

Things to know about Pride Month, brand promises, and performative marketing

Article

As many brands honor members of the LGBT+ community this Pride Month, consumers are looking for more than just a rainbow logo—they want action.

A lack of response to discriminatory legislation is landing some corporations in hot water.

Despite efforts by various corporations and states to establish LGBT+ discrimination protections, the US lacks federal-level safeguards for the population. The Equality Act, passed by the US House in 2019, would prohibit discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity—but the legislation remains stalled in the Senate.

With a rise in state-level anti-LGBT+ laws and sharp policy contrasts across geographies, the corporate sector faces challenges in formulating a coherent response to LGBT+ related issues. **The very public and costly fight that Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis ignited with The Walt Disney Co., after the company denounced his “Don’t Say Gay” bill, may be an indication of the hurdles ahead.** When it comes to LGBT+ advocacy, divisive politics will further test corporations’ economic clout, stretch social ties with customers, and pose new challenges to leaders.

Some companies like PepsiCo capitalize on Pride Month while playing it safe.

With its Pride Month campaign, **PepsiCo’s Bubly** brand is highlighting the need for LGBT+ safe places.

In its release announcing the campaign, Bubly talked about how safe spaces are important to LGBT+ consumers seeking to escape discrimination or harassment while also providing a sense of community. **But one has to wonder how daring such a campaign is in 2022 versus, say, 15 years ago.** American consumers are largely pro-LGBT+ acceptance.

In its campaign, Bubly did not address the current US tide of anti-LGBT+ legislation.

Couplet Coffee spoke with Insider Intelligence about authentic Pride Month marketing.

“A lot of brands are super performative and care about the queer community in June when they can commercialize it,” says Couplet CEO and founder Gefen Skolnick.

“Couplet Coffee is queer every day. Brands put out merch products that clearly someone queer was not part of creating, and it feels like low-hanging fruit for brands to say they’ve done something in their marketing calendar for Pride.

“I would challenge brands to think deeper about how they can empower the queer community, whether it's partnering with nonprofits or organizations that help folks out in the queer space or empowering small businesses like Couplet versus the mainstream alternatives.”