


Brand Activism and Pink Advertising: Purpose as Commitment to a Cause


ACTIVISMO DE MARCA Y *PINK ADVERTISING*: EL PROPÓSITO COMO
COMPROMISO DE CAUSA

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Abstract: This research analyzes the effectiveness of different brand advertising campaigns with LGBTQI+ intentional marketing as a commitment to a cause. To achieve this, a case study using content analysis was carried out on the social network X on the basis of three objectives: to establish the interaction rate per publication (IPR), the engagement and disengagement generated by the campaigns, and the nature of the feedback. The results show that only 20% of the brands are perceived as true activists of the LGBTQI+ cause on the basis of communicative proposals identified as pink advertising. In 80% of the remaining brands, the proposals developed are identified with an opportunistic use of, and lack of commitment to, the LGBTQI+ cause, otherwise known as pink washing. This study concludes that brands that manage to communicate their corporate values by associating them with a true commitment to the LGBTQI+ community achieve better interaction and engagement results.

Keywords: Brand Activism; Pink Advertising; Woke Advertising; Purpose; Engagement.

Resumen: En esta investigación se analiza la eficacia de diferentes campañas publicitarias de marcas con propósito LGTBIQ+ como compromiso con causa. Para ello se realiza un estudio de casos en la red social X, mediante análisis de contenido, a partir de tres objetivos: establecer la tasa de interacción por publicación (TIP), el *engagement* y *disengagement* generado por las campañas y la naturaleza del *feed-back*. Los resultados muestran que únicamente el 20% de las marcas son percibidas como verdaderas activistas de esta causa social, a partir de propuestas comunicativas que se identifican como *pink advertising*. En el 80% de las marcas restantes, las propuestas desarrolladas se identifican con una utilización oportunista y carente de compromiso con la causa LGTBIQ+ (*pink washing*). Se concluye que las marcas que logran comunicar sus valores corporativos, asociándolos a un compromiso verdadero hacia la comunidad LGTBIQ+, consiguen mejores resultados de interacción y *engagement*.

Palabras clave: Activismo de marca; *pink advertising*; *woke advertising*; propósito; *engagement*.



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1. Introduction

Corporate values, as principles that guide the behavior of business organizations, represent continuing points of reference for intentional branding strategies corresponding to the commitment of organizations to a social cause (Fernández Gómez *et al.*, 2023). Such intentional marketing, which must be authentic, meaningful, and relevant, is incorporated into the brand identity itself, aligning with the mission, vision, and corporate culture to foster a more just, inclusive, tolerant, and responsible society (Manfredi, 2019; Pintado *et al.*, 2020; Canavese, 2023; Sanahuja *et al.*, 2023).

Consequently, brands use intentional marketing (or commitment to a cause) as a differentiating element in their positioning against their competitors (Barrio-Fraile *et al.*, 2022; López-Casares, 2023), promoting a positive social impact that also benefits them. A brand's purpose, when perceived by consumers as a real identity value, generates loyalty and fidelity since it allows the establishment or reinforcement of bonds with clients and consumers. It is not, therefore, a matter of launching a marketing strategy focused on the brand's purpose, but of transforming it into part of the organization's DNA.

Brand activism is identified with the involvement of business organizations and their commercial brands in the defense of social, ethical, political, ecological, or environmental values. This corporate philosophy goes beyond strictly strategic and financial objectives by integrating commitments to causes stemming from the brands' purpose (Fernández Gómez *et al.*, 2023; Sanahuja *et al.*, 2023).

When business organizations take a clear and manifest position with respect to certain values, issues, or social problems, they contribute to promoting changes in perception, attitude, and behavior. This form of corporate activism is demonstrated through donations to specific causes, explicit support for social movements, advocacy for policies or laws that promote certain causes, and marketing and advertising campaigns. In this sense, we can find different marketing strategies that are used as proponents of social change to modify opinions, attitudes, and behaviors on the basis of messages regarding social justice, equality, inclusion, and diversity policies, identified as social marketing (Alvarado-López *et al.*, 2018; López-Miguel *et al.*, 2021). Activism is thus held up as a direct manifestation of corporate purpose through concrete and visible actions (Manfredi, 2019; Pintado *et al.*, 2020; Almeida-García, 2021; Cristóbal *et al.*, 2022; Asenjo and Del Pino-Romero, 2023).

In this context, certain business organizations develop gay-friendly corporate strategies that utilize intentional marketing as a social commitment (or

with a cause) to promote the visibility and normalization of the LGBTQI+ collective. Brands with a clear and authentic purpose, which make this commitment visible through intentional marketing (woke advertising), are perceived positively by consumers (Cristobal *et al.*, 2022). However, brands can also use this commitment to certain social values in an opportunistic or inauthentic way (woke washing).

In this study, the advertising campaigns of different commercial brands that have used intentional marketing directed toward the LGBTQI+ collective are analyzed through X (formerly Twitter), to investigate whether social media users identify these proposals as pink advertising (a real commitment to the LGBTQI+ collective based on the brand's purpose) or pink washing¹ (the absence of a real commitment beyond the intentional marketing strategy). For this purpose, the interaction rate per publication (IPR), the engagement generated by the campaigns, and the nature of the users' feedback are analyzed.

2. Origin and Evolution of Brand Activism: CSR, Social Marketing, Intentional Marketing, and Woke Advertising

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) analysis, as a philosophy of governance, pertains to different approaches that explain how, since the second half of the twentieth century, the interaction between business organizations and their context has been brought about from social, economic, and environmental impacts, stemming from the activities developed by the organizations themselves (UN, 2015; Eding and Scholtens, 2017; Arteaga *et al.*, 2022). Thus, we find numerous contributions focused, among other issues, on the relationships between organizations and stakeholders, as well as the ethical, philanthropic,

¹ *Rainbow washing* is an analogous term that has to do with the use of LGBTQI+ symbols and images by companies in a strictly marketing-oriented way, without active support for the rights and welfare of the community. This is an opportunistic appropriation that distorts the meaning of the defense of the rights of the collective with the use of symbols and images as mere decorative elements, especially during the celebration of Pride Day.

In this context, and as one of the pioneering concepts of woke advertising, we refer to greenwashing: abusive and misleading communication that seeks to build the brand image of an organization on the basis of an ecological positioning, despite the fact that its actions are harmful to the environment.

regulatory², economic, social, and environmental dimensions, together with the implementation of CSR models, to create value, improve the positioning of organizations, and achieve an optimal reputation (Kramer and Porter, 2006; Villafañe, 2009; García-Salazar *et al.*, 2021).

As a result, and especially since the first decade of the twenty-first century, there has been a notable increase in the interest of business organizations that generate a high impact on society to show their CSR initiatives through reports, balance sheets, and sustainability reports that are conveniently verified (UN, 2015; Sánchez-Villamil *et al.*, 2019).

Of all the aspects of CSR, it is the social dimension that is most closely linked to corporate philanthropy. Companies dedicate financial, human, or material resources to support social, environmental, or educational causes through charitable actions with a direct impact on society. These initiatives take the form of financial donations to non-profit organizations or associations, volunteer programs, and sponsorship of community events, as well as contributions, collaborations, and sustainable investments.

In this review of concepts, the social marketing of Kotler and Zaltman (1971) is consolidated with Kotler and Roberto (1989), in which they establish that, in marketing oriented toward social products such as ideas, other factors such as attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are also integrated. A new approach is thus emerging on the basis of the fact that organizations must direct all their efforts toward a group of adopters (or the target market), as the target audience, so that they accept, modify, or abandon certain ideas, attitudes, and behaviors.

Social marketing is a common practice within the different intentional marketing strategies (developed by NGOs and non-profit associations) and commitment to a cause (or corporate social), which aims to convey commitment to certain social values by associating them with the identity and culture of an organization (Almeida-García, 2021). In this sense, social advertising is, in turn, framed within the more traditional parameters of social marketing by contributing to the alleviation or resolution of certain social issues or conflicts on the basis of messages that stem from awareness-raising objectives, advocacy,

² CSR has been managed by the corporate governments of business organizations, following different regulations, national plans, European legislation, and guidelines set by different international bodies, such as the European Commission, OECD, UN, ILO, Institute of Social and Ethical Accountability, Global Reporting Initiative, International Organization for Standardization, and UNESCO.

and civil rights (Orozco and Roca, 2011; Senes and Ricciulli-Duarte, 2019; López-Casares, 2023).

On the contrary, woke advertising represents the review and evolution of corporate intentional marketing (or corporate social) strategies, since its purpose is to reflect relevant social issues from the position of purpose as an integrative approach to generate engagement with a target audience that values the authenticity of brands. Thus, the identity of business organizations reflects the real commitment to these social values in all areas of management and strategic policies, beyond the marketing narrative itself (Cristóbal *et al.*, 2022). This involves the implementation of purpose-driven internal policies such as social engagement, ethical hiring practices, diversity in the workplace, initiatives to support different sectors of the community, and other concrete actions that justify cause-focused marketing campaigns.

In this context, brands design advertising strategies not only to attract their target audience but also to promote meaningful messages about relevant social issues (López-Casares, 2023). Purposeful brand communication is based on clear, transparent, and convincing messages that make the commitment assumed by the brand visible through a narrative consistent with its own identity. Through this, empathy and emotional affinity with the target audience are generated (Barrio-Fraile *et al.*, 2022).

In contrast to these approaches, woke washing practices represent the superficial or opportunistic use of socially sensitive issues and are identified with the way brands proceed when they use speech, images, or symbols related to social issues to connect with consumers and improve their image and reputation, without backing up their communicative narrative (storytelling) with actions or significant changes in the strategic lines of their corporate policy (storydoing) (Vizcaíno-Alcantud, 2017, 2023; Asenjo and Del Pino-Romero, 2023).

Consequently, organizations that link their identity to a purpose – as a true social commitment – develop efficient corporate strategies with actions aimed at consolidating their image and reputation as intangible values in the medium and long term (Villafañe, 2009; Orozco and Roca 2011; Carreras *et al.*, 2013; Senes and Ricciulli-Duarte, 2019; López-Casares, 2023). Such actions include the design of marketing campaigns focused on raising awareness of social causes.

3. Gay-friendly Corporate Strategies: Pink Advertising and Pink Washing

The term “gay-friendly” emerged in the 1990s in the United States and refers to spaces, policies, people, organizations, and institutions committed to establishing and maintaining a tolerant, supportive, and accepting environment for LGBTQI+ people³ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and other gender diversities and sexual orientations) (Transgender Europe 2020; REDI, 2023; Gay Friendly Spain, 2024).

Gay-friendly companies are those that show their commitment to the collective through different actions and corporate strategic policies (Gay Friendly Spain, 2024). Therefore, the identification of organizations under this categorization is independent of whether they operate in the business context of the pink market, with products and services offered by brands that manage the needs and assume the preferences and ideals of the collective. These organizations integrate the awareness of the principles of equal opportunity and respect for LGBTQI+ diversity in their corporate values, develop an inclusive culture, ensure their essential rights, and manage inclusion and visibility policies in an intersectional manner (Ortiz-Fernández, 2016; REDI, 2023). They are characterized by active support for organizations working to defend the rights and equality of the LGBTQI+ community through strategic alliances, financial donations, collaborations, sponsorship of events (such as Pride Month), or awareness campaigns. They also establish standardized action protocols for cases of discrimination and homophobic behavior, along with the development of annual reports reflecting the results of LGBTQI+ inclusive policies.

In this context of LGBTQI+ intentional marketing activism, marketing and communication strategies are designed to establish strong emotional connections between organizations and their target audiences on the basis of an ongoing commitment to identity and cultural values or the reflection of causes

³ Progress in the rights and normalization of this group has been extremely relevant in recent decades, as analyzed in *Europe's Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People in Europe and Central Asia* report (ILGA, 2025), which reflects the institutional policies of international organizations such as the UN, the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In Spain, the legislative framework can be found in *Law 4/2023, from February 28, for the real and effective equality of trans people and for the guarantee of the rights of LGBTI people*.

relevant to the community (Olveira-Araujo, 2019, 2022; Castelló-Martínez, 2023; Romero and Checa, 2023).

In marketing communication, the collective has traditionally been represented in a superficial and inexplicit way. However, in recent years, brands have evolved toward much more transparent and risky representations by using sexual orientation and gender identity in the design of creative strategies (Darie, 2017; Valecillos and Martínez, 2022; Eisend *et al.*, 2023). Their representation in marketing communication has contributed to significant advances in the social construction of their own identity as a collective (Darie, 2017; Velasco, 2017; Valecillos and Martínez, 2022; Castelló-Martínez, 2023; Romero and Checa, 2023), and this visibility of the LGBTQI+ community is further reinforced when their different realities are incorporated into the news generation processes of the media as a part of the journalistic routine (Marini *et al.*, 2010; Olveira-Araujo, 2019, 2022).

We are able to identify marketing campaigns whose main objective is to make this social reality visible in a respectful and faithful way, as well as to promote inclusion and acceptance of people's sexual, gender, and identity diversity (Velasco, 2017; Transgender Europe, 2020; López-Miguel *et al.*, 2021; Valecillos and Martínez, 2022; Castelló-Martínez, 2023).

Developing a brand strategy with LGBTQI+ intentional marketing involves knowing and understanding their needs, concerns, and life experiences to efficiently communicate a purpose aligned with gay-friendly corporate values and culture (pink advertising). However, this commitment to the community can also be perceived as a superficial marketing strategy (or pink washing) if there is no real, authentic, and permanent purpose on the part of business organizations and their brands to explicitly support this group. The fight for inclusion and diversity should not be used as a mere marketing resource; it requires moving away from exploitation toward a sincere commitment that translates into concrete actions within brand activism.

4. Objectives and Methodology

The general objective of this descriptive and exploratory research was to analyze the effectiveness of 20 marketing campaigns of brands with LGBTQI+ intentional marketing as commitment to a cause on X between 2019 and 2023. To this end, three specific objectives are proposed:

1. Establish the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) corresponding to the global interaction rate per publication (Metricool, 2023) of the gay-friendly campaigns developed by the brands.



2. Analyze the positive and negative engagement (Muñoz-Expósito *et al.*, 2017; Metricool, 2023) obtained by the different brands to verify whether social media users identify the marketing campaigns that use the reality of the LGBTQI+ collective as a communication axis as brands with purpose (pink advertising) or, on the contrary, as proposals lacking real commitment to the collective (pink washing).
3. Relate the positive or negative nature of such interaction between brands and users on the basis of the nature of the comments elicited by the campaigns as personal experience, primary emotion, or vindication (Palguna *et al.*, 2015).

The methodological process consists of a case study using the content analysis method (Simons, 2011; Bernete, 2013; González-Teruel, 2015). Different national and international campaigns that were designed on the basis of the LGBTQI+ reality communication axis were selected as a non-probabilistic purposive sample.

For the selection of the sample of marketing campaigns, a search on Google Alerts⁴ was carried out (Codina, 2018; Codina *et al.*, 2020) with the following keywords (in Spanish and English): *campañas publicitarias y LGTBIQ+, marcas y LGTB, marcas comerciales y transexualidad, publicidad y transexualidad, publicidad trans, comunicación y LGTBIQ+, publicidad y LGTBIQ+; advertising campaigns and LGBTQI+, brands and LGBT, trademarks and transsexuality, advertising and transsexuality, trans advertising, communication and LGBTQI+, advertising and LGBTQI+.*

A total of 31 marketing campaigns were identified during the established analysis period, collected during the month of January 2024. On the basis of the specific objectives established, X was chosen because of its recurrent use as a means of showing commitment to a cause, encouraging activism and user interaction in real time (Sandoval *et al.*, 2021; Carrasco *et al.*, 2022; Fernández Gómez *et al.*, 2023; Peña-Fernández *et al.*, 2023; IAB Spain, 2024). This criterion allows us to refine the final selection of cases since, of all the campaigns identified, only 20 used X in their dissemination strategy.

⁴ In social science research, this active search tool is used to monitor information, given that Google Alerts allows you to automate the process of searching for information on a certain topic, during a defined period of time, on the basis of a keyword equation that must be tracked.

Table 1. Sample LGBTQI+ intentional marketing campaigns (2019–2023)

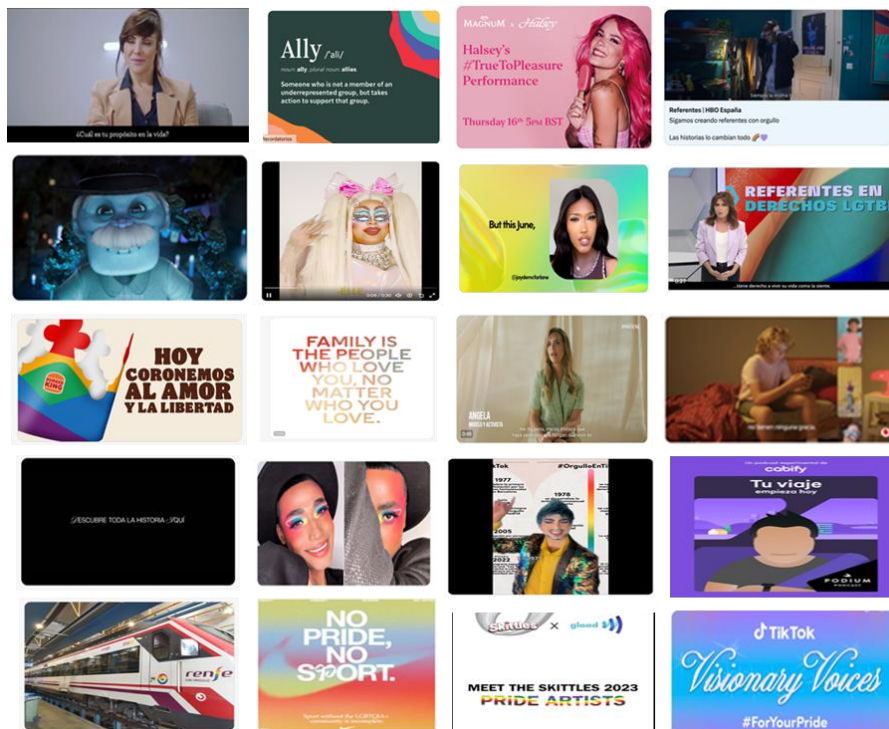
	Brand	Campaign/Hashtag/URL	Date
1	Adecco @adecco_es	Tu propósito (national) #tuproposito https://x.com/adecco_es/status/1126048704379674624?s=20	09/05/2019
2	Starbucks @Starbucks	Happy Pride (international) #Pride https://x.com/Starbucks/status/1276168278969217024	25/06/2020
3	Magnum @MagnumGlobal	Halsey's true to pleasure performance (international) #TrueToPleasure https://x.com/MagnumGlobal/status/1283443844999241729	15/07/2020
4	HBO Max @StreamMaxES	Las historias lo cambian todo (national) #orgullo https://x.com/HBOMaxES/status/1277212977456955393?s=20	28/06/2020
5	Doritos @Doritos	Nunca es tarde para ser quién eres (international) #OrgulloTodoElAño #DoritosRainbow https://x.com/Doritos_Mx/status/1451660959903277065	22/10/2021
6	ELLE @ELLEmagazine	Dime ELLE (international) #NoGenderIssue #ELLEpride https://twitter.com/ELLEMexico/status/1397326618490654725	26/05/2021
7	TikTok (USA) @tiktok_us	Free to be pride (international) #ForYourPride https://twitter.com/tiktok_us/status/1399763609740251139	01/06/2021
8	Atresmedia @a3tresmedia	Un gran país lleno de Orgullo (national) #pride2022 https://twitter.com/ATRESplayer/status/1541483209002713092	27/06/2022
9	Burger King @BurgerKing	Hoy coronemos al amor y la libertad (international) #FlameantxsyOrgullosxs https://x.com/BurgerKingMX/status/1540741616234770433?s=20	25/06/2022
10	H&M @hm	Family is the people who love you, no matter who you love (international) #HMPride https://x.com/hm/status/1532361435967369216?s=20	02/06/2022

11	Procter & Gamble @PG_Espana	El pelo Pantene no tiene género (national) #ElPeloNoTieneGénero https://x.com/PG_Espana/status/1526925825681104896?s=20	18/05/2022
12	Vodafone @vodafone_es	Nos Movemos con Orgullo (national) #NosMovemosConOrgullo https://x.com/vodafone_es/status/1674126790019764225?s=20	28/06/2023
13	Domino's @DominosPizza_ES	Diversity Hunger (national) #DiversityHunger https://x.com/DominosPizza_ES/status/1674092751820816390	28/06/2023
14	MACCosmetics @MACcosmetics	Express your creativity (international) #MACLovesPride https://x.com/MACcosmetics/status/1672303588612120582?s=20	23/06/2023
15	TikTok (Spain) @TikTok_ES	King Massalami (national) #OrgulloEnTikTok https://x.com/TikTok_ES/status/1674085136814538752	28/06/2023
16	Cabify @cabify_espana	Tu Viaje Empieza Hoy (national) #TuViajeEmpiezaHoy https://x.com/cabify/status/1674105103656304640?s=20	28/06/2023
17	Renfe Renfe	Renfe con Orgullo (national) #DíadelOrgullo https://x.com/Renfe/status/1674046010572587012	28/06/2023
18	Nike @Nike	No pride, no sport (international) #NoPrideNoSport https://twitter.com/Nike/status/1675151267734118406	01/07/2023
19	Skittles @Skittles	Collaboration with Glaad (international) #Pride2023 https://twitter.com/Skittles/status/1653746359894147074	01/05/2023
20	TikTok (Comms) @TikTokComms	Visionary voices (international) #ForYourPride https://twitter.com/TikTokComms/status/1663952981191184385	31/05/2023

Source: Author creation.



Figure 1. Collage of intentional marketing LGBTQI+ campaigns (2019–2023)



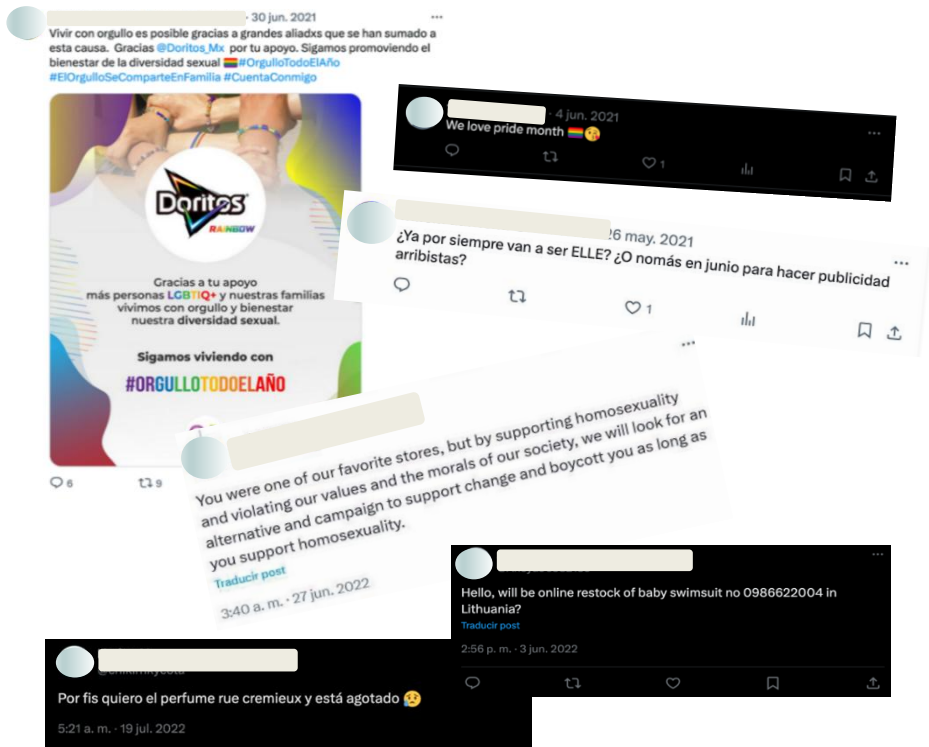
Source: Author creation

Of the 20 campaigns selected, 9 are national and 11 are international: from the perspective of longitudinal analysis, they begin appearing in a bottom-up manner during the period 2019–2023, specifically around the celebration of Pride Day (June 28), with the exception of Doritos. For data collection in X, following Hwalbin *et al.* (2018), there are two alternative methods: first, massive data mining or downloading of all tweets (and their comments) that employ a hashtag or keyword for subsequent quantitative and qualitative analysis, or second, selective computational analysis that, using the social network's own algorithms, organizes the relevance of the sampling of tweets and their comments hierarchically.

In this research, the selective method was chosen since the purpose of purposive sampling is to perform a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the character (positive, negative, or neutral) of the opinions or comments, as well as of their nature (absence of reference, personal experience, primary

emotion, or vindication), interaction, and engagement. Accordingly, 50 comments⁵ that the X algorithm considered most relevant on the basis of the hashtags employed were analyzed from the posts of each campaign in the study sample.

Figure 2. User comments on intentional marketing LGBTQI+ campaigns



Source: Author creation.

⁵ The X algorithm selects content from the home, follow, explore, and trending tabs. It also suggests relevant accounts and topics by constantly monitoring users' interests and activities. Therefore, it greatly influences users' following and engagement with brands. This circumstance could imply a certain limitation with respect to the comments analyzed, owing to the successive changes made to the platform and the possible loss of feedback. This is because some years have elapsed since the first campaigns analyzed.

Table 2. Social network analysis sheet for X

Brand: ()	No. of followers		
Post-campaign marketing (hashtag) (URL)	No. of likes		
	No. of shares		
	No. of comments	Character of commentary:	
		(1) Positive	
		(2) Neutral	
		(3) Negative	
		Nature of comment:	
		(1) Level 0: no explicit reference, allusion or response to the message.	
		(2) Level 1: personal experience, identifies with the message.	
(3) Level 2: primary emotion, shows empathy, shares feelings.			
(4) Level 3: recognition, actively involved.			
Interaction rate × publication	$\left[\frac{(\text{total likes} + \text{total retweets} + \text{total comments})}{\text{no. of followers}} \right] \times 100$		
Positive engagement	$\left[\frac{(\text{total likes} + \text{total retweets} + \text{total POSITIVE comments})}{\text{total number of comments analyzed}} \right] \times 100$ no. of followers / 1000		
Negative engagement (Disengagement)	$\left[\frac{(\text{total likes} + \text{total retweets} + \text{total NEGATIVE comments})}{\text{total number of comments analyzed}} \right] \times 100$ no. of followers / 1000		

Source: Muñoz-Expósito *et al.* (2017), Metricool (2023). Author creation.

During the methodological procedure, an analysis sheet was designed (Table 2) and two researchers from the team were trained to code the sample, carrying out a pre-test of the template to detect possible errors and areas for improvement (Neuendorf, 2002). The objectivity of the content analysis was verified using the intercoder reliability process (Piñeiro-Naval, 2020) with the Percent Agreement Observed (PAo) index. Following Palenzuela *et al.* (2020), each of the coders applied the analysis sheet to the same five randomly selected campaigns (25% of the total number of campaigns) and calculated the PAo [(agreement between observations/total observations) × 100] for the character of the comment and nature of comment variables, obtaining an agreement of

94%. Similarly, to correct for the random effect of agreement, Cohen’s kappa was calculated for this variable ($k = 0.8$). In both cases the value is above 80%, suggesting a high degree of objectivity and agreement between coders (Lovejoy *et al.*, 2016).

5. Research Results

The results of the study come from the three specific research objectives established. The descriptive indicators of the campaigns were obtained on the basis of the analysis sheet’s application.

Table 3. Descriptive indicators of campaigns with LGBTQI+ intentional marketing (2019–2023)

	likes	retweets	com	character			* nature of the comment			
				+	N	–	level 0	level 1	level 2	level 3
1. ADECCO (no. of followers: 72,500)	1,500	435	50	4	14	32	2	4	44	0
2. STARBUCKS (no. of followers: 10,900,000)	548	78	35	6	5	24	6	0	22	7
3. MAGNUM (no. of followers: 26,200)	6,000	630	50	41	8	1	3	0	47	0
4. HBO MAX (no. of followers: 308,900)	6,500,000	1,700,000	13	12	1	0	4	0	9	0
5. DORITOS (no. of followers: 128,000)	13,000	1,000	50	50	0	0	0	7	7	36
6. ELLE (no. of followers: 596,100)	3,900,000	1,200,000	50	1	3	46	0	0	48	2
7. TIKTOK (USA) (no. of followers: 2,200,000)	501	32	50	3	7	40	0	17	33	0
8. ATRESMEDIA (no. of followers: 58,100)	4	3	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	0
9. BURGER KING (no. of followers: 181,800)	21	4	3	0	1	2	2	0	1	0
10. H&M (no. of followers: 7,700)	616	214	50	2	1	47	5	23	22	0



11. P&G (no. of followers: 1,611)	4	3	3	0	0	3	0	0	3	0
12. VODAFONE (no. of followers: 216,600)	53	25	8	0	0	8	7	0	1	0
13. DOMINO'S PIZZA (no. of followers: 52,900)	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14. MACCOSMETICS (no. of followers: 1,500,000)	45	6	2	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
15. TIKTOK (SPAIN) (no. of followers: 10,300)	5	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
16. Cabify (no. of followers: 2,676)	2	2	3	0	1	2	0	0	1	2
17. RENFE (no. of followers: 252,500)	57	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18. NIKE (no. of followers: 10,100,000)	450	96	48	3	11	34	3	0	33	12
19. SKITTLES (no. of followers: 648,700)	4	3	50	20	9	21	6	0	31	13
20. TIKTOK (COMMS) (no. of followers: 45,500)	53	12	22	0	4	18	0	0	0	22

* Level 0: no explicit reference, allusion or response to the message.

Level 1: personal experience, identifies with the message.

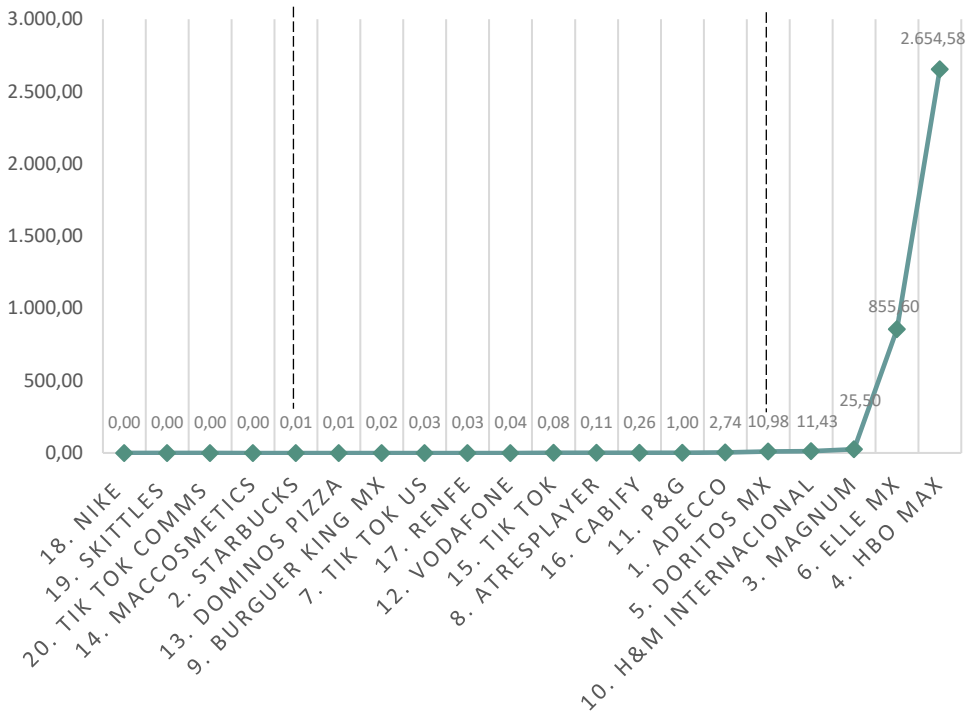
Level 2: primary emotion, shows empathy, shares feelings.

Level 3: recognition, actively involved.

Source: Author creation.

Table 3 identifies the number of followers per brand, as well as the number of likes, retweets, and comments of the advertising proposals analyzed, and then specifies their character (positive, neutral, and negative) and nature (level 0, level 1, level 2, or level 3). On the basis of these descriptive indicators, we identify, firstly, through X, the total interactions per publication (TIP) of each of the campaigns in the sample as the main KPI (objective 1); and secondly, the positive and negative engagement produced (objective 2) as well as the nature of the comments generated by the campaigns and their relationship with engagement (objective 3).

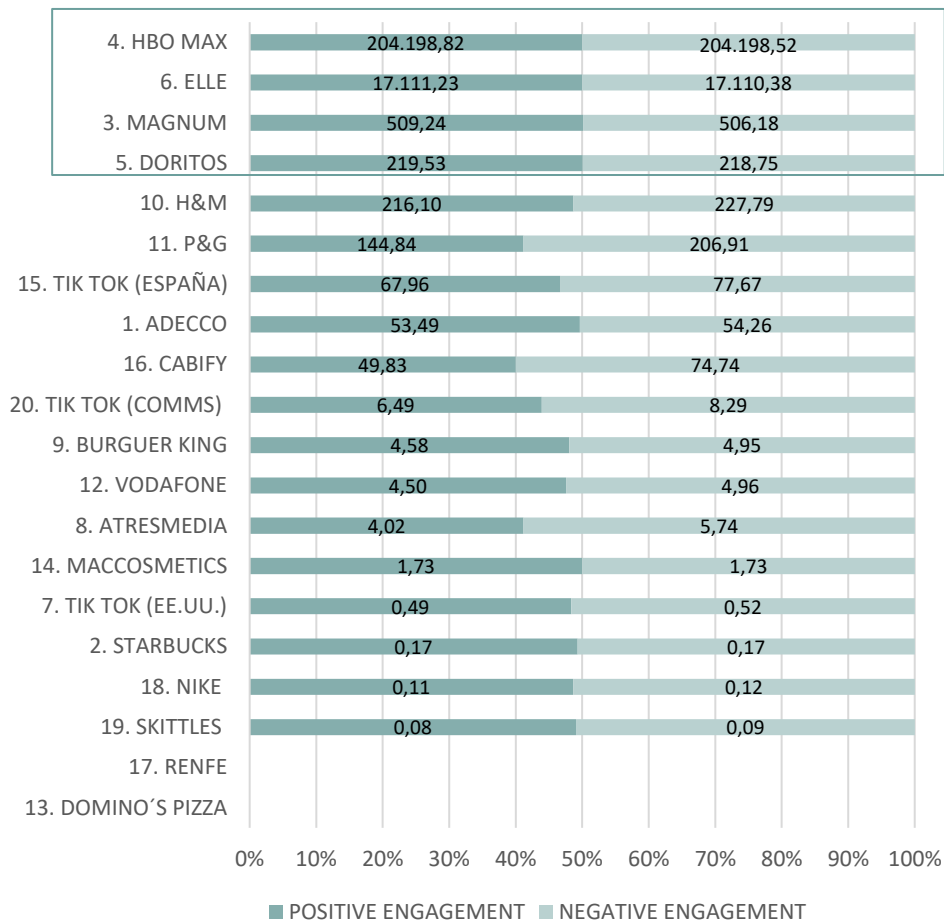
Figure 3. Total interactions per publication (TIP) in campaigns with LGBTQI+ intentional marketing (2019–2023)



Source: Author creation.

Regarding the total number of interactions per publication, Figure 3 shows that 75% of the brands have no interaction (segment A) or residual interaction (segment B). In addition, only five of them, representing 25% of the campaigns analyzed (segment C), show a sufficiently significant value: HBO MAX (2,654.58), ELLE (855.60), Magnum (25.50), H&M (11.43), and Doritos (10.98). Consequently, it was found that most brand campaigns with LGBTQI+ intentional marketing have not elicited a significant interest from users on X, since there is not a high number of likes, retweets, and comments based on the number of followers and the communicative proposals of the brands.

Figure 4. *Generating brand engagement with LGBTQI+ intentional marketing (2019–2023)*



Source: Author creation.

When analyzing the engagement generated by campaigns with LGBTQI+ intentional marketing, Figure 4 shows the ambivalent nature of four of the five brands with a high or very high rate of interaction per publication (IPR) (Figure 3), accounting for 20% of the cases analyzed: HBO MAX (positive value: 204,198.82; negative value: 204,198.52), ELLE (positive value: 17,111.23; negative value: 17,110.38), Magnum (positive value: 509.24; negative value: 506.18), and Doritos (positive value: 219.53; negative value: 218,75).

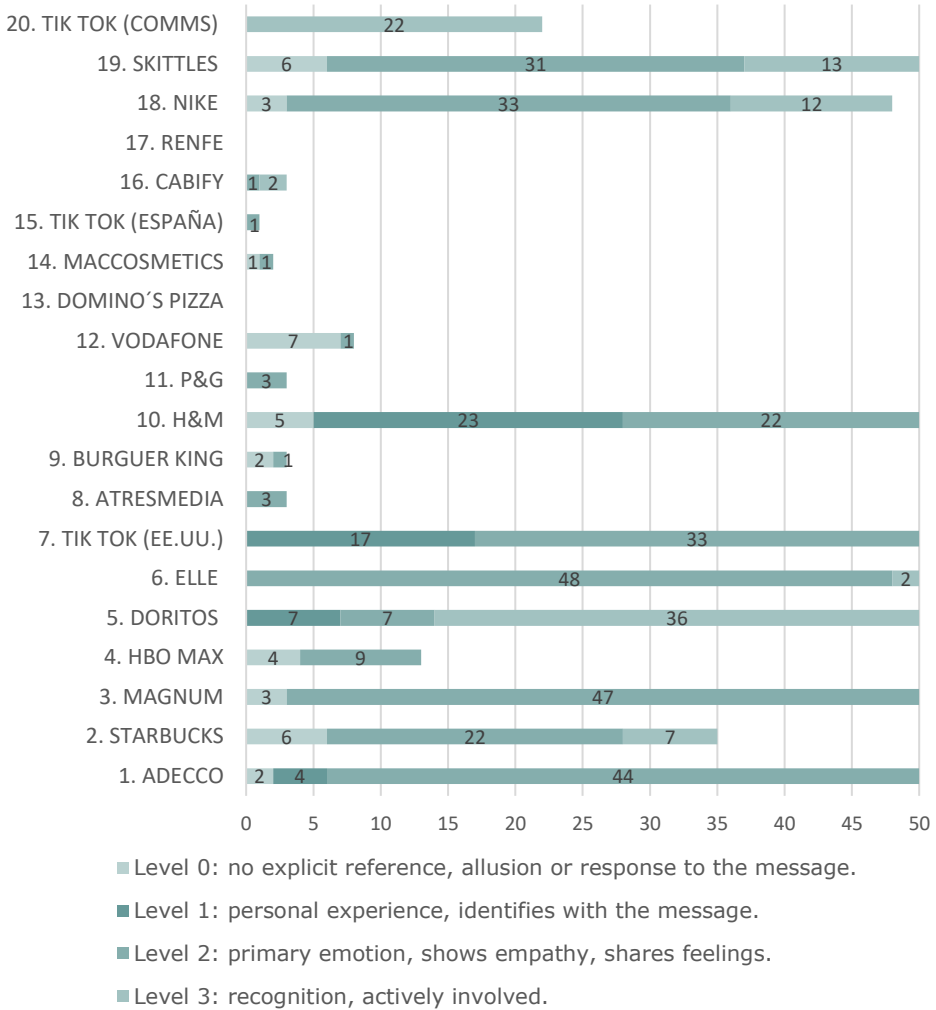
The communicative proposals of these four brands discriminate between positive and negative engagement (disengagement) in a completely balanced way, given that they have been valued by users dichotomously, although with a modest positive trend compared with the rest of the campaigns. Consequently, in the context of brands with LGBTQI+ intentional marketing, only the marketing campaigns developed by HBO MAX, ELLE, Magnum, and Doritos were identified as pink advertising by more than 50% of X users, and it is clear that even the brands that achieved the greatest visibility and interaction (Figure 3) are not exempt from criticism and negative evaluation of their activism for a cause (Figure 4).

On the contrary, four brands also obtained a disengagement index that can be highlighted as a relative value with respect to positive engagement: campaigns that reflect, in addition, a low number of comments with respect to the rest of the marketing proposals (Table 3): Procter & Gamble (negative value: 206.9; no. of comments: 3), Cabify (negative value: 74.74; no. of comments: 3), TikTok (Comms) (negative value: 8.29; no. of comments: 22), and Atresmedia (negative value: 5.74; no. of comments: 3). Further, Domino's Pizza and Renfe are also included with these brands given their null value, due to the absence of user comments regarding the campaigns. In this sense, 30% of the communicative proposals analyzed have been highly questioned or ignored by social media users, who have identified them as pink washing practices, lacking authentic purpose or real commitment to the community, its social and cultural identity, and expectations as a collective.

The marketing campaigns developed by 50% of the remaining brands continue to present a clear ambivalence regarding the generation of positive and negative engagement, with no or residual interaction in all cases, except for H&M (Figure 3), which has an impact on the brand's immediate position regarding the four brands that appear in the top positions in terms of positive engagement (Figure 4).

Figure 5 shows the nature of the comments on X reflected to highlight the relationship between the different categories (level 0, level 1, level 2, and level 3) and the engagement (positive or negative) generated by the campaigns analyzed.

Figure 5. User comments on LGBTQI+ intentional marketing campaigns (2019–2023)



Source: Palguna *et al.* (2015). Author creation.

The four brands with the highest positive engagement index (HBO MAX, ELLE, Magnum, and Doritos; Figure 4) once and again see the nature of their user comments in their marketing campaigns (Figure 5) associated with the



level 2 category: primary emotion, empathy, and feelings, which is also the general trend in the rest of the intentional marketing campaigns focused on here. In the case of Doritos, its pink advertising proposal also emphasizes level 1 comments, which correspond to personal experiences that allow for identification with the advertising message, and level 3, which reflects recognition, demonstrating a solid link between the brand and users, which is materialized in a high level of commitment and involvement with the LGBTQI+ cause on the basis of the communication of brand purpose.

With respect to the rest of the campaigns analyzed, few brands manage to generate level 1 comments, such as personal experiences and identification (H&M, TikTok USA, and Adecco); and those that generate level 3 comments, such as active expression (TikTok COMMS, Skittles, Nike, and Starbucks), show zero interaction per publication (TIP) (Figure 3: segment A) and a low or residual engagement rate, as can be seen in Figure 4.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

Corporate strategies of gay-friendly organizations must be aligned with their purpose to achieve consumer trust and credibility. These strategies must be monitored and evaluated sequentially, in the different stages of their development, to objectively verify compliance with the corporate objectives linked to social commitment, representing, therefore, a recurrent and continuous process, since the purpose of the brand is not static, but dynamic. This forces brands to adapt as social needs, expectations, and values change.

Purposeful brand strategies aimed at the LGBTQI+ group not only seek to attract this group as a target audience with its own identity values, needs, and expectations, but also to promote its inclusion and the normalization of sexual and gender diversity through messaging that makes the group visible in a coherent and respectful way.

However, the results obtained in this research on the basis of the marketing campaigns analyzed reveal that only 20% of the brands are perceived as true activists of this social cause, with more positive than negative engagement (HBO MAX, ELLE, Magnum, and Doritos), as seen with proposals identified as pink advertising; and even so, they have been questioned by approximately 50% of users, who are increasingly demanding and aware of the dynamics required of social advertising.

In most of the cases analyzed (80%), these initiatives are identified as an opportunistic use of the LGBTQI+ cause, lacking a genuine commitment to specific actions that would support the marketing discourse. This pink washing

exercise translates into little or no interaction produced by the analyzed brands (Figure 3), as well as in negative engagement (Figure 4) and comments generated by the campaigns (Figure 5). As a result, these pink washing practices, as shown in studies such as those by Gois and de Moura (2021) or Santos (2023), not only jeopardize the brand's reputational value, but can also generate rejection and distrust among consumers who demand coherence between the marketing narrative and the actions stemming from the brand's purpose.

This research concludes that brands that manage to communicate their corporate values, associating them with a true commitment to the LGBTQI+ community, achieve outstanding levels in the interaction rate per publication (IPR) (Figure 3), obtain better results in absolute and relative values of positive engagement (Figure 4), and receive messages from users mainly on the basis of primary emotions, empathy, and feelings that contribute to consolidating their image and reputation (Figure 5).

The data resulting from the interaction rate per publication (IPR), the generation of engagement, and the nature of comments made by users, based on the brands with intentional marketing analyzed, suggest that in the context of woke advertising it is pertinent to address new innovation and social marketing strategies that allow brands to link their communication strategies much more efficiently with their corporate values and purpose as a social commitment.

Only through this integrative approach will business organizations and brands with LGBTQI+ intentional marketing be able to develop social advertising proposals that are aligned with their corporate philosophy and principles, thus justifying the investment in pink advertising campaigns whose effectiveness must be measured and monitored through KPI parameters (González-Oñate *et al.*, 2019; Metricool, 2023).

On the basis of the research results, two future lines of work are suggested: on the one hand, the extension of the study of the communication of brands with LGBTQI+ intentional marketing to other social networks, evaluating KPIs such as interaction and engagement of the campaigns, to check whether there are significant coincidences or differences with respect to X; and on the other hand, the analysis of corporate reports and annual management reports of gay-friendly organizations that allow for a correlational analysis of their verified social commitment on the basis of the impact and effectiveness of LGBTQI+ social marketing campaigns.

Ethics and Transparency

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) of this article declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest.

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Author Contributions

Contribution	Author 1	Author 2	Author 3	Author 4
Conceptualization	X			
Data curation		X	X	
Formal analysis	X	X		
Funding acquisition	X			
Investigation		X	X	
Methodology	X			
Project administration	X			
Resources	X			
Software	X	X	X	
Supervision	X			
Validation		X	X	
Visualization	X	X		
Writing – original draft	X			
Writing – review & editing		X	X	

Data Availability Statement

For data availability, the authors should be contacted.

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