

The background of the header is a photograph of a crowded outdoor event, likely a Pride celebration, with a body of water and hills in the distance. The text is overlaid on this image.

The Pink Pound – are you just jumping on the cultural bandwagon?

ADVERTISING DIVERSITY SPORT

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Pride gets bigger and louder every year, and 2019 marked a real turning point for the number of companies who weighed in with their support. However, are these businesses genuine in their motives? Is their celebration of Pride an extension of their values or are they guilty of jumping on the cultural bandwagon?

We investigate further.

2019 marks 50 years since the Stonewall Uprising; a riot that sparked a global push for

LGBTQ+ rights. We've come a long way since then, both in the visibility of the LGBTQ+ community and in the enthusiasm of individuals and companies alike to show their support at Pride. However, there is still a long way to go.

A study conducted by YouGov, commissioned by [Gay Times](#) and [Karmarama](#), found that whilst 64% of adults think it's positive for the LGBTQ+ community to be visible in advertisements, a considerable 72% of the LGBTQ+ community feel their presence in advertising is tokenistic. Does this mean that brands who incorporate the rainbow into their logo are not doing enough to engage the LGBTQ+ community?

No time brings out these questions quite like Pride. This year in particular saw many campaigns accused of inauthenticity and a lack of substance, highlighting the pitfalls of advertising around the event, while [The Guardian](#) published headlines warning that 'Pride has sold its soul to rainbow-branded capitalism.' Meanwhile UK Black Pride and Trans Pride are often overlooked in favour of more 'mainstream' events.

Ultimately businesses wanting to be involved and reach out to the LGBTQ+ community need to become more aware and develop a deeper understanding of why they're supporting Pride and what they're adding to the conversation before there can be any plans to align with an important event such as this. By not considering their role and the wider organisation's existing relationship with the LGBTQ+ community, within both their customer and employee base, it's difficult for an activation to stand up to scrutiny. The simplest to move towards this position is to involve members of the community within the campaigns planning stages.

One company we saw shine this year in their Pride work is [Paddy Power](#). Their message sat loud and proud behind their Brighton Pride activation, using their huge 'game changer' inflatable to kickstart a much-needed conversation around homophobia in football. Working with Gay Times, on a consultative basis for 7 months prior to going live, they put the work in to identify where they could have a meaningful impact within LGBTQ+ and importantly listened to advice and changed initial plans to ensure they did this. Setting a simple but ambitious goal, Paddy Power want to help create a safe and less homophobic place where the LGBTQ+ players and fans can feel more comfortable. Understanding their influence and peer level relationship with football fans, their aim was to impact the fans, players and clubs who have the ability to change the environment in stadiums, pubs, online and anywhere people watch football.

Crucially Paddy Power recognised that these conversations are not limited to the Pride window. Their unmissable 'game changer' activations at Pride, where openly LGBTQ+ players marched with a 16m inflatable footballer, representing all the LGBTQ+ players who exist within the game but unable to take part in Pride, was just the start of the campaign. Following through to September and the new football season, Paddy Power will be continuing the conversations through content with key openly LGBTQ+ players and talent such as Graeme Souness and Scott Brown, to look at changing the football mindset and tackle homophobia head on. Continuing their work with Gay Times and involving their audience ensures the campaign is both impactful and meaningful.

Alongside this they looked into their own business, working with Stonewall on the diversity champion programme, ensuring their own business is a positive place for LGBTQ+ employees.

Tag Warner, CEO GAY TIMES, said "Paddy Power have been on a transformational journey within LGBTQ and understand the influence they hold within football audiences – a

cohort that has quite publicly struggled with LGBTQ themes. The brands ability to understand nuances has grown from strength to strength. Our recent partnership saw an 'anonymous hero' icon at Brighton Pride changed to the 'game changer.' The change in tone echoing the brands ability to position LGBTQ people away from some thing hidden, to celebratory and empowered."

In conclusion, whilst all support for Pride is positive, brands need to understand their role in the space whilst looking internally and understanding their business' relationship with the community if they're going to deliver a campaign that stands up to possible scrutiny that follows.

Our advice for businesses:

Consider looking outside of the Pride window, moving away from seeing pride as an activation window and seeing LGBTQ+ as a legitimate audience to target all year round. This is something MediaCom are in a position to help clients with, working with consultants who understand the community best (such as the Paddy Power and Gay Times relationship) ensures that we have voices in the room that guide campaign strategy and creative in a progressive and authentic manner.

To read more about our work with Paddy Power, click [here](#).

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