

Pro-LGBTQIAP+ counterintuitive communication toward the consumer

Pro-LGBTQIAP+ counterintuitive communication

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Received 12 April 2022

Revised 2 August 2022

11 October 2022

12 November 2022

Accepted 25 November 2022

Abstract

Purpose – The study aims to analyze consumer reaction to counterintuitive communication linked to the LGBTQIAP+ cause.

Design/methodology/approach – The theoretical framework focused on marketing communication, counterintuitive communication and the insertion of the LGBTQIAP+ issue in them. A hypothetical-deductive approach was adopted, carried out through an online experiment with a factorial design 2 (high involvement product – wedding ring × low involvement – perfume) × 2 (homosexual couple – counterintuitive × heterosexual – intuitive), with two subsequent steps: eye tracker collection (n = 21) and questionnaire application (n = 136).

Findings – It was possible to attest to the differences between traditional (intuitive) and counterintuitive marketing communications, identified both in terms of visualizations and fixations (eye tracking), and objective responses (online questionnaire), finding more positive consumer behavior in the case of counterintuitive communication with insertion of the LGBTQIAP+ cause.

Research limitations/implications – Marketing communication has great potential to create “new/other” values and worldviews, thus having an important role in social responsibility that goes beyond the marketing sphere. Precisely in this context, the study contributes to endorse the literature concerning counterintuitive communication, reinforcing the increasing importance and favorable scenario for its practice, as well as highlighting its importance as an efficient marketing strategy.

Originality/value – The study extends the understanding of counterintuitive communication with the scope of an investigation linked to the LGBTQIAP+ cause, especially from the perspective of the receiving public, the consumers. Furthermore, it advances in the sense of aggregating empirical evidence by means of both exploratory (with neuroscientific technique as eye tracking) and explanatory factors.

Keywords Marketing communication, Counterintuitive communication, LGBTQIAP+ communication, Consumer behavior

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The content shared by organizations in the form of ads, advertisements or any other type of promotion generally constitutes a mirror of the beliefs and values shared by their target audience. This is because companies need to communicate in such a way as to attract the customers' attention through subjects that are known to them or that are of interest to them. In this sense, many times companies choose to assume a comfortable position of broadcasting contents that follow the hegemonic standard, namely white, cis-heteronormative and with idealized and unreal beauty (Silva, Barreto, & Facin, 2006).



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Revista de Gestão
Vol. 31 No. 3, 2024
pp. 307-320
Emerald Publishing Limited
e-ISSN: 2177-8736
p-ISSN: 1809-2276

DOI 10.1108/REG-04-2022-0048

However, marketing communication contains great potential to create “new/other” values and worldviews, thus playing an important role in social responsibility (Strozenberg, 2006; Leite, 2018). It is precisely in this context that counterintuitive communication gains importance, as it aims to break old stereotypes, opposing the hegemonic pattern reigning in traditional marketing communication (Silva *et al.*, 2006; Leite, 2016). Thus, counterintuitive communication works toward proposing more inclusive values, presenting a positive proposal related to groups traditionally targeted by negative biases (Fry, 2002; Silva *et al.*, 2006; Leite, 2016).

In a recent survey, Andreoli and Vieira (2022) point out that academic production concerning counterintuitive communication is still quite scarce, being strongly restricted to theoretical discussion/re-discussion, with few empirical advances. Among the latter, only one article with a hypothetical-deductive approach was identified (Leite & Batista, 2014), which, however, presented limitations in terms of hypothesis validation and final results. Furthermore, the study also embedded a limitation in terms of the scope of the investigation, mostly associated with the racial issue (specifically the black race).

Thus, investigating counterintuitive communication with primary data collection is an important research gap, especially through the hypothetical-deductive method, referring to the issue of sexuality, including the LGBTQIAP+ theme. This gap had already been pointed out by the literature in the area (Leite, 2008a, b; Leite & Batista, 2009), being corroborated by the mapping conducted (Andreoli & Vieira, 2022). Still in this sense, Gois and de Moura Ferraz (2021) observe that research on the LGBTQIAP+ theme in the field of administration is still limited, not contemplating the issues that will be explored here: understanding consumer reaction.

Communication with protagonists belonging to the LGBTQIAP+ cause has been growing over the last decades, considering not only the great buying potential of this public but especially their preference for buying/consuming with organizations engaged with this social cause (Gois & de Moura Ferraz, 2021). This direction proved to be expressive enough for the emergence of a new term capable of referring to it, *outvertising*, that is, communication focused on the LGBTQIAP+ cause (Mozdzinski, 2019; Mozdzinski, 2020).

As Gonçalves (2021) explains, the acronym LGBTQIAP+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and pansexual, and leaves room for any other gender identities and sexual orientations that were not mentioned, but similarly does not fit into the cis-heteronormative pattern. Still, it is worth pointing out that the acronym shows itself to be inherently fluid, with a composition that adapts to keep up with the demands of society.

Despite this recent advance, attempts at retrogression are notorious. As an example, one can highlight the proposal to vote on Bill 504/2020 by the Legislative Assembly of the State of São Paulo (Alesp, in the Portuguese acronym), in April 2021, whose purpose was to prohibit the broadcasting of communication pieces – through any vehicle – with content alluding to sex and/or gender diversity, with presence or reference to the LGBTQIAP+ community. The mere possibility of such a proposition already raises important questions. How legitimate is the LGBTQIAP+ cause in society? As a consequence, how attractive is it to organizations, especially to those that call themselves gay-friendly? And how does the consumer market position itself in relation to this?

The present article was derived precisely from these questions, with the objective of analyzing consumer reaction to counterintuitive communication tied to the LGBTQIAP+ cause. To this end, the theoretical framework focuses on the conceptual basis of marketing communication, counterintuitive communication and the insertion of the LGBTQIAP+ issue in them. As a methodological procedure, a hypothetical-deductive approach was adopted, carried out through an online experiment with factorial design 2 (high

involvement product – wedding ring \times low involvement – perfume) \times 2 (homosexual couple – counterintuitive \times heterosexual – intuitive), with two subsequent steps: eye-tracker collection ($n = 21$) and questionnaire application ($n = 136$).

2. Theoretical framework

Marketing communication, marked by its persuasive character and focused on financial gains, makes use of images that reflect beliefs and values accepted by society, thus spreading not only messages that induce the purchase, but also ideas and lifestyles (Galindo, 2012). It happens that, most of the time, these speeches are inconsistent with the present sociocultural reality, filled with stereotypes and prejudices aimed at minority groups (Silva *et al.*, 2006; Araújo, 2014).

In this sense, it should be noted that marketing communication goes beyond the commercial and financial potential of disclosure and promotion of products, having an important role of social responsibility (Strozenberg, 2006; Andreoli & Vieira, 2022). Thus, the potential of marketing communication to spread beliefs and values and contribute with “new/other” worldviews more suitable to the current context is emphasized (Leite, 2008, Leite, 2008a, b; Leite & Batista, 2014).

It is precisely in this sense that counterintuitive communication arises, seminally conceptualized as the “deliberate attempt to break with old stereotypes” (Fry, 2002, p. 305) through the presentation of representatives of minority groups in a position of social prestige in advertising discourses (Leite, 2008a, b). In doing so, it contributes to the breaking of expectations of the receiver, forcing him to engage in a critical sense to update the knowledge baggage held until then (Leite, 2016).

Counterintuitive communication aims to provoke and broaden debates in society, which, as a consequence, can influence not only the way of viewing different social realities – especially those concerning minority groups – but also the opinions, attitudes and behaviors directed to them. In this way, counterintuitive marketing communication makes it possible to develop a reality that discourages and reduces social prejudices still in force, proposing instead the construction of more conscious, democratic and inclusive values.

It is important to point out that counterintuitive communication can embrace the potentiality of social responsibility, even going beyond the “politically correct,” but maintaining the commercial and profitable marketing interests (Leite, 2008a, b, 2017). Thus, with regard to the commercial role of counterintuitive communication, its greater potential for memorization by the receiving public stands out, since by breaking with the expectations directed by intuition, the received message is more easily registered and retained (Leite, 2016). Additionally, the breaking of paradigms within the marketing discourse can be understood as a strategy of the organization for adapting to the socio-historical situation, positioning itself as favorable to the representation of social minorities (Praxedes, Medeiros, Bonfim, & Rios, 2016).

Despite its importance, counterintuitive communication has still been little explored by academic literature, as pointed out by a recent mapping conducted by Andreoli and Vieira (2022). In this work, it became clear that the body of knowledge on the theme is still very scarce, as well as very focused on theoretical understanding, without many empirical studies. Among the latter, only one article with a hypothetical-deductive approach was observed, which, however, presented limitations in terms of hypothesis validation and final results. Moreover, a limitation was also detected in terms of the scope of investigation of counterintuitive communication, restricted to the analysis of the racial issue, particularly the black race.

Although, it should be noted that the insertion of LGBTQIAP+ representation has been investigated beyond the scope of study of counterintuitive communication, with a broad aspect of consideration. Studies explore from the conception of breaking away from mere traditional marketing communication with the incorporation of causes (Kautish, 2010; Covaleski, 2019) to more specific analyses of these insertions, under the name of *outvertising*, a term denoting advertising “out of the closet” (Mozdzenski, 2020). As the author argues, *outvertising* can be understood as a recent, more inclusive and pro-diversity advertising trend, which may have a deconstructionist (Rodrigues & Zanin, 2014) and/or counterintuitive character (Leite, 2014). By the definition, the high alignment between the themes discussed here is clear.

Nevertheless, even in this scope, there are still few studies that sought to investigate consumer perception before these marketing communications, in terms of reception, processing, evaluation and reaction, especially with an experimental method (Cunningham & Melton, 2014; Read, van Driel & Potter, 2018; Shepherd, Chartrand & Fitzsimons, 2019). Still, the results found in the aforementioned studies did not show convergence, either within their own internal contradictions, which sometimes attested to better evaluation and sometimes not (Read *et al.*, 2018), or in a comparative synthesis between them.

In this sense, there is an important research gap in the study of the insertion of LGBTQIAP+ cause representation, especially in terms of the effectiveness of counterintuitive marketing communication and consumer behavior. This gap is also found in the organizational environment, with very little representation of this public. The concern with this analysis was inserted in the most current version of the Todxs survey, from 2020, which identified the presence of LGBTQIAP+ characters in a mere 1.3% of television commercials and advertising posts in the country. With similar results, research conducted by Elife and SA36 Agency analyzed almost 2,000 ads posted by 50 major brands on Instagram and Facebook in the year 2020, detecting only 3% with some LGBTQIAP+ indication or representation.

These data are confronted with the growing representativeness of that market, which indicates a high purchasing power and expressive consumption by the population that identifies as LGBTQIAP+. According to a survey by the corporate advisory firm LGBT Capital, the consumption of this audience added up to around \$3.6 trillion worldwide in the year 2018, and in Brazil this was close to \$107 billion (Oliveira, 2019).

Thus, it can be said that, despite the attractiveness of the market, campaigns directed to the LGBTQIAP+ audience are still practically nonexistent, disproportionate to their consumption potential and, furthermore, when they are in fact made, they are broadcasted in platforms directed to them (Praxedes, 2019; Sánchez-Soriano & García-Jiménez, 2020). The justification is the fear of organizations associating themselves with the LGBTQIAP+ cause due to the portion of more conservative, non-sympathetic consumers (Praxedes, 2019; Zago Junior, Souza Junior, & Gusatti, 2019). This was even supported by empirical evidence in a recent experiment conducted by Andreoli and Batista (2021), in which consumer behavior proved negative toward the inclusion of a homosexual couple compared to a heterosexual one in a Close Up advertising piece.

In view of this discussion, three hypotheses were elaborated related to counterintuitive communication with LGBTQIAP+ cause insertion. It is expected that counterintuitive communication with the LGBTQIAP+ cause, represented by the prominence of a homosexual couple, will be better evaluated when compared to traditional (intuitive) communication, represented by a heterosexual couple. This better evaluation should occur both in terms of emotional reaction to the ad and in terms of willingness to spread the communication and buy the advertised product. In addition, a better perception is also expected from the respondents about the evaluation of the social responsibility role of marketing communication.

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- H1.* More favorable emotional reaction to the ad is expected in the case of counterintuitive communication with LGBTQIAP+ cause, represented by the prominence of the homosexual couple, compared to traditional intuitive communication, represented by the heterosexual couple.
- H2.* Greater interest and willingness to purchase is expected in the case of counterintuitive communication with LGBTQIAP+ cause, represented by the prominence of the homosexual couple, compared to traditional intuitive communication, represented by the heterosexual couple.
- H3.* More positive evaluation of communication responsibility is expected in the case of counterintuitive communication with LGBTQIAP+ cause, represented by the prominence of the homosexual couple, compared to traditional intuitive communication, represented by the heterosexual couple.

3. Methodological procedure

The methodological procedure followed a hypothetical-deductive approach, with the conduction of an online experiment with a 2 (high involvement product \times low involvement product) \times 2 (homoaffective couple – counterintuitive \times heteroaffective – intuitive) factorial design. Two subsequent steps were employed, which are explained below.

The first stage was more exploratory, using remote eye tracking, conducted through Real Eye platform with 21 respondents. Eye tracking allows analysis of the visualizations and fixations of the participants, both in general terms and in relation to specific areas. Thus, it was possible to identify both the most seen areas (views) and the ones on which participants focused the most (fixations), both in relation to the piece as a whole and to some more specific areas of analysis, such as the image of the couple and the advertised products.

The second stage, with an explanatory character, was conducted with 136 respondents. Due to ethical concerns, a consent form was presented before the research started. As participants agreed to the terms, the actual collection procedure began. There were three metrics of interest: emotional reaction to the ad, with eight assertions, a scale originally developed by Wells (1964) and recently adapted by Andreoli and Nogueira (2021); interest and willingness to purchase, a scale with four assertions, adapted according to the logic of the net promoter score (NPS); and the evaluation of communication responsibility, a scale developed for this study, with eight assertions. All these scales had a random presentation of the statements for each participant, who was asked to assign an agreement score on a Likert-type scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being totally disagree and 10 being totally agree.

Different statistical techniques were employed in the data analysis. In the case of the scales, exploratory factor analyses were run, paying attention to compliance with consistency assumptions, such as minimum sample size of five participants for each variable; multivariate normality of the data; Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) tests greater than 0.5; significant Bartlett's test of sphericity; measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) greater than 0.5; communality greater than 0.5; and total variance explained greater than 0.5 (Hair *et al.*, 2006). To validate the hypotheses, t-test for one-dimensional analyses and generalized linear model (GLM) were used.

In both cases, samples were non-probability, chosen by convenience, with random distribution among groups and between-subject procedure (each participant had only access to one experimental group). Also, college students were selected as participants, due to the tendency to easily achieve homogeneity between treatments. Such delimitations are congruent with the focus on the internal validity of the experiments and the reliability of the results.

For the first stage, we followed the guidance of Pradeep (2012), who argues the need for a limited number of respondents when employing neuroscientific techniques, close to 10% of traditional surveys. In the second step, the sample power test was run through the G-power program to validate the required sample size and ensure the validity of the results. Thus, a high power was obtained (t-test, power 0.84) at medium effect size (0.3) and significance level (5%), which indicates the recommended statistical power (high) of the sample to reliably detect the analyzed effect.

The material adopted consisted of a fictitious advertising piece, developed exclusively for the purposes of this study, to avoid possible interferences resulting from previous exposure. The pieces were homoaffective couple (counterintuitive) with high involvement product (wedding ring), heteroaffective couple (intuitive) with high involvement product (wedding ring), homoaffective couple (counterintuitive) with low involvement product (perfume) and heteroaffective couple (intuitive) with low involvement product (perfume), respectively.

The project of this research, with all the details of the methodological procedure described here, was approved by the Ethics Committee of the university in early 2021.

4. Eye tracker

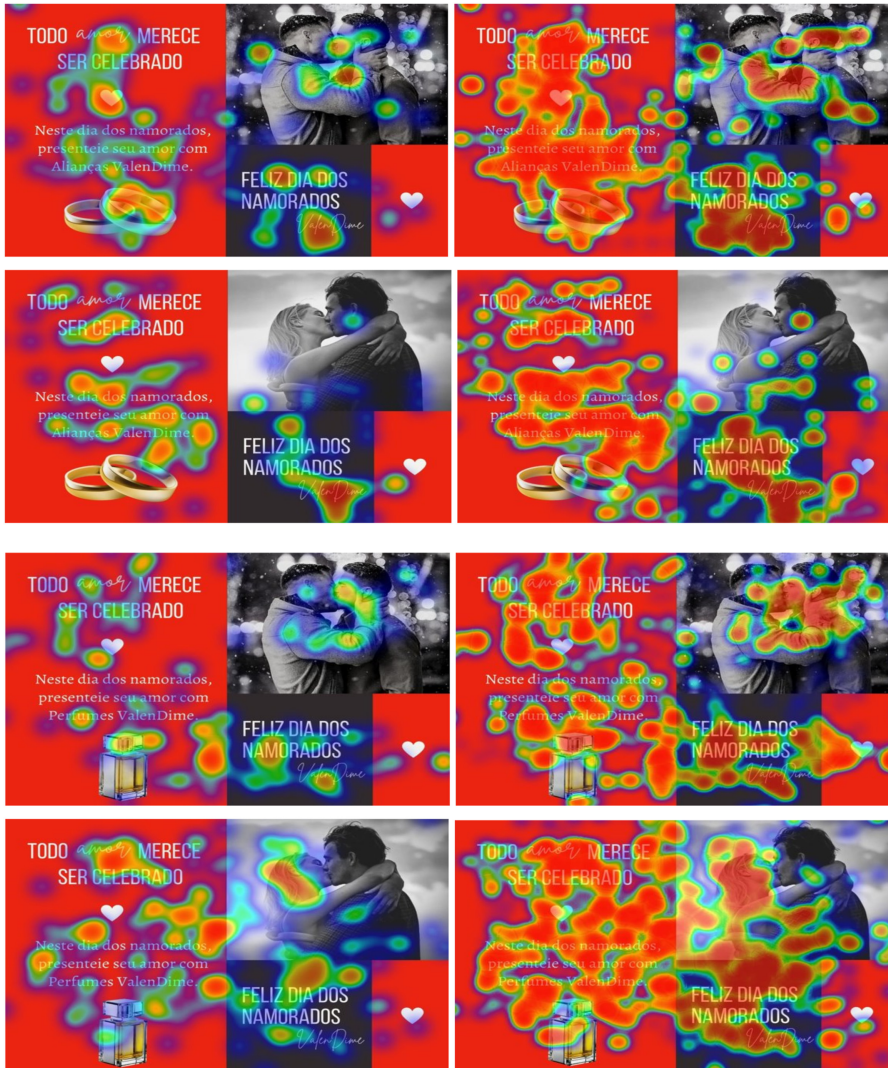
At first, data collection via eye tracking (Eye tracker) was carried out with 21 selected participants, most of them female (15), all college students aged between 19 and 24 years. Below (Figure 1) are the heatmap analyses of the four campaigns in general terms, with the visualizations and fixations, respectively. These heatmaps were extracted with the following standardizations: visualizations (point 50px, shade 50px and 0.5 opacity) and fixations (point 20px, shade 50px and 0.5 opacity).

Starting with the analysis of *the wedding ring* product, it was possible to identify greater visualization and fixation on the product when the homosexual couple is the protagonist. This protagonist per se also accounted for superiority in visualization and fixation, compared to the heterosexual couple. Moreover, the word “love,” which is highlighted in the first line of the text, also had more visualizations and fixations in the piece performed by the homosexual couple.

Regarding *the perfume* product, it can be said that there was some similarity in terms of visualization and fixation on the product. Both the couple and the brand seemed to draw more attention from the respondents when the homoaffective protagonist was present, compared to the heteroaffective one. With respect to the couple, it is possible to notice that there were fixations on both men of the homoaffective couple, that is, the two people who form the couple were observed, while in the piece with the heteroaffective couple this was not observed: there is a concentration of fixed looks on the woman that was not repeated on the man. Now, the word “love” was more visualized in the piece starring the heterosexual couple, different from what happened in the pieces of the “wedding ring” product. These exploratory insights can be corroborated by the indicators exposed in the summary tables below.

Analyzing all figures together, but more specifically the results related to the couple, it can be seen that in the pieces with the homosexual couple, there is greater fixation in the region where the couple kiss, which is not repeated in the pieces with the heterosexual couple. Although there is fixation in the woman of the “perfume” product, the region where the protagonists kiss was not fixed by the participants. When observing the brand, the metrics were close, regardless of the couple.

In this sense, when doing a general analysis, there was a preponderance of the protagonist of the homoaffective couple, which not only relates to the image of the couple but also extends to the product and the brand. Thus, some preliminary evidence seems to suggest the receivers’ positive evaluation of the counterintuitive communication tied to the LGBTQIAP+ cause. Particularly the idea that it draws more attention from consumers, precisely due to the



Source(s): Data extracted from the Real Eye platform (2021)

Figure 1.
Heatmap analysis –
visualizations and
fixations

counterintuitive appeal (Leite, 2008a, b), seems to have been corroborated here. It is interesting to reinforce that this attention was not only limited to the appeal in question (counterintuitive), but to the main points of the campaign in marketing terms, such as the product offered and the advertised brand.

Still, four regions of interest were selected to be analyzed in more detail: brand, major brand, couple and product. The tables below present a synthesis of the results considering both visualizations, with the first capture (time elapsed until the gaze is directed), the duration that this gaze remained stationary and the revisitation average, listing how many times the

gaze returned, and the fixations, with the number of times this occurred and the average time it lasted.

These indicators not only corroborate the findings discussed earlier, but also show more expressive results for the pieces with the prominence of the homosexual couple, practically in all the variables analyzed. Thus, once again the importance of counterintuitive communication is reinforced, considered an innovation in the communication field, which can fulfill the marketing purpose, while also playing the role of social accountability (Andreoli & Vieira, 2022). The results of the eye monitoring analysis are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

5. Questionnaire analyses

The sample ($n = 136$) was composed of a majority of male respondents (54.1%) and heterosexual orientation (75.8%), followed by bisexual (16.4%), as well as asexual, pansexual and unlabeled (1.6% each), with an average age of 21 years (ranging from 17 to 36 years) and average individual income around R\$1,800. The groups were almost evenly distributed (33 or 35 respondents).

Prior to the mean difference analysis, exploratory factor analyses were performed on the three metrics of interest in this study: emotional reaction to the ad ($KMO = 0.913, p = 0.000$ and $\alpha = 0.911$), yielding 62.2% of the total variance explained; interest and willingness to purchase ($KMO = 0.767, p = 0.000$ and $\alpha = 0.877$), with 74.0% of the total variance explained; and assessment of communication responsibility ($KMO = 0.813, p = 0.000$ and $\alpha = 0.752$), resulting in 82.4% of the total variance explained.

At first, the unidimensional analyses were carried out. When comparing products, a statistically significant difference was found in the case of homoaffective protagonist for a single variable: the eighth assertion of the communication accountability evaluation scale ($t = 1.953, p = 0.05$), with more positive results in the wedding ring product ($M = 7.17, SD = 1.984$), compared to perfume ($M = 5.97, SD = 2.738$). Thus, even though this isolated assertion had a good evaluation in both cases, there seemed to be a greater attribution from respondents about the diversity portrayed in marketing communication in the case of the wedding ring, indicating a greater perceived responsibility.

In the case of hetero-affective protagonist, a statistically significant difference was also found for a single variable: the fourth assertion of interest and willingness to purchase scale ($t = 2.361, p = 0.021$), specifically concerning the recommendation of the offer to other people, in which the best result attributed to the wedding ring product was repeated ($M = 5.23, SD = 2.931$), compared to perfume ($M = 3.52, SD = 3.053$). Thus, there appeared to be greater willingness of participants to refer the visualized offer to others in the case of the high involvement product.

More importantly, when comparing the protagonist couples, statistically significant differences were found in two metrics, for both products. First, for emotional reaction to the ad for both the wedding ring product ($t = 4.373, p = 0.000$) and the perfume ($t = 3.964, p = 0.000$). Second, for the evaluation of communication responsibility, also for both the wedding ring ($t = 2.498, p = 0.015$) and the perfume ($t = 3.763, p = 0.000$). In both cases, the piece starring the homosexual couple was better evaluated when compared to the heterosexual couple. This result evidences the better evaluation from consumers when counterintuitive communication is used, not only in terms of the direct emotional reaction to the ad but also in their perception of the responsibility of the communication. With this, full support is added to the first and third hypotheses, corroborating the validity and relevance of counterintuitive communication, as advocated by the literature, here especially in terms of the LGBTQIAP+ cause.

The interest and willingness to purchase obtained statistically significant differences only in one single assertion (4), in the case of the wedding ring ($t = 2.816, p = 0.006$), with better

	First capture			Duration			Average revisitation		
	HM ring	HT ring	HT perfume	HM ring	HT ring	HT perfume	HM ring	HT ring	HT perfume
Brand	9.0	5.5	8.4	0.4	0.9	0.4	2	6	1
Major brand	4.7	5.4	2.8	0.2	0.5	0.4	4	5	1
Couple	5.1	3.6	4.9	0.8	0.4	0.9	10	5	6
Product	5.8	3.5	6.2	0.6	0.1	0.3	5	2	3

Source(s): Data extracted from the Real Eye platform (2021)

Table 1.
Summary of Eye
tracker results – views

results with the homosexual couple ($M = 5.48, SD = 2.612$) in comparison to the heterosexual couple ($M = 3.52, SD = 3.053$). As for perfume, the difference was close to the significance zone ($t = 1.812; p = 0.07$), repeating the better result for the homosexual couple ($M = 6.46; SD = 2.737$), in detriment to the heterosexual couple ($M = 5.23; SD = 2.931$). This result adds partial support to the second hypothesis, indicating a greater willingness of respondents to advertise and buy the product when the homosexual couple is the protagonist. With this, it is possible to corroborate, in part, the literature that defends the greater marketing potential of counterintuitive communication, again here especially in terms of the LGBTQIAP+ cause.

Then, the generalized linear model (GLM) was employed. Its assumptions were checked and largely met (correlation between the dependent variables and homoscedasticity of the individual and joint metrics). A multivariate GLM was run with the three dependent variables, the fixed factors of manipulation (four groups), gender and sexual orientation, and the covariate age. As a result, adopting Pillai's trace metric, an overall model was obtained with significant differences from manipulation ($F = 2.899, p = 0.003, \eta^2 = 0.076$ and power = 0.965), for two of the metrics of interest: emotional reaction to the ad ($F = 4.375, p = 0.006, \eta^2 = 0.110$ and power = 0.861) and evaluation of communication responsibility ($F = 4.739, p = 0.004, \eta^2 = 0.118$ and power = 0.889).

In both cases, more favorable results were verified in the groups in which the homosexual couple was protagonist, both for the product wedding ring ($M = 6.542, SD = 0.426$ and $M = 7.225, SD = 0.312$, respectively) and for the perfume ($M = 6.750, SD = 0.443$ and $M = 7.168, SD = 0.325$, respectively), compared to the heterosexual couple with a wedding ring ($M = 4.105, SD = 0.561$ and $M = 5.568, SD = 0.411$, respectively). Also, in the latter case, the piece with the heterosexual couple as protagonist with perfume was close to the significance zone when compared to the homosexual couple with wedding ring, repeating the worse result ($M = 6.031, SD = 0.346$).

Further, the interaction of some profile variables with the manipulation presented significant differences, such as with gender ($F = 1.856, p = 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.05$ and power = 0.819) and with gender combined with orientation ($F = 3.117, p = 0.006, \eta^2 = 0.082$ and power = 0.913). In the latter, the difference was close to the significance zone only for emotional reaction to the ad ($F = 2.873, p = 0.061, \eta^2 = 0.051$ and power = 0.552). Table 3 summarizes the discussion of the results.

The results corroborate the one-dimensional analyses, adding full support to two hypotheses of this study: the first, related to the best emotional reaction to the ad, and the third concerned the best evaluation of the social responsibility of marketing communication. Nevertheless, no support was found for the second hypothesis, related to the willingness to advertise and buy the product. A possible justification for this is that this metric concerns the product itself, rather than the actual advertising discourse. That is, one could ponder that the non-differentiation stems from a supposed lack of interest by participants in the advertised products, rather than from the non-influence of the LGBTQIAP+ protagonist and/or cause.

	Number of fixations				Average time			
	HM ring	HT ring	HM perfume	HT perfume	HM ring	HT ring	HM perfume	HT perfume
Brand	128	189	99	122	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.4
Major brand	325	221	89	107	1.0	0.6	0.3	0.4
Couple	613	189	576	868	1.7	0.7	1.6	2.1
Product	368	118	121	97	1.0	0.4	0.4	0.3

Source(s): Data extracted from the Real Eye platform (2021)

Table 2.
Summary of Eye
tracker results –
Fixations

As a discussion of the results, the study manages to add important empirical evidence about the importance of counterintuitive communication on the two main fronts of usage consideration. First, the improved emotional reaction to the ad by respondents denotes the validation of the potential of counterintuitive communication for financial and profit marketing purposes (Leite, 2008a, b; Leite, 2017; Andreoli & Vieira, 2022). Second, the better evaluation of the responsibility of marketing communication indicates the validation of its purpose beyond the commercial sphere, in which the marketing update occurs according to new social demands, extrapolating even the “politically correct” (Strozenberg, 2006; Praxedes, Medeiros, Bonfim, & Rios, 2016; Leite, 2017; Andreoli & Vieira, 2022).

Specifically, in regards to the insertion of the LGBTQIAP+ cause, its legitimization before the consumer market is reinforced. With that in mind, it is expected that the results found here will serve as a stimulus for the adoption of this cause by organizations, with communications of this nature not only directed to the community in question but also to the general public (Praxedes, 2019). This was corroborated by the composition of the sample itself, which, despite having declared heterosexual orientation (76%), still had positive feedback.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the positive results mentioned above were found in a sample that is supposed to be more open to the issue investigated here: young people, college students from a federal public institution, also embedding a certain diversity. Thus, although generalizations cannot be made, one can confabulate that this indicates a possible movement of the market, which is more receptive to the LGBTQIAP+ cause, as well as more adherent to counterintuitive marketing communication in general.

6. Final considerations

The paper aimed to analyze consumer reaction to counterintuitive communication tied to the LGBTQIAP+ cause. Thus, the prominence of homoaffective versus heteroaffective couples was compared, especially in terms of three metrics of interest: emotional reaction to the ad, interest and willingness to purchase, and evaluation of the responsibility of the communication. With this, it was possible to attest to the differences between traditional (intuitive) and counterintuitive marketing communication, both identified in terms of visualizations and fixations (eye tracking) and objective responses (questionnaires). Moreover, more positive consumer behavior was observed in the case of counterintuitive marketing communication with insertion of the LGBTQIAP+ cause.

In terms of eye tracking, it was possible to observe both greater visualization and fixation when the protagonist was the homosexual couple, especially in the areas considered of interest, which were brand, couple and product offered. Corroborating this, in regards to the quantitative analysis, the prominence of the homosexual couple also responded for better emotional reaction to the ad and evaluation of the responsibility of the communication, validating two hypotheses raised by this study. Nevertheless, one of the hypotheses did not

Metric	Wedding ring
Emotional reaction to the ad ($F = 4.375$, $p = 0.006$, eta squared = 0.110 and power = 0.861)	Homosexual couple wedding ring ($M = 6.542$, $DP = 0.426$) and perfume ($M = 6.750$, $DP = 0.443$) > heterosexual couple – wedding ring ($M = 4.105$, $DP = 0.561$)
Responsibility of communication ($F = 4.739$, $p = 0.004$, eta squared = 0.118 and power = 0.889)	Homosexual couple wedding ring ($M = 7.225$, $DP = 0.312$) and perfume ($M = 7.168$, $DP = 0.325$) > heterosexual couple wedding ring ($M = 5.568$, $DP = 0.411$) and perfume* ($M = 6.031$, $DP = 0.346$)

Source(s): Prepared according to GLM results

Table 3.
Summary of
differences – GLM

obtain full support, with no statistically significant difference found in the metrics associated with interest and willingness to purchase.

Thus, the study contributes to endorse the literature concerning counterintuitive communication, reinforcing the growing of a scenario favorable to its practice, as well as highlighting its importance as an efficient marketing strategy, especially in face of new market demands. More specifically, the article extends the understanding about counterintuitive communication with the scope of investigation focused on the LGBTQIAP+ cause, studied from the perspective of *outvertising*, especially from the point of view of the receiving public: the consumers. Going further, it advances in the sense of aggregating empirical evidence, by means of both exploratory and explanatory approach.

As a management contribution, it is expected that the results found here will serve as a stimulus for the adoption of counterintuitive marketing communication by the organizational environment. Specifically, concerning the LGBTQIAP+ cause, *outvertising* is pointed out as a valid and attractive path before the market. The market has long demanded from organizations a performance that goes beyond the mere commercial sphere, with real engagement with the social and political contingencies derived from the environment in which they operate.

Finally, one should also consider some limitations of the study, especially regarding the methodological procedure. Thus, it is emphasized that this is a study with delimitation defined by the authors, development of specific materials and convenience sample selection. This is in line with the focus on internal validity, limiting the results found to the specific context of application.

With all this in mind, future studies are recommended. First, in general, it is noted that there is a scarcity of studies focused on the analysis of counterintuitive communication. Second, some areas of investigation of counterintuitive communication are especially neglected, such as the promotion of gender/sexual diversity, as well as more realistic aesthetic standards. Third, new contexts should be considered, with the inclusion of new metrics of interest.

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