

Advertising can be so gay



By [Dylan Balkind](#)

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It really is a fine time to be gay. The world's getting its rainbow on more than ever despite some insistent folks who aren't that happy about it.

But, if you're part of the Westboro Baptist Church and genuinely believe the gays to be the evil you claim, your problems are a little bigger than myself and my mincing ilk.

From Hurricane Sandy to Oscar Pistorius' murder story, religious fanatics everywhere are blaming homosexuality for all sorts of malarkey. American Republican Michele Bachmann is having her own flap because of the abolishment of the Defence of Marriage Act; the land of the free is now the home of the gays, and what with what's happening in Russia and the rest of Africa, we're in the limelight now more than ever.

Big business

Commercially, this is big business and the ever-growing gay market is estimated to be worth \$835 billion. Homosexuality in Advertising and Marketing is alive and well. This doesn't mean that everyone in the agency model is gay (and now that I know this, I have to seriously question my career path), but it means that everyone is okay with it, because to legitimise this audience offers bonus opportunities for brands through an endorsement or a communication storyline.

The position these brands take (if at all) is a bold one. There's business to be won and lost either way. The Chick-fil-A case in the States is a remarkable one that exploded because of the company's chairman making clear his vehement opposition to the debate around marriage-equality. The backlash was enormous and business couldn't have been good. Oh well... You win some. You lose some.

What's more important to me are the brands willing to stand for a kinder message - and how big of a surprise some of them are: the Royal Dutch Football Association for example. Who would have thought?

There's always the risk that someone without the chops or the know-how has a bash at it though and goes a little far. This spot for Toronto's Gay Rugby Team has potential and then loses steam because while talking about challenging stereotypes, falls straight into one.

Still, it's great to see that the subject matter is being covered with well-produced content. But for the relevance to resonate, I believe it's more about the articulate subtlety in the story and how powerful this is for an audience who - in my lifetime still - will always and in some way be looking for acceptance.

I'm not here to force the issue. I wouldn't say we need the gay version of every straight commercial out there. Noeleen

going to that fancy schmancy institute to do that research for Ariel has saved us so much time, don't put us down for a gay version of that. And anyway, it would just be painful and very, very boring. But I am for more of the good ones. It would corroborate the work being done by shows like Glee, The New Normal and Modern Family. Shows that teach kids about how different we all are - and how cool that actually is.

Advertising plays a very powerful part in the choices we make. In a country (and world) with so many closeted issues when it comes to tolerance, do you think we could help make them better?

ABOUT DYLAN BALKIND

Even the person who can sell ice to Eskimos needs have a way of letting the world know. Words. They're wonderful warriors with the potential for worry. Use a writer who takes his passion seriously. Here's more about me and mine: <http://goo.gl/68Rsse> | Twitter [@DylanBalkind](https://twitter.com/DylanBalkind)

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