

Application of Perceived Brand Authenticity, Consumer Identity, and Rainbow Advertising Towards the Purchase Decision of Gen Z Consumers in the Fashion Industry

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Abstract

This study explores the influence of inclusive advertising appeal on the purchase decisions of Filipino consumers in the fashion industry, with a specific focus on LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising and the mediating roles of perceived brand authenticity, consumer identity, and rainbow-washing awareness. Grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Model and adapted from Pham Thi Be et al. (2024), the research employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational design and gathered responses from 320 Gen Z participants in Metro Manila through an online survey. Results revealed that while LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements were generally perceived as visually and emotionally unappealing, and often met with skepticism regarding their authenticity and identity relevance, their appeal still had a positive and statistically significant relationship with consumer purchase decisions. Among the mediating variables, only perceived brand authenticity significantly influenced the relationship between advertisement appeal and purchase decision. The study underscores the importance of authenticity in inclusive advertising and provides insights for fashion brands aiming to engage Filipino consumers ethically and effectively, particularly amid rising social consciousness and expectations of sincerity.

Keywords: *perceived brand authenticity, consumer identity, rainbow-washing, LGBTQ+ advertising, purchase decision, Gen Z consumers, fashion industry, inclusive marketing, Philippines, SOR model*

Introduction

In recent years, inclusive advertising has emerged as a strategic approach that emphasizes representation, authenticity, and cultural sensitivity by reflecting the diverse identities and lived experiences of consumers. This included showcasing variations in race, body size, gender, age, ability, and sexuality in advertising content, with the goal of forming deeper emotional connections and promoting social equity (Bommanavar & Malipatil, 2024). Within this broader framework, LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and others) advertising has gained prominence in the fashion industry, reflecting wider societal shifts toward inclusion, self-expression, and diversity. From once being largely invisible, LGBTQ+ representation grew significantly in the 2000s, particularly in fashion, where personal identity and style intersect (Ciszek, 2020; Dahl, 2021). As consumer behavior became increasingly driven by personal values and social consciousness, brands recognized the cultural and commercial value of engaging LGBTQ+ consumers. However, while some brands demonstrated genuine support through year-round initiatives and community partnerships, others were criticized for engaging in “rainbow-washing”—the superficial use of LGBTQ+ symbols and messages without meaningful commitment (Grilo, 2024; Rice, 2023).

In the Philippine context, where societal values around inclusivity were evolving but remained nuanced, Filipino consumers expected brands to demonstrate sincere support for marginalized communities (Campagan et al., 2022; Vega et al., 2022). Despite the increasing visibility of Pride-themed marketing campaigns, Filipino consumers—especially younger generations like Generation Z (Gen Z)—became more discerning, often questioning whether brands’ actions, including fashion brands, aligned with their values and beliefs (Capucan et al., 2024). Factors such as perceived brand authenticity, consumer identity, and awareness of rainbow-washing practices critically shaped how consumers responded to LGBTQ+ fashion advertising, influencing purchase decisions.

Authenticity became a foundation for successful engagement, as consumers increasingly valued consistency between a brand’s public image and its internal practices (Ciszek, 2020; Grilo, 2024). Research suggested that when brands authentically integrated LGBTQ+ support into their core values—beyond seasonal Pride campaigns—they built stronger emotional connections and fostered greater consumer trust (Lopes, 2021; Vrendenburg et al., 2020). However, rainbow-washing remained a critical concern. Many brands leveraged LGBTQ+ imagery during Pride Month without meaningful action, leading to consumer skepticism and accusations of performative allyship (Bautista, 2024; Sarza, 2023). While some studies, such as that of Johns et al. (2022) and Campagan et al. (2022), showed that skepticism toward performative allyship did not always impact purchase behavior, others like Schopper et al. (2024) suggested that highly identity-salient consumers actively disengaged from brands perceived as insincere.

Additionally, consumer identity—including gender, social values, and generation—played a crucial role in shaping responses to LGBTQ+ advertising. Studies showed that women and LGBTQ+ consumers were more skeptical of Pride messaging compared to their counterparts, reflecting heightened expectations for authenticity (Cheah et al., 2021; Pham Thi Be et al., 2024). Meanwhile, cultural and generational factors strongly influenced self-expression: Filipino Gen Z

consumers viewed fashion as an expression of individuality, balancing the need for uniqueness with social acceptance (Capucio et al., 2024; Cho et al., 2022). In contrast, older Filipino consumers, such as Baby Boomers, engaged differently based on their cultural and social experiences (Adan & Ramos, 2023).

Given these dynamics, it became essential to explore how perceived brand authenticity, consumer identity, and rainbow-washing awareness influenced the purchase decisions of Filipino consumers when it came to fashion products. With younger consumers, especially Gen Z, becoming more socially conscious and discerning, the importance of understanding their expectations became more critical for fashion brands. As these consumers increasingly valued sincerity over performative actions, brands needed to navigate a delicate balance of advocacy and authenticity to maintain credibility and consumer trust.

This study held relevance in the current marketing landscape, where Filipino fashion brands were increasingly integrating LGBTQ+ inclusivity into their campaigns. However, there was a significant gap in understanding how Filipino consumers perceived the authenticity of such advertising. Much of the existing research on LGBTQ+ advertising was conducted in Western contexts, where consumer behavior may differ due to cultural differences. In contrast, studies exploring how Filipino consumers evaluated LGBTQ+ advertising in the fashion industry remained limited. The growing awareness and expectations surrounding LGBTQ+ inclusivity in the Philippines necessitated a more localized approach to understanding consumer responses. This study, therefore, aimed to fill this gap by exploring the intricate factors that shaped Filipino consumers' purchase decisions in the context of LGBTQ+ advertising.

Moreover, while there had been some research into the role of brand authenticity and identity in relation to LGBTQ+ advertising, there was a lack of comprehensive studies that integrated these factors with awareness of rainbow-washing. This gap was critical because Filipino consumers were increasingly discerning of performative allyship and superficial marketing. As such, understanding how perceptions of authenticity, consumer identity, and rainbow-washing collectively influenced purchase behavior was paramount. By addressing this gap, the study provided valuable insights that could guide fashion brands in the Philippines to engage meaningfully with LGBTQ+ consumers while maintaining credibility.

Statement of the Problem

In today's socially conscious market, fashion brands in the Philippines have increasingly utilized LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements to project values of diversity and inclusion. While these marketing efforts may have resonated with some consumers, others questioned the sincerity behind them—raising concerns over performative branding or rainbow washing. As consumer expectations evolved, particularly among identity-driven markets, it became crucial to understand how advertising appeals influenced not just emotional reactions, but deeper psychological responses tied to identity and authenticity.

This study sought to examine the internal consumer processes—namely perceived brand authenticity, consumer identity, and rainbow-washing awareness—that mediated the relationship

between LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising appeals and purchasing decisions. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do the respondents assess the advertising appeal of the LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements?
2. How can the advertising appeal of the LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements influence consumer purchase decisions?
3. How can perceived brand authenticity mediate the relationship between advertising appeal of the LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements and consumer purchase decisions?
4. How can consumer identity mediate the relationship between advertising appeal of the LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements and consumer purchase decisions?
5. How can rainbow-washing awareness mediate the relationship between advertising appeal of the LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements and consumer purchase decisions?

Hypothesis

H₀₁: The advertising appeal of LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements does not significantly influence consumer purchase decisions.

H₀₂: Perceived brand authenticity does not mediate the relationship between advertising appeal and consumer purchase decisions.

H₀₃: Consumer identity does not mediate the relationship between advertising appeal and consumer purchase decisions.

H₀₄: Awareness of rainbow-washing does not mediate the relationship between advertising appeal and consumer purchase decisions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising and the purchase decisions of Filipino consumers in the fashion industry. Quantitative research enabled the numerical measurement and statistical analysis of variables, allowing for the identification of patterns and relationships. A descriptive-correlational research design aimed to describe the variables and determine the relationship between them. In this study, the variables—LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisement appeal, perceived brand authenticity, consumer identity, rainbow-washing awareness, and purchase decision—were described, and their relationships were measured.

Respondents of the Study

The study targeted individuals who were part of Gen Z residing within Metro Manila and who had purchased fashion apparel from clothing brands within the past month. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure representation of the target population. Purposive sampling involved the deliberate selection of participants based on their knowledge, relevance, or experience related to the research topic.

The criteria for respondents included:

1. Gen Z individuals aged 18 to 28
2. Residents of Metro Manila
3. Individuals who had recently purchased fashion apparel from clothing brands

The population of the study consisted of Gen Z residents of Metro Manila, with a total population of 3,679,900 based on the 2020 Census of Population and Housing by the Philippine Statistics Authority. Using a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level, the required sample size was calculated to be 385 using Raosoft's online sample size calculator. After removing outliers and incomplete responses, a total of 320 valid survey responses were retained for data analysis.

Research Instrument

The primary research instrument was an online survey questionnaire designed to measure key variables related to LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising and its influence on the purchase decisions of Filipino consumers in the fashion industry. The questionnaire consisted of seven sections and began with an introduction and informed consent section that provided an overview of the study and secured the participant's voluntary agreement.

To assess LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising appeal, participants were shown advertisements featuring fashion products with LGBTQ+ design and symbols and were asked to rate their perception of the advertisement's appeal. The next section focused on perceived brand authenticity by evaluating whether participants believed that the brand genuinely supported LGBTQ+ rights and values.

The questionnaire also assessed consumer identity by measuring how personal identity factors influenced their response to inclusive advertising. Another section examined rainbow-washing awareness to determine how familiar participants were with the concept and whether they could distinguish between genuine and performative efforts. Lastly, the purchase decision section evaluated participants' likelihood of buying the fashion product shown in the advertisement based on their perceptions.

Each item in the survey was rated on a 4-point Likert Scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 4 (Strongly Disagree), to provide standardized measurements of attitudes and behaviors. The

survey was hosted on Google Forms, ensuring ease of access and efficient data collection across a broad range of participants.

Content Validity and Test of Reliability

To ensure that the survey instrument effectively measured the intended variables, the questionnaire underwent content validity testing. Professors from the institution reviewed the survey items to determine whether they accurately reflected the key variables of the study. Feedback from the professors was used to revise the wording, structure, and relevance of the questions, ensuring alignment with the research objectives before finalizing the survey.

A pilot test was conducted prior to full-scale data gathering to assess the reliability of the instrument. The reliability of the survey items was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, which assesses internal consistency. The results revealed the following coefficients: $\alpha = 0.88$ for LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising appeal, $\alpha = 0.74$ for perceived brand authenticity, $\alpha = 0.93$ for consumer identity, $\alpha = 0.92$ for rainbow-washing awareness, and $\alpha = 0.90$ for purchase decision. All values were within the accepted range, indicating strong internal consistency.

Procedure

The data collection process was carried out in multiple phases to ensure accuracy and reliability. First, a pilot test was conducted to refine the survey instrument based on participant feedback. Once the final version was ready, the survey was distributed online through social media platforms and other digital communication channels to reach participants who actively engage with fashion brands and LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising. Before starting the survey properly, participants were required to read and agree to an informed consent form, which will outline the study's objectives and confidentiality measures.

Participants have completed the Likert-scale questionnaire, which was designed to take approximately four (4) minutes to complete. To ensure sufficient participation, the survey remained open for four (4) weeks, during which periodic reminders were sent to encourage responses. All collected data were stored securely and processed in compliance with data privacy regulations, ensuring the protection of participant information and research integrity.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the survey were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize the responses to each survey item. To examine the relationships among variables, regression analysis was applied to determine the influence of LGBTQ+ advertising appeal on purchase decisions. The Sobel test was employed to assess whether perceived brand authenticity, consumer identity, and rainbow-washing awareness mediate the relationship between LGBTQ+ advertising appeal and consumer purchase decisions in the fashion industry. This approach provided insights into both the direct and indirect effects among the variables of the study.

Results

Table 1

Descriptive analysis on LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising appeal

Item/Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation	Ranking
This ad is visually appealing.	2.12	0.80	Disagree	3rd
This LGBTQ+ ad is valuable to me as a consumer.	2.21	0.83	Disagree	2nd
This ad makes me more likely to talk about the brand with others.	2.25	0.82	Disagree	1st
This ad helps me understand the brand's value and social stance.	2.02	0.84	Disagree	4th
This ad reinforces the importance of LGBTQ+ inclusion in society.	1.96	0.82	Disagree	5th
Overall	2.11	0.64	Disagree	

Based on the descriptive analysis shown in Table 1, the respondents' assessment of the LGBTQ+ advertising appeal reflected generally unfavorable perceptions. All five items under this variable fell within the range of 1.75 to 2.49, indicating disagreement. The third item "This ad makes me more likely to talk about the brand with others" received the highest mean of 2.25 (SD = 0.82), showing that the advertisement did not strongly encourage brand-related word-of-mouth, while the fifth statement "This ad reinforces the importance of LGBTQ+ inclusion in society" scored the lowest with a mean of 1.96 (SD = 0.82). Overall, the section received a total mean score of 2.11 (SD = 0.64), interpreted as Disagree.

Table 2 indicates that respondents generally questioned the sincerity of brands promoting LGBTQ+ causes. Using the interpretation scale, a mean score of 1.75 to 2.49 indicates Disagree and 1.00 to 1.74 indicates Strongly Disagree, the majority of the items reflected skepticism toward the authenticity of LGBTQ+ inclusive campaigns. The fourth item "These LGBTQ+ inclusive campaigns are more about actual support than profit" scored the highest mean of 2.06 (SD = 0.97) however still interpreted as Disagree. Hence, the first item "I have positive opinions of brands that sincerely support LGBTQ+ causes" received a mean of 1.63 (SD = 0.68), the lowest among the items, indicating Strongly Disagree. This suggests that many respondents held negative views even when the brand's support was sincere. The overall mean score for this section was 1.84 (SD = 0.47), interpreted as Disagree.

Table 2

Descriptive analysis on perceived brand authenticity

Item/Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation	Ranking
I have positive opinions of brands that sincerely support LGBTQ+ causes.	1.63	0.68	Strongly Disagree	5th
The brands in the ads feel morally obligated to help.	1.83	0.36	Disagree	4th
The brands that promotes LGBTQ+ causes are genuinely socially responsible.	1.84	0.71	Disagree	2nd
These LGBTQ+ inclusive campaigns are more about actual support than profit.	2.06	0.97	Disagree	1st
These brands' support for LGBTQ+ causes reflect its core values.	1.84	0.74	Disagree	2nd
Overall	1.84	0.47	Disagree	

Table 3

Descriptive analysis on consumer identity

Item/Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation	Ranking
These brands' LGBTQ+ inclusive advocacy reflects who the consumer is as a person.	2.14	0.89	Disagree	4th
I relate to the values expressed in these brands' LGBTQ+ inclusive campaigns.	2.25	0.89	Disagree	3rd
I feel that these brands' LGBTQ+ inclusive campaign is closely associated with the identity of the consumer.	2.41	0.88	Disagree	1st
These products in the ads would help the consumer express who they are.	2.28	0.93	Disagree	2nd
I feel proud to support a fashion brand that promotes LGBTQ+ inclusion.	1.89	0.86	Disagree	5th
Overall	2.19	0.73	Disagree	

Table 3 reveals that respondents generally did not feel a strong connection between their personal identity and the values portrayed in LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements. Based on the interpretation guide where a mean of 1.75 to 2.49 indicates Disagree, all items in this section fell within this range, suggesting a lack of resonance with the advertising content. The third item “I feel that these brands’ LGBTQ+ inclusive campaign is closely associated with the identity of the consumer” gained the highest mean of 2.41 (SD = 0.88), though still interpreted as Disagree. The lowest score was recorded for “I feel proud to support a fashion brand that promotes LGBTQ+ inclusion,” with a mean of 1.89 (SD = 0.86), indicating minimal emotional connection or pride associated with the brand's advocacy. The overall mean for this variable was 2.19 (SD = 0.73), interpreted as Disagree.

Table 4

Descriptive analysis on rainbow-washing awareness

Item/Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation	Ranking
Some brands take advantage of LGBTQ+ causes to help their own business.	1.58	0.63	Strongly Disagree	4th
Some brands support LGBTQ+ causes mainly to gain publicity.	1.62	0.67	Strongly Disagree	3rd
Some brands support LGBTQ+ causes mainly to increase profit.	1.56	0.65	Strongly Disagree	5th
These brands take advantage of LGBTQ+ causes to help their own business.	1.92	0.79	Disagree	1st
This brand supports LGBTQ+ causes mainly to attract more customers.	1.89	0.72	Disagree	2nd
Overall	1.72	0.54	Strongly Disagree	

Table 4 indicates that respondents generally disagreed with the notion that the LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements were exploitative or insincere. Using the interpretation scale, a mean score of 1.75 to 2.49 indicates Disagree and 1.00 to 1.74 indicates Strongly Disagree, most items under this variable suggest that participants did not perceive the ads as examples of rainbow-washing. Two items—“These brands take advantage of LGBTQ+ causes to help their own business” and “This brand supports LGBTQ+ causes mainly to attract more customers”—had slightly higher means of 1.92 (SD = 0.79) and 1.89 (SD = 0.72), respectively. However the highest level of disagreement was observed in the item “Some brands support LGBTQ+ causes

mainly to increase profit,” which had a mean of 1.56 (SD = 0.65). These responses reflect a strong disagreement with the idea that LGBTQ+ themes are being used solely for marketing gain. The overall mean for this variable was 1.72 (SD = 0.54), interpreted as Strongly Disagree.

Table 5

Descriptive analysis on purchase decision

Item/Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation	Ranking
I am likely to buy the product after seeing the LGBTQ+ inclusive ads.	2.32	0.87	Strongly Disagree	1st
I would consider purchasing products from the brand that supports LGBTQ+ causes.	2.03	0.75	Strongly Disagree	3rd
I would seek out the brand in stores or online because of its support of LGBTQ+ causes.	2.16	0.79	Strongly Disagree	2nd
I would be willing to buy from the brand in the future if it genuinely and consistently supports LGBTQ+ causes.	1.93	0.81	Disagree	4th
I would recommend the brand to others if it genuinely supports LGBTQ+ causes.	1.80	0.73	Disagree	5th
Overall	2.05	0.66	Strongly Disagree	

Table 5 reveals a generally low level of agreement among respondents regarding their decision to purchase from brands after exposure to LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements. Using the interpretation scale, a mean score of 1.75 to 2.49 indicates Disagree and 1.00 to 1.74 indicates Strongly Disagree, most responses leaned toward strong disagreement or disagreement, suggesting limited behavioral impact from the advertisements. The statement “I am likely to buy the product after seeing the LGBTQ+ inclusive ads” received the highest mean of 2.32 (SD = 0.87), falling within the Disagree category. Likewise, “I would recommend the brand to others if it genuinely supports LGBTQ+ causes” (1.80, SD = 0.73)—suggest even stronger reluctance, bordering on strong disagreement. The overall mean score for this variable was 2.05 (SD = 0.66), indicating a general strong disagreement with the idea that LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising significantly drives purchase behavior.

Table 6

Relationship between LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising appeal and purchase decision

Correlation between	<i>r</i> -value	Description	<i>p</i> -value	Remark
Advertising appeal and purchase decision	0.598	Moderate	.000	Significant

Table 6 presents the results of the regression analysis examining the relationship between the advertising appeal of LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements and consumer purchase decisions. The analysis revealed a moderately strong positive correlation between the two variables, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.598$. This indicates that as the perceived appeal of LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements increases, the likelihood of consumers making a purchase also tends to rise. Furthermore, the p -value of .000 is significantly lower than the assumed level of significance of 0.05, indicating that the relationship between advertising appeal and purchase decision is statistically significant.

Table 7

Relationship between LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising appeal and purchase decision when mediated by perceived brand authenticity

Variables	Coefficient	Standard Error
Advertising appeal on perceived brand authenticity	0.383	0.035
Advertising appeal and perceived brand authenticity on purchase decision	0.224	0.073

The regression results indicated that advertising appeal had a positive effect on perceived brand authenticity ($\beta = 0.383$, $SE = 0.035$), and when both advertising appeal and perceived brand authenticity were considered, they had a positive effect on purchase decision ($\beta = 0.224$, $SE = 0.073$), suggesting that perceived brand authenticity plays a role in transmitting the influence of the advertising appeal of LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements to consumer purchase decisions.

Table 8

Mediation analysis of perceived brand authenticity between LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising appeal and purchase decision

Variable	Sobel Test <i>z</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
Perceived brand authenticity	2.95	.003

The Sobel test indicated that the mediating effect of perceived brand authenticity is statistically significant ($z = 2.95, p = .003$), suggesting that the perceived brand authenticity plays a significant role in transmitting the influence of the advertising appeal of the LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements to consumer purchase decisions.

Table 9

Relationship between LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising appeal and purchase decision when mediated by consumer identity

Variables	Coefficient	Standard Error
Advertising appeal on consumer identity	0.708	0.050
Advertising appeal and consumer identity on purchase decision	0.266	0.492

Table 10

Mediation analysis of consumer identity between LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising appeal and purchase decision

Variable	Sobel Test z -value	p -value
Consumer identity	0.540	.589

The Sobel test indicated that the mediating effect of customer identity is not statistically significant ($z = 0.540, p = .589$), suggesting that the consumer identity does not play a significant role in transmitting the influence of the advertising appeal of the LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements to consumer purchase decisions.

Table 11

Relationship between LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising appeal and purchase decision when mediated by rainbow-washing awareness

Variables	Coefficient	Standard Error
Advertising appeal on rainbow-washing awareness	0.708	0.050
Advertising appeal and rainbow-washing awareness on purchase decision	0.266	0.492

Table 12

Mediation analysis of rainbow-washing awareness between LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising appeal and purchase decision

Variable	Sobel Test z -value	p -value
Rainbow-washing awareness	1.88	.061

The Sobel test indicated that the mediating effect of rainbow-washing awareness is not statistically significant ($z = 1.88, p = .061$), suggesting that rainbow-washing awareness does not play a significant role in transmitting the influence of the advertising appeal of the LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements to consumer purchase decisions.

Discussion

The study examined the influence of LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising on Filipino consumers' purchase decisions in the fashion industry. It specifically explored the mediating roles of perceived brand authenticity, consumer identity, and rainbow-washing awareness in this relationship.

As shown, table 1 received a total mean score of 2.11 ($SD = 0.64$), interpreted as Disagree. These results suggest that the LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements were not well-received by the respondents in terms of visual aesthetics, personal appeal, or perceived contribution to social values—supporting prior research that found consumers often view such campaigns as ineffective when they lack emotional resonance, perceived authenticity, or meaningful engagement with the LGBTQ+ community (Jaquez, 2021; Champlin & Li, 2020; Vega et al., 2022).

Table 2 illustrates that many respondents held negative views even when the brand's support was sincere reinforcing the perception that the support is not deeply rooted in the brands' identity, with the overall mean score of 1.84 ($SD = 0.47$), interpreted as Disagree. These findings present a general skepticism among respondents regarding the authenticity and true intentions behind LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising campaigns, which aligns with the literature emphasizing that consumers—especially Gen Z—are increasingly critical of inauthentic brand activism and expect genuine, values-driven support beyond seasonal or symbolic gestures (Grilo, 2024; Lopes, 2021; Vega et al., 2022).

Table 3 results suggest that the LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements in the fashion industry do not strongly align with consumers' self-concepts or identities, indicating a potential gap between the intended brand messaging and the personal values of the target audience—consistent with findings by Capucao et al. (2024) and Pham Thi Be et al. (2024), who emphasize that identity

alignment is crucial in marketing to Gen Z, especially when campaigns aim to connect through values and self-expression.

As stipulated in Table 4, the overall mean for rainbow-washing awareness variable was 1.72 (SD = 0.54), interpreted as Strongly Disagree. These findings imply that, on average, respondents did not view the fashion advertisements as rainbow-washing, indicating trust in the sincerity of the LGBTQ+ messaging presented—somewhat contrasting earlier literature that highlights growing consumer concern over performative allyship and rainbow-washing practices (Rice, 2023; Champlin & Li, 2020; Bautista, 2024).

Table 5 reveals a generally low level of agreement among respondents regarding their decision to purchase from brands after exposure to LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements. The statement “I am likely to buy the product after seeing the LGBTQ+ inclusive ads” received the highest mean falling within the Disagree category. Likewise, “I would recommend the brand to others if it genuinely supports LGBTQ+ causes” suggest even stronger reluctance, bordering on strong disagreement. The overall mean score for this variable also indicates a general strong disagreement with the idea that LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising significantly drives purchase behavior. This means that while respondents may not view the ads negatively, they are not motivated to support the brand through purchasing or recommendation either—supporting prior findings that inclusive or advocacy-based advertising may improve brand perception but does not necessarily convert into higher purchase intent, particularly when authenticity is questioned or when other purchase drivers (e.g., price, quality) take precedence (Campagan et al., 2022; Johns et al., 2022; Vega et al., 2022).

The findings indicate that LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements in the fashion industry are generally not well-received by Gen Z consumers in Metro Manila. Respondents expressed unfavorable attitudes toward the overall appeal of these advertisements, suggesting they found them visually unengaging, lacking in personal relevance, and ineffective in communicating meaningful values or social messages. This lack of appeal also extended to the emotional and social impact of the ads, which did not inspire conversation, connection, or perceived social importance.

Moreover, consumers appeared skeptical of the sincerity behind brands promoting LGBTQ+ causes. Many respondents questioned whether such campaigns were genuinely rooted in the brand’s core values or merely used for strategic gain. Despite this skepticism, they did not strongly believe the advertisements to be exploitative or examples of rainbow-washing. This indicates a nuanced view: while consumers may not fully trust the authenticity of these efforts, they also do not completely dismiss them as insincere or opportunistic (Pham Thi Be et al., 2024; Schopper et al., 2024).

Additionally, the advertisements did not resonate with consumers on a personal level. Respondents did not feel that the values represented in the campaigns aligned with their identity, nor did they feel a sense of pride or personal connection in supporting brands with inclusive messages. As a result, the advertisements had minimal influence on their likelihood to purchase, recommend, or seek out such brands.

Despite the generally negative reception, a more in-depth analysis revealed that when the advertisements are perceived as appealing, they have the potential to influence consumer behavior positively. This relationship is significantly mediated by the perceived authenticity of the brand. In other words, consumers are more likely to consider purchasing from a brand if they believe the inclusive message is sincere and aligns with genuine social responsibility. However, identity alignment and awareness of rainbow-washing did not significantly influence this relationship, indicating that authenticity, rather than representation or skepticism, plays a more central role in shaping purchase decisions.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of authenticity in LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising within the Philippine fashion industry. Filipino Gen Z consumers, in particular, are unlikely to respond to symbolic representation alone. For inclusive campaigns to be effective, brands must go beyond surface-level inclusion and demonstrate a genuine, long-term commitment to supporting marginalized communities.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that while Filipino Gen Z respondents generally found LGBTQ+ inclusive advertisements unappealing, these campaigns still demonstrated a positive influence on purchase intentions when perceived as appealing. This underscores the potential of inclusive marketing to affect consumer behavior despite low baseline appeal, aligning with the findings of Paklapas et al. (2024) and Johns et al. (2022), which highlight that inclusive branding, when executed effectively, can shape consumer responses.

A key contribution of this study lies in establishing perceived brand authenticity as a significant mediating factor between advertising appeal and purchase decisions. Consumers were more likely to respond positively to inclusive advertisements when they perceived the brand's advocacy as genuine supporting the conclusions of Vega et al. (2022) and Lopes (2021), who emphasize the role of authentic brand activism in fostering trust and loyalty. In contrast, consumer identity and rainbow-washing awareness did not significantly mediate the relationship, suggesting that in the Philippine context, consumers may be more responsive to the perceived sincerity of a brand's efforts rather than how closely an advertisement aligns with their personal identity or their awareness of performative marketing.

The cultural and social landscape of the Philippines may have significantly influenced these findings. As a country deeply rooted in collectivist values and strong familial and religious traditions, Filipino consumers may exhibit heightened sensitivity to perceived authenticity and sincerity in brand messaging, especially when it concerns marginalized communities like the LGBTQ+ population. While the Philippines has made strides toward LGBTQ+ visibility, societal ambivalence and ongoing stigma persist, which may explain the generally low appeal of such advertisements among respondents. This nuance reflects the observations of Campagan et al. (2022) and Vega et al. (2022), who argue that Filipino consumers often respond more favorably to purpose-driven marketing when it is well-executed and culturally resonant.

In summary, this study contributes to the growing body of research on inclusive marketing in the Philippines by emphasizing the importance of authenticity and cultural sensitivity in shaping

consumer behavior. For brands operating in the Philippine fashion industry, merely incorporating LGBTQ+ themes in advertising is insufficient. To truly connect with Filipino Gen Z consumers, campaigns must be rooted in genuine support, culturally relevant narratives, and ethical practices that reflect long-term commitment to inclusivity.

Implications of the Findings

This study offers meaningful insights for marketers and fashion brands aiming to implement LGBTQ+ inclusive marketing strategies. While the findings suggest that such advertisements may not be universally appealing, their potential to influence purchase decisions remains notable. This underscores the importance of designing campaigns that are not only inclusive in content but also resonate meaningfully with the target audience. Brands are encouraged to invest in audience research and strategic message development to enhance the appeal and relevance of inclusive advertisements.

Moreover, the significant mediating role of perceived brand authenticity highlights the necessity of sincerity in brand communications. When consumers perceive a brand's support for the LGBTQ+ community as genuine, the effectiveness of inclusive advertising in shaping purchase behavior is amplified. Therefore, brands should move beyond symbolic gestures or seasonal campaigns and instead engage in sustained, transparent, and ethical practices that reflect a long-term commitment to diversity and inclusion.

From a broader social and ethical standpoint, this research contributes to ongoing discussions on responsible advertising and the ethical deployment of social causes in brand messaging. The findings advocate more accountable and inclusive marketing practices that align with the values of increasingly discerning consumers. As public awareness of performative allyship grows, brands that demonstrate authenticity and meaningful advocacy are more likely to foster trust, loyalty, and long-term consumer engagement.

Limitations of the Study

The study has several limitations. It focuses on Gen Z consumers in Metro Manila, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other generations or regions. The study is also limited to the fashion industry. Data was collected through self-reported surveys, which may be subject to interpretation variability. Additionally, the study did not measure actual brand performance. Another limitation is that the researchers did not differentiate respondents based on sexual orientation, such as between heterosexual individuals and those identifying as part of the LGBTQ+ community. This may overlook potential differences in consumer behavior and brand perception across diverse identity groups. These limitations suggest that future research could broaden the scope to include other demographics, industries, and data collection methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations can be made for key stakeholders involved in inclusive marketing practices:

For Marketers and Fashion Brands. It is essential for marketers and fashion brands to demonstrate authentic, long-term commitments to LGBTQ+ inclusion, rather than relying on seasonal or symbolic gestures. Given that perceived brand authenticity was found to significantly influence consumer purchase decisions, brand messaging should consistently reflect genuine values, sustained advocacy, and transparent practices. This involves moving beyond superficial representation to include the implementation of inclusive workplace policies, continuous engagement with LGBTQ+ communities, and the demonstration of consistent, year-round support. Moreover, marketers could collaborate with members of the LGBTQ+ community in the development of advertising campaigns to ensure cultural sensitivity and contextual relevance. Conducting targeted research to better understand the distinct needs and preferences of LGBTQ+ consumers—particularly within the diverse cultural landscape of the Philippines—can further enhance the effectiveness of inclusive marketing efforts. Collectively, these strategies can foster consumer trust, strengthen brand engagement, and contribute to long-term brand loyalty.

For the LGBTQ+ Community and Advocates. The study highlights the importance of continuing to hold brands accountable for how they represent LGBTQ+ identities. While inclusive advertising can positively influence consumer behavior, there is increasing awareness of performative allyship. These findings can support efforts to push for deeper, systemic brand commitments and promote consumer support for companies with proven records of advocacy—rather than those that participate only in symbolic efforts like rainbow packaging during Pride month.

For Academics and Future Researchers. This study opens pathways for future research on inclusive marketing, particularly within the Philippine context. Future studies should examine the long-term effects of LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising on consumer behavior and brand loyalty. It is equally important to explore how intersecting aspects of identity—such as generation, race, and socioeconomic status—interact with responses to inclusive advertising. Additionally, researchers are encouraged to assess the effectiveness of various LGBTQ+ inclusive advertising strategies and compare their outcomes across different cultural and demographic contexts. Examining the role of actual brand performance and ethical business practices may also shed light on whether inclusive branding efforts translate into measurable consumer outcomes, such as purchase decisions and brand engagement. Furthermore, there is a need to investigate consumer awareness of rainbow-washing and to develop strategies that empower individuals to make informed, critical, and authentic purchasing choices. Future studies should also consider the diversity within the LGBTQ+ community, recognizing that subgroups such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and non-binary individuals may have distinct perspectives, values, and advertising preferences. By addressing these gaps, future research can contribute to a more nuanced, ethical, and culturally sensitive understanding of consumer responses to identity-based marketing.

For Policymakers and Consumer Rights Groups. The findings suggest the need for clearer ethical advertising guidelines, especially when brands align with social causes. Policymakers can



advocate greater transparency and accountability in marketing campaigns that claim to support marginalized communities. Consumer protection bodies may also consider developing tools or standards to help the public distinguish between authentic brand activism and opportunistic rainbow-washing, ultimately promoting fairer and more responsible marketing practices.

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