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Introduction

Advertising should better represent the real world, a well-known creative director named William Bernbach once said, “The most powerful element in advertising is the truth” (We Are Fred, 2021). The meaning of embrace is when there is an act of accepting something willingly or vigorously (The Oxford Entry Dictionary, 1879). Advertising today has not reached its full potential for being inclusive of diversity and is therefore considered as not representing the real world, in this essay I look to explore evidence to support this notion. I will investigate some existing examples of positive and negative advertising campaigns to highlight whether adverts have embraced diversity and are reflecting on the real world and if so, is this enough? I will begin with *Apple* who has made a commercial about diversity, following by *Coke-Cola*, *H&M* and *Maltesers* regarding how they have embraced diversity, gender, and race equality.

Apple’s advertisement, *Inclusion & Diversity 2017* description on *YouTube* states ‘that “open” isn’t just a word. It’s our culture. One that embraces faiths, disabilities, races, ages, ideologies, personalities, and differences. Because humanity isn’t singular. It’s plural’ (Apple, 2017).

[Apple — Inclusion & Diversity — Open](#)



Fig.1 (Inclusion & Diversity (Apple, 2017))

In 2020 Apple's Vice President of Inclusion and Diversity stated,

"Inclusion and diversity are cornerstones of the global Apple community. We're proud of the foundation we've built, and we're clear-eyed about the challenges that remain. Together, we're committed to continuing this journey with humility and resolve" (Whye, Barbara, 2020).

It illustrates they want to involve everyone and for everyone to be a part of Apple, "Humanity is plural, not singular" (Apple Commercial, 2021), it embraces people from all races, religions, and gender, it is advocating for equal value and equal pay among all genders, "Many more women in charge" and "Equal pay for equal work" (Apple Commercial, 2021). Apple is leading the way and their success will influence others to catch up with their advertising approach to embraces diversity.

Apple aren't the first though, leading the way back in 1971 was Coca-Cola's TV commercial *'I'd like to buy the world a coke,'* it is a notable example that this brand unites people from all different ethnicities. "It aimed to show that even though people can come from diverse backgrounds, everyone has something in common" (Bump, 2019).

[Coca-Cola, 1971 - 'Hilltop' | "I'd like to buy the world a Coke"](#)



Fig.2 (I'd like to buy the world a coke (Project Rebrief, 2012))

This successful commercial resulted in the company receiving around 100,000 letters of appreciation from the public from all around the world. Due to its commercial success, it has been updated and remade numerous of times. The focus about this Coca-Cola commercial is it was one of the earliest examples of inclusive marketing, not only was it successful, but it also became iconic and was even featured as a last scene in an episode of the fictional drama series about an advertising agency called *Mad Men* (2007 – 2015). *The Aesthetics of Nostalgia TV* (2019) a book written by Alex Bevan highlighted that, “The ending of the show indicates that progressivism as a cultural mood can be co-opted and sold back (‘I’d like to give the world a coke’) by the privileged white man in advertising, and that everything is always provisional” (Bode, 2019). The endpoint about this commercial is it was a message of unity and joy, and it was an advert that would have drawn buyers to be part of this commercial, therefore, this is one notable example that this is the power of inclusive and diverse marketing.



Fig.3 (H&M Apologizes for 'Monkey' Image Featuring Black Child (The New York Times, 2018))

Here in Fig 2 is evidence that diabolical oversight occurs in marketing, in 2018, only due to the complaints it received, H&M had to pull down a page from their website of the website of the advert depicting a young black child wearing a green sweatshirt with the slogan, "Coolest monkey in the jungle." H&M released a statement and agreed with those who complained about the page and apologised "We are deeply sorry that the picture was taken, and we also regret the actual print" (Director of H&M, 2018). To be critical about this post from H&M, it is hard to believe how this could have happened and that they did not think twice about publishing this page, it is truly shocking.

This example where advertising has not embraced diversity, in this case specifically race equality has left H&M badly discredited for its error. One tweet, a representation of many similar says, 'woke up this morning shocked and embarrassed by this photo. I'm deeply offended and will not be working with @hm anymore... pic.twitter.com/P3023iYzAB' (The Weekend, 2018).

Another aspect of representing the real world which appears to be omitted in advertising is disability, it is said that,

“Despite the large volume of people who are affected by disability, directly or indirectly, the history of the disability rights movement is little known and not well represented in popular culture” (Erin E. Andrew, 2019).

Activist Caroline Casey at the London Braver Conference of 2018 said, “Brands that take disability inclusion seriously will be the real winners of the future economy” (Caroline Casey, 2018). Disability inclusion will need to be considered because “Nine out of ten companies declare that they take diversity seriously, yet only four per cent include disability on their board agendas,” also “More than half of global C-suite executives rarely or never discuss disability on their leadership agendas” (Caroline Casey, 2018). This shows that there is a big problem in how the advertising companies are not embracing diversity within disability. Doing some research on commercials or advertising pieces, I concluded that most adverts do not have disability in their commercials. In one article it says that,

“The people running these campaigns and companies do not believe that having a disabled person in an ad would help it to sell, maybe they think it would actually turn people off” (Campaignlive, n.d.).

Contradicting results appear though, disable people in advertising does work, proven by Mars’s *Maltesers* advert in 2017 that featured disabled actors and proved to be the ‘most successful’ advert for the brand in 10 years.

[The 19th FAB Awards: Maltesers - The Light Side of Disability \(Wedding\)](#)



Fig.4 (Maltesers – The Light Side of Disability (The FAB Award, 2017)

In the article written by Natalie Mortimer (2017) mentioned that the 'chocolate brand sales grew by 8.1% and the brand affinity grew by 20%' (Mortimer, 2017). This is one benefit why advertising companies should include disability. Therefore, *Mars UK Maltesers* are trying their best to be inclusive with using disabled people and are sending the message to other companies to re-think their ideas.



Fig.5 (Chase & Sanborn Poster (Gender Equal Media Scotland, 2016))



Fig.6 (Gucci (Gender Equal Media Scotland, 2016))

Figure 3 and figure 4 link together. Figure 3 is showing a man empowering his wife, figure 4 is the same but much more sexualised, the man still has all the power yet in Fig 4 he appears almost indifferent of his beautiful, sexy, available, and submissive prop which is intended to support his dominant masculinity and to gain the attention of the male viewer. Images such as this are contested by women as a misrepresentation of how women identify female beauty, “The major task of early feminist researchers across disciplines was to document the assertion that images of women in Western culture have generally been created from the male perspective” (Firestone 1971: Lakoff 1975). The major problem with women being used as props questions whether advertising embraces equality of gender or even represents the real world and as the quote suggests it is men that are the main executives when creating and developing ideas of these advertisements. “This perspective has as its object a generically identifiable ‘women,’ and that the view of women through men’s eyes are assumed to be the universal one for both men and women” (Russ, 1972).

[They Will See You: LGBTQ+ Visibility in Advertising](#)



Fig.7 (They will see you: LGBTQ+ Visibility in Advertising (Great Big Story, 2020))

[Pantene | MJ \[Pomona, CA\]: Coming home is #BeautifulLGBTQ](#)



Fig.8 (Coming home is beautiful LGBTQ (Pantene, 2019))

Leading on from the imbalance of male to female representation which appears to be improving due to the backlash they receive and governing bodies policing content is advertising that includes the LGBTQ community, which is rare and often stereotypical, a survey for *Getty Images* revealed that a third of LGBTQ advertising visuals depict 'gay men as feminine and lesbian women as masculine' (Taiano, 21). LGBTQ inclusion in advertising research from the partnership between GLAAD, the world's largest LGBTQ media advocacy organisation and Procter & Gamble (P&G) found that only 1.8% of LGBTQ characters were in ads at the *Cannes Lions Festival* (The visibility project, 2021). An oversight when you consider GLAAD's research also shows that there is a 20% increase of people identifying as LGBTQ particularly in the age group 18 – 24-year-olds where 1 in 6 identify themselves as LGBTQ (GLAAD). From this growing cohort, 41% say that they would switch retailers to ones who embrace inclusion and diversity this would mean a potential global purchasing power of \$3.9 trillion says Investment firm *LGBT Capital* (LGBT Capital, 2021).

Figure seven for the P&G and GLAAD's *The Visibility Project* of 2021 (VP21) was created from data obtained from 100's of advertisers and agencies with clients of budgets of up to \$1 billion (GLAAD) and uncovered that 81% of Advertisers and 41% of Agencies agree that 'an inauthentic execution of LGBTQ people and scenarios would lead to a larger backlash than not featuring them in ads at all' (The Visibility Project, 2021). Their avoidance is more to do with the worry about getting the representation wrong and offending the LGBTQ community than offending the public, the figures here are that 61% of advertisers and 28% of agencies agree they are 'fearful of public backlash for including LGBTQ people in advertising' (The Visibility Project, 2021). The good thing is, "Both marketing and advertising executives are aligned in their recognition of the important social impact of responsible and authentic LGBTQ representation?" (GLAAD).

The 1.8% media visibility as mentioned may have something to do with Accenture's research data revealing 'that only 31% of LGBTQ employees are fully open about their gender identity/expression or sexual orientation at work, dropping down even further to 21% among those in senior leadership positions (Accenture-GTE-Pride-2020). Sarah Kate

Ellis CEO of GLAAD explains 'What people see and hear in media – impacts the decisions they make in the boardrooms, academia and institutions of higher education, court rooms, newsroom, living rooms and at the ballot box' (GLAAD). The VP21 report highlights that almost 50% of people believe being exposed to LGBTQ in the media makes them more accepting, 80% exposed say they are more supportive of LGBTQ equal rights and 72% exposed said they would be more comfortable having an LGBTQ family member, this is all positive news for society but for businesses it is worth noting that it also shows that 82% looked favourably upon the companies and believe that it reflects on the company's value for all kinds of diversity. Some organisations have stopped and listened and do embraced inclusivity, Mark Pritchard, the Chief Brand officer at P&G says, 'Our job is to accurately portray all of humanity, including those of all identities. Visibility is crucial, and we are committed to getting this right' (Aziz, 2019).

Going forward, there is much help and support for advertising agencies to be able to embrace diversity and correctly represent LGBTQ people accurately in the future. Figure eight shows how advertising agencies could improve. There are as shown media advocacy organisations that can educate, inform, and advise advertising executives on the media they create to 'advance equality for everyone' (Dorey, 2021). 'Marketers are putting resources into initiatives' (Adams, 2021). With the *Association of National Advertisers' Alliance for Inclusive and Multicultural Marketing* (AIMM) who are drawing up guidelines with the *Association of National Awareness* (ANA). The best practice created from these partnership's accountability through CIIM™, the *Cultural Insights Impact Measure*™, which measures the cultural relevance of ads and content and their impact on sales' (Parmenter, Galliher and Maughan, 2020).

Mark Pritchard advocates,

“It is important that we engage more deeply with partners like GLAAD, the ANA/AIMM *and* others to develop best-in-class practices for LGBTQ inclusion. The community faces challenging obstacles and it’s my hope that this work will allow everyone in our industry to come together and use our collective voice for good – to drive acceptance, inclusion, and love for humanity” (McInroy and Craig, 2016).

The list continues, there is the *HRC Foundation* who have a best practice advice document *LGBTQ Marketing and Advertising: Best Practice* which companies can use as a guide (HRC Foundation, 2021). *Getty Images* have teamed up with *GLAAD* and have release their *LGBTQ Image Guidebook* (LGBTQ guide, Getty Images, 2021). And finally, for our purpose I have also found *Do The WeRQ* which is an inclusion forum that fosters connections and cultural transformations specifically aimed at advertising aiming for long term change and inclusion in the industry (DoTheWeRQ). *LGBT Capital* is proud to be associated with creation of the Credit Suisse LGBT Equality Index™, measuring performance of US companies recognised for promoting LGBT equality (LGBT Capital, 2021).

There has been a progression and much change over time where marketing companies are now beginning to listen and respond appropriately to the inclusion of minority groups and ethnic consumers, stated by Licsandru and Cui 2018 there is a ‘deliberate effort by marketers to reach a group of consumers presumably due to their unique ethnic characteristics’ (Licsandru and Cui, 2018, pp.330-339). A Professor in Emeritus of Strategic Communication named Jean Grow proclaims that “It is time to have a conversation about preparing women and minorities for success and leadership in advertising creative departments and having that discussion with our industry partners is imperative” (Jean M Grow, 2015, pp.86-). This change has been influenced and pushed along by the world’s political and social debates about the necessity for inclusion but also due to the continuing growth of the changing demographic in society, the customer. ‘In 2020, the non-UK-born population was 9.5 million of that 3.5 million (37%) were born in the EU’ (Office for National

Statistics, 2020). Also, according to the last census in 2011, it is recorded that, '87% of people in the UK are White, and 13% belong to a Black, Asian, Mixed, or other ethnic group' (Census Data, 2011), these figures will have grown wider in the past 10 years since the last census and are important to acknowledge because marketing companies will need to be inclusive to reach a changing society. "If we want diverse marketing and advertising, then we need diverse and inclusive working environment" (Blair, 2016). This is a fundamental point, it is a crucial aspect which affects change, having a diverse and inclusive work force would influence direction and decisions bringing together diverse and inclusive ideas, thus contributing as the catalyst for change towards a better and fairer representation of society within their creative output of advertising.

There is a Governing body known as the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) who are the UK's independent advertising regulators. ASA will check adverts across the UK media to see whether they are keeping to the advertising rules, which is the advertising codes. Another organisation that helps ASA is the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) who are there to take responsible for writing all the Advertising Codes. CAP is publishing a dialogue on the introduction of new rules on harm and protected characteristics which is defined in the Equality Act 2010. CAP Code:

"Marketing communications must not include anything likely to cause harm. To comply with this rule, marketers must have particular regard to the likelihood of causing harm to vulnerable people, and to the following characteristics: age, disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation" (Practice, 2021).

All advertising companies and agencies have a legal obligation and must abide by the CAP code. A direct consequence of this compliance has been an improvement and change in media and marketing output by companies, it is beginning to be a fairer representation of the real-world embracing diversity, gender, and race equality. By advertising embracing diversity, gender, and race equality, people will choose to buy products from brands like Nike who are embracing diversity, gender, and race equality. As my research for this essay, Maltesers did their job and gained more buyers. It will have a knock-on effect on other

advertising companies because they do not embrace. This is one way to sell idea to the money-making advertisers and companies, but this is not the reason. Therefore, to have a more diverse society and more equality in gender and race within the advertising industry, it needs something to happen which one quote that is stated in the introduction from an American advertising creative director named, William Bernbach once said, “The most powerful element in advertising is the truth” (We Are Fred, 2021). So, it is important to be truthful as a society.

To summarise and conclude, this essay talks about both the positives and negatives on how advertising companies embraced diversity, gender, and race equality. The likes of *Nike*, *Coke-Cola* and *Maltesers* have made a positive response whereas *H&M* and *Gucci* have made a negative response to how they embraced diversity, gender, and race equality. To conclude on this, all advertising companies that works in the UK will all be under the restrictions of the Advertising Code due to the power that ASA and CAP have. Therefore, by having the Advertising Code, advertising companies have already started. Which means that there can only be one direction that advertising companies can go, an increased embracement in diversity, gender, and race equality.

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Figures

Fig: 1 - Apple (2017) *Inclusion & Diversity*. 9 November. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvb49-Csq1o> (Accessed: 11 November 2021).

Fig: 2 - Project ReBrief (2012) *I'd like to buy the world a coke*. 6 March. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VM2eLhvsSM> (Accessed: 10 November 2021).

Fig: 3 – The New York Times (2018) *H&M Apologizes for 'Monkey' Image Featuring Black Child*. 8 January. Available at: < <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/08/business/hm-monkey.html> > (Accessed: 26 November 2021).

Fig: 4 – The FAB Award (2017) *Maltesers – The Light Side of Disability*. 18 May. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IH0tASe9_uM> (Accessed: 30 November 2021).

Fig: 5 - Gender Equal Media Scotland (2016) *Sexism in advertising, what can we do?* 13 May. Available at: <<https://www.genderequalmedia.scot/news/blog/sexism-in-advertising-what-can-we-do/>> (Accessed: 12 November 2021).

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Fig: 7 – Great Big Story (2020) *They will see you: LGBTQ+ Visibility in Advertising*. 28 May. Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zs1kRgr44RY>> (Accessed: 7 December 2021).

Fig: 8 – Pantene (2019) *Coming home is beautiful LGBTQ*. 5 December. Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSgS6gVwV6M>> (Accessed: 7 December 2021).