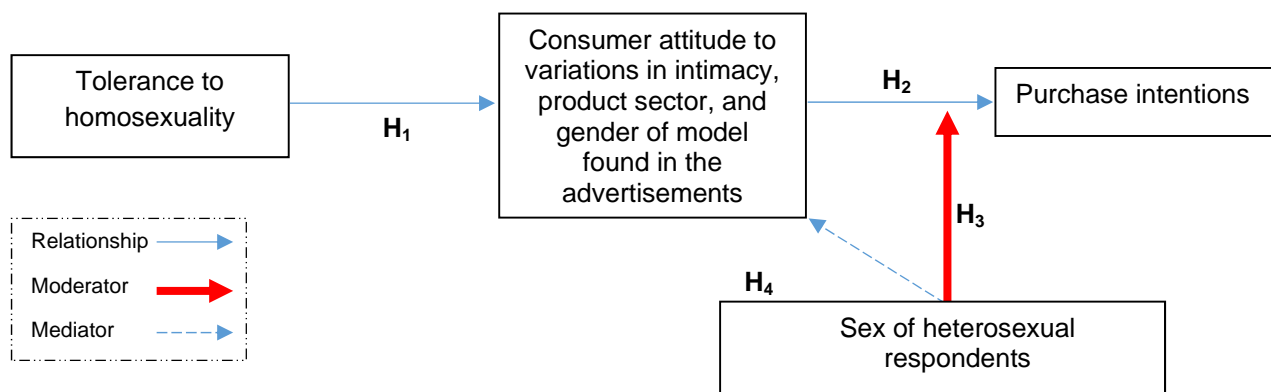
However, these results are not confirmed by all researchers (Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2004).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Based on the research accumulated, Figure 1 depicts the proposed theoretical model.

This model is one-directional and attempts to determine the influence of *tolerance to homosexuality* on consumer attitudes to a stimulus (the variations in advertisements), and subsequently its effect purchase intentions, and account for a heterosexual respondent's gender. The independent variable is *tolerance to homosexuality* as it affects the attitudes toward the variation in advertisements. Accordingly, the dependent variable is the *attitude* consumers form when viewing advertisements, which in turn affects *purchase intention*. This effect is indicative of the dual mediation model that visually depicts the procedure that consumers undergo to process marketing messages, which, in effect, are the attitudes and purchase intentions developed by the consumer (Yoonk, Lacznaiak, Muehling & Reece, 1995). In order to work out the relationship between consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, a consumer's attitude towards the advertisement subsequently becomes the independent variable, and purchase intentions become the dependent variable. A respondent's gender IS said to moderate formation of a consumer's attitude when the independent variables are manipulated.

FIGURE 1
Model used in this study



Compiled by Ereni Akermanidis (2013)

Lastly, a respondent's gender as a mediator on consumer attitude formation will expose a difference between gender and the formation of attitudes. Subsequently, the hypotheses are as follows:

H₁: there is a relationship between *tolerance to homosexuality* and *consumer attitudes to homosexual advertising*;

H₂: there is a relationship between heterosexual overall *consumer's attitudes* and overall *purchase intentions*;

H_{2a}: there is a relationship between attitudes formed for advertisement #1 (low intimacy, female, fashion sector) and *purchase intentions*;

H_{2b}: there is a relationship between attitudes formed for advertisement #2 (low intimacy, male, fashion sector) and *purchase intentions*;

H_{2c}: there is a relationship between attitudes formed for advertisement #3 (high intimacy, female, fashion sector) and *purchase intentions*;

H_{2d}: there is a relationship between attitudes formed for advertisement #4 (high intimacy, male, fashion sector) and *purchase intentions*;

H_{2e}: there is a relationship between attitudes formed for advertisement #5 (low intimacy, female, technology sector) and *purchase intentions*;

H_{2f}: there is a relationship between attitudes formed for advertisement #6 (low intimacy, male, technology sector) and *purchase intentions*;

H_{2g}: there is a relationship between attitudes formed for advertisement #7 (high intimacy, female, technology sector) and *purchase intentions*;

H_{2h}: there is a relationship between attitudes formed for advertisement #8 (high intimacy, male, technology sector) and *purchase intentions*;

H₃: gender of respondents moderates the formation of *consumer attitudes*;

H_{4a}: there is a difference between heterosexual male attitudes when viewing different homosexual advertisements; and

H_{4b}: there is a difference between heterosexual female attitudes when viewing different homosexual advertisements.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study undertook a quantitative, descriptive research design whereby questionnaires were distributed among a sample of 340 respondents.

Sampling

A stratified sample of 340 university students were selected, of which 312 questionnaires were found useful. Each strata was defined based on the faculties offered at the University. All students were from the University of Witwatersrand, representing a diverse socio-demographic target population, and the stance of the university is for students to support homosexuality openly (Wits, 2013). The sample of students were mostly between the ages of 18 and 24, equally divided between males and females. This sample fell into a subgroup of generation Y, also known as echo boomers, where the appropriate age group selected was the 19-24 year age group, since the young adult population is primarily focused on their sexuality, reiterating the appropriateness of the selected sample (Traeen et al., 2009).

Ethical consideration

This research underwent a comprehensive ethics procedure. Questionnaires were anonymous and respondents participated voluntarily. The data was only used for academic purposes within the University of the Witwatersrand. Due to the sensitive subject matter, counselling was freely available for all participants.

Measuring instruments

Questionnaire design

The questionnaire consisted of four sections. In the first section, Part A, a brief overview of the participant's demographics was established. Part B required the respondents to rate their attitudes and purchase intentions towards four advertisements that varied in

depiction levels of intimacy and gender. These advertisements were related to fashion products. In Part C, respondents had to rate their attitudes and purchase intentions responding to four advertisements that similarly varied in level of intimacy and gender, however, these advertisements were related to technology products. Fictional brand names were used to avoid any form of possible bias (See Appendix A). Part D required a respondent to state their sexual orientation. The question was worded in the following manner: *“If I had to categorise myself, I would define myself as being homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual”* (Bhat et al., 2010). Furthermore, an additional option was given to respondents to describe their sexual orientation as ‘uncertain’, acknowledging the potential confusion some respondents have towards their sexuality. In order to ensure that the study is conducted in the most ethical manner possible, all respondents’ information will be statistically analysed, but focus will be concentrated on the heterosexual consumer.

Questionnaire scales

To measure tolerance of homosexuality, a newly created scale was developed since the majority of existing scales reflect an assumption of a dominant heterosexist paradigm, which may lead or offend respondents. This new scale adopted principles of the semantic differential measurements. When developing this scale, similar terminology was employed as used by Bhat et al. (2010), namely moral, immoral, acceptable, unacceptable, condemned, and liberated. These terms were chosen due the stigmatisation of homosexuality in some cultures that affect consumers’ behaviour (Francis & Msibi, 2011; Joubert, 2010). Secondly, the decision to include terms like maddening, pleasing, criticism, and praise are informed by the analysis of a South African context, whereby homosexuality is considered un-African and is believed by some to have emerged as a result of colonisation (Francis & Msibi, 2011).

Thirdly, the terms ‘genetic’ versus ‘learnt’ have been used because when viewed from a strictly genetic perspective, homosexuality allows for society to be more tolerant to the homosexual lifestyle. Conversely, when

viewing homosexuality from the perspective of learnt behaviour, more negative feelings begin to surface (Whitehead & Baker, 2012; Halder-Markel & Joslyn, 2008). Lastly, when a consumer views varying degrees of intimacy in an advertisement, their attitudes also change, where an increase in the level of intimacy leads to more negative attitudes (Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2004). The reason behind this may be allied to whether not the consumer feels comfortable with homosexuality.

Attitudes were measured using an adaptation the Attitude toward the Ad scale used by Bhat et al. (2010) and the Bruzzone test (Shimp, 2007). Together these scales registered high reliability ($\alpha=0.92$) across all advertisements measured in the study. Furthermore, to measure purchase intentions a three-item scale, termed a brand interest scale, was used, registering high reliability across three advertisements used in their study ($\alpha=0.85$, 0.86 and 0.88) (Oor, van Oudtshoor, Kotze, 2005). The tolerance to the homosexuality scale had high reliability ($\alpha=0.90$).

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted on the 312 usable questionnaires using a variety of tests in SAS Enterprise 5.1. A factor analysis confirmed the validity of the scales, and cronbach alpha values confirmed the reliability of all the scales in the questionnaire (Bereson, Levine & Krehbiel, 2006). In this study a level of significance was taken as 0.05. Simple linear regression was used in order to work out relationships specified in the model. Moreover, an Anova was performed to deduce the differences between attitudes for males and females when exposed to different advertising stimuli. Thereafter, a t test was used to determine the difference in attitudes across gender and for each product sector (Bereson et al., 2006). In some instances the sample was separated and clustered into a heterosexual group and a non-heterosexual group due to the low response rate of non-heterosexual respondents (28 out of 312 respondents). By doing so, the non-heterosexual sample did not form part of the main analysis in this study, to avoid the results being erroneously skewed.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Descriptive results

In terms of the descriptive data, non-heterosexual respondents reported to form neutral attitudes to homosexual imagery across product sectors ($\mu=3$). Furthermore, male non-heterosexuals were unlikely to follow through with a purchase when viewing advertisement #1, #2, #3, and #4 ($\mu=2$) but showed neutral intentions towards the other advertisements ($\mu=3$). Further, female non-heterosexual female respondents showed neutral purchase intentions across all advertisements. In addition, tolerance to homosexuality resulted in neutral tolerance levels from male non-heterosexuals, and positive tolerance levels from female non-heterosexual respondents.

Concerning the heterosexual respondents' attitudes for advertisement #3, male respondents formed negative attitudes but females showed more neutral attitudes.

Furthermore, for advertisement #6, positive attitudes were formed by males but females showed more neutral responses. In terms of purchase intentions, negative purchase intentions were evident across both genders. Furthermore, female and male heterosexual respondents showed neutral attitudes in terms of their tolerance of homosexuality. In connection to hypothesis testing, the following was uncovered:

Hypothesis 1: A key objective of this study was to determine if tolerance to homosexuality influences attitudes towards various homosexual advertisements. The first hypothesis met this objective and tested the relationship between tolerance to homosexuality and consumer attitudes. Using a regression analysis, the results supported this hypothesis ($p=0.001$) and showed that there is in fact a relationship between tolerance to homosexuality and attitudes formed by respondent.

Hypothesis 2: The second hypothesis tested the relationship between heterosexual consumer attitudes and overall purchase intentions. This hypothesis was supported and shows that this relationship exists ($p=0.001$).

Further analysis was conducted for each advertisement, which varied in intimacy, gender, and product sector. All relationships for each advertisement individually were also supported ($p=0.049$; $p=0.001$; $p=0.0001$; $p=0.0001$; $p=0.0001$; $p=0.0001$; $p=0.001$; $p=0.0001$). In addition, using Pearson correlations moderate correlations existed between attitudes and purchase intentions for advertisements #1 ($p=0.70$), #4 ($p=0.71$), #7 ($p=0.72$) and #8 ($p=0.71$), whilst a strong correlation existed for advertisements #2 ($p=0.75$), #3 ($p=0.75$), #5 and #6 ($p=0.71$).

Hypothesis 3: In line with an objective of this study, this hypothesis tested gender as a moderator of the formation of consumer attitudes. This hypothesis was shown to be significant ($p=0.001$), implying a difference in attitudes between gender groups. Furthermore, the interaction between gender and attitudes was shown to be significant ($p=0.001$), reinforcing the fact that gender does moderate the relationship between attitudes and purchase intentions.

Hypothesis H_{4a}: The fourth hypothesis (H_{4a}) tested the differences in attitudes between male heterosexual attitudes when viewing each advertisement. This hypothesis is related to hypothesis #3, which proposed that there is a statistically significant difference between the genders of the heterosexual person's formulated attitudes when viewing different homosexual advertisements.

Regarding the source statistics, the independent groups (advertisements) are significant ($p=0.0001$), which implies that there is a difference between male heterosexual attitudes when viewing independent advertisements. Given that the Levine's test is significant ($\sigma^2=0.001$), there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the means are equal. Furthermore, the Bartlett test shows a significant chi square ($\chi^2=0.001$), which implies that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the population variances are different. The Bonferroni test shows that there is a significant difference between advertisement #6 and all other advertisements.

In effect, advertisements can be grouped together in that they elicit similar attitudes. Where, advertisements with low intimacy (#2,

#5, and #7) elicited the same attitudes; advertisement #1, #3, #7, and #8 resulted in the same attitudes as one another. Furthermore, advertisements with high intimacy (#3, #4, and #8) had the same attitudes as one another, and #1, #5, and #7 elicited the same attitudes from respondents.

Hypothesis test H_{4b} : The fourth hypothesis (H_{4b}) suggested there is a difference between female attitudes when viewing different advertisements. With regard to the source statistics, the independent groups (advertisements) are significant ($p=0.001$). Given that the Levine's test is significant, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that σ_j^2 are equal ($\sigma^2=0.0536$). Furthermore, the Bartlett test shows a significant chi square ($\chi^2=0.001$), which implies that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the population variances are different. The Bonferroni test shows that there is no significant difference between advertisements #1, #2, #3, #5, #6, and #7 among females.

Correspondingly, there is no significant difference between advertisements #4 and #8 (high intimacy male advertisements) among female consumers. However, a difference exists between these two groups, implying that respondents negatively view high intimacy male advertisements, which is different to their responses to all other advertisements.

Post hoc testing to measuring attitudinal differences

Attitudinal differences between males and females: To measure changes in attitudes between male and females per advertisement, t tests were performed. A significant difference between males and females existed for advertisements #2 ($p=0.0001$), #3 ($p=0.0002$), #4 ($p=0.0001$), #6 ($p=0.0001$), #7 ($p=0.0174$), and #8 ($p=0.0001$) were identified.

Attitudinal differences within the fashion sector: In the fashion sector there is a difference between advertisements #1 and #2 ($p=0.0001$), advertisements #2 and #4 ($p=0.0001$), and advertisements #3 and #4 ($p=0.0001$).

Attitudinal differences within the technology sector: In the technology sector

there is a difference between advertisements #5 and #6 ($p=0.0001$), advertisements #5 and #7 ($p=0.0001$), advertisements #6 and #8 ($p=0.0001$), and advertisements #7 and #8 ($p=0.0001$).

Attitudinal differences across the fashion and technology sector: With regards to product sector differences, it was evident that differences in attitude were formed between advertisements #1 and #5 ($p=0.0202$), advertisements #2 and #6 ($p=0.0001$); advertisements #4 and #8 ($p=0.0001$). Further analysis revealed that the mean difference ($\mu=0.16$) between advertisements #1 and #5 showed that advertisement #5 elicited more positive attitudes than advertisement #1. Secondly, in terms of the mean difference ($\mu=0.35$) for advertisements #2 and #6, the results imply that advertisement #6 was better received by respondents than advertisement #2. Thirdly, advertisements #3 and #7 had no significant difference ($p=0.6328$), however the mean difference ($\mu=0.0293$) implies that advertisement #7 was slightly better received by respondents. Lastly, the mean difference between advertisements #4 and #8 shows that advertisement #8 was better received than advertisement #4. This implies that the technology sector elicited more positive attitudes than the fashion sector.

DISCUSSION

Insights into the non-heterosexual consumer

In view of the low response rate from non-heterosexual consumers resulting in the inability to draw conclusive findings from such a low base size, bisexual, homosexual and uncertain respondents' results tended to be more neutral to homosexual advertising than what would have been expected.

Research conducted by Holland and Gentry (1999) can be used to shed light on this outcome. Holland and Gentry (1999) dealt with ethnic groups' reaction to target-specific marketing messages. Although the research is not in line with the theme of this study, an implication has surfaced. Consumer attitudes are influenced by the information that they possess about the brand or agent providing

them with marketing messages. If an ethnic group does not have sufficient information about the brand, they may not recognise the true reasoning behind target-specific messages. Similarly, if the consumer is well-versed with a brand, and are aware of past support for their consumer group, they will show more interest or a more positive attitude to a brand and its marketing message (Holland & Gentry, 1999).

To relate these findings to the homosexual consumer, the use of fictional brands may have had an adverse effect on some of the non-heterosexual respondents. Thus, failure to have prior brand information and its support for homosexuality may have resulted in respondents experiencing less favourable attitudes to the advertisements, due to the perception that the advertisements were a mere marketing ploy, as opposed to a brand supporting their consumers directly.

Another more superficial reasoning behind this unexpected outcome may be as a result of the actual advertisement's composition, rather than the respondents' lack of support for their own sexual orientation. Non-heterosexual respondents may have analysed the advertisement further and not have been enticed by the style of fashion depicted in the advertisement, or may they may have failed to understand the networking service that was advertised in the technology sector. The possible reasons may have counted against the advertisement, and resulted in only neutral attitudes and purchase intentions being formed.

In terms of non-heterosexual male respondents' tolerance to homosexuality, male respondents showed neutral tolerance. This may be a by-product of social discrimination resulting in non-heterosexual respondents experiencing shame for their sexual orientation, or fear of being overtly positive about their lifestyle, which is traditionally marginalised in society (Traeen et al., 2009). However conversely, female respondents did show positive tolerance to homosexuality, which suggests that female non-heterosexual respondents are more open to celebrating their sexual orientation.

Insights into the heterosexual consumer

On average, heterosexual respondent's tolerance to homosexuality was neutral. This implies that the student population may not be overtly heterosexist, but rather indifferent to homosexuality. This in effect links to research conducted by Schott-Ceccacci, Holland & Matthews, 2009 which looked at student attitudes as a consequence of their educational environment. Educational environments harbour the most tolerance to different lifestyles and, in effect, can re-socialise young consumers.

Results suggested that males prefer low levels of intimacy in advertising and are more inclined to appreciate female homosexual imagery across both levels of intimacy. Regarding female heterosexual attitudes, on average the majority of their attitudes were neutral. A similarity was evidenced by the fact that negative attitudes were formed for advertisements #4 and #8, which both depicted high intimacy levels between males. On average, female consumers are more likely to be accepting of brands that make use of homosexual advertising, on condition that male homosexuality is not the focus of the advertisement. In effect, this research confirms Hooten, Noeva, and Hammonds (2009) research that found that heterosexual consumers do not form positive attitudes towards male homosexuality.

The influence of tolerance to homosexuality on attitudes

Bhat et al. (2010) proposed that tolerance to homosexuality did effect attitude formation. This is confirmed in this study, where results show that tolerance to homosexuality does affect consumer attitudes towards the advertisement. This notion implies that marketers must pay careful attention to determining the tolerance level of their market. The probability that a market is, on average, tolerant to homosexuality, increases the success rate of using homosexual imagery in advertising campaigns.

Attitudes on purchase intentions

Attitudes formed by respondents showed an influence on purchase intentions (Bhat et al.,

2010; Yoonk et al., 1995). A consumer who forms positive attitudes towards the advertisement will be more likely to purchase from the brand. Thus, based on this notion, careful attention must be paid to ensuring that the composition of the advertisement elicits positive attitudes.

The role of product sectors

The results of this study argue that product sector is a fundamental component in effectively targeting homosexual consumers in mainstream advertising. The technology sector elicited more positive attitudes than the fashion sector. Potential deductions of this are that the fashion sector has a stronger association with a consumer's identity.

This implies that a consumer may find it difficult to identify with homosexual imagery, which is unlike their own. This notion is discussed in research conducted by White and Dahl (2007), which shows that the consumer is more likely to feel less connected to a brand that is associated with an out-group. Thus, it may be inferred that heterosexual consumers may not identify with the technology sector as a reflection of the self, and thus be more open to associate this sector to imagery that is different to their identity. This is unlike the fashion sector, which consumers often use as a means of self-expression, and is a direct reflection of a consumer's identity.

The role of gender

According to the findings shown in the previous section, a consumer's gender does moderate heterosexual attitudes and purchase intentions, as suggested by research conducted by Oakenfull & Greenlee (2004).

The possibility of advertising to the homosexual consumer

It is evident that there is in fact a feasible way to target 19-24 year old homosexual consumers in mainstream advertising without marginalising heterosexual consumers (falling within this same age range) in the process. Findings show that that the level of intimacy, product sector, and gender of the homosexual models in the advertisement do influence consumer attitudes. This is evident in the

technology sector that showed more positive attitudes in both male and female heterosexual respondents than the fashion sector did. In addition, low to high intimacy of female imagery in advertising is more feasible than making use of male homosexual imagery within this sampled group. This notion is then further influenced by a consumer's tolerance to homosexuality, and the respondent's gender also mediates the relationship between attitudes and purchase intentions. However, more investigation is necessary to determine the intrinsic differences between consumers.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETERS

This study holds several implications for marketers. Firstly, marketers need to ensure that the targeted homosexual consumers do in fact identify with the brand. This could be determined through market research of a brand's target market. Secondly, a brand that is looking to target homosexual consumers in mainstream advertising, should gain adequate insight into the secondary heterosexual market to which the brand also appeals. With regard to tolerance to homosexuality, the sample was seen as tolerant to homosexuality, therefore brands that target the educated youth have more freedom in illustrating homosexuality in their advertising campaigns. On the other hand, if a brand's target market is less educated, marketers could face negative effects that can result in the risk of heterosexual consumers switching brands.

Female homosexual imagery is more acceptable to heterosexual consumers, and this should be borne in mind when trying to gain insight into a brand's market. By doing so, the brand will target all sexual orientations in a mutually beneficial manner. As a result, marketers should minimise the use of male intimacy in their campaigns. The findings provide evidence that this could lead to negative attitudes and lower levels of purchase intentions among the heterosexual consumer. Using high levels of homosexual intimacy in campaigns should be used with caution, since the South African young adult population's readiness to engage with such homosexual advertisements is underdeveloped. With this in mind, the product sector influences the successfulness of such a marketing campaign. As uncovered by this research, marketers

should rather use this strategy in the technology sector than in the fashion sector.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

The contribution of this study is twofold: theoretical and practical. This research adds to literature in gender studies, youth studies, and branding within an African context. Marketers need to understand the youth because future consumers are paramount and this research provides insights into the educated youth population of Johannesburg. This study can be used in targeting homosexual consumers and can be further applied to successfully implementing other kinds of risqué advertising techniques to build brand awareness and to differentiate themselves from their competitors.

Given this shift in consumer mind-sets leads to practical contributions. With careful analysis of a brand's target market composition, specific sexual orientations can be targeted, allowing a brand to dispense with marketing campaigns and reap mutually beneficial returns in terms of an increase in market share and brand equity.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Intimacy, gender, and product sector were not tested directly in the questionnaire. This resulted in the inability to develop results for each construct in isolation. It is advised that future research considers each construct in isolation. Furthermore, analysing the differences in environments can provide more insight into different consumer groups with regard to external factors. This research's failure to do so has resulted in weak generalisability.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the use of homosexual models in mainstream advertising should be implemented with care among certain demographic groups. This study successfully investigated the influence that a consumer's tolerance to homosexuality has on their attitudes towards homosexual advertisements (varying in the level of intimacy, gender, and

product sector) and its influence on purchase intention.

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APPENDIX A

A DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENTS USED IN THE STUDY

Advertisement Number	Description of Advertisement
1	Low levels of intimacy between females for the fashion category
2	Low levels of intimacy between males for the fashion category
3	High levels of intimacy between females for the fashion category
4	High levels of intimacy between males for the fashion category
5	Low levels of intimacy between females for the technological category
6	Low levels of intimacy between males for the technological category
7	High levels of intimacy between females for the technological category
8	High levels of intimacy between males for the technological category