

# Enactment of Theories of Diversity - Diversity as a Marketing Strategy? Heritage Months and Diversity Training in the United States

## Heritage Months

**There have been attempts to bring diversification to society in workplaces and other institutions through diversity training in business and bringing awareness to diversity and discrimination through advertising. The effectiveness of these attempts is being questioned. Companies are realizing their responsibility to the public.**

**Diversification** is the process of diversifying something or making something more diverse. What measures are we taking to actually implement "diversity"?

In the United States, heritage months are months that celebrate the stories and contributions of marginalized identities. These months are intended to be a time for marginalized groups to show pride and for the rest of society to show solidarity. The months are dedicated to studying cultural history and learning and exploring the respective groups/cultures so that it becomes visible how society sees the cultures and an awareness of society's interaction with them. These are widely popular in the United States and are recognized by companies large and small across and academic institutions throughout the nation. They are also becoming increasingly popular in the rest of the Western Hemisphere<sup>1)</sup>. These months popularly include Black History Month (celebrated in February), Pride Month (celebrated in June), and Latinx Heritage Month (celebrated in September/October).

It is common during these months for schools to provide programming to students that brings attention to the history or culture of these marginalized identities. Higher learning institutions will bring in speakers and host events that address bringing awareness to the struggles of these discriminated against minorities. Large corporations create advertisements that demonstrate their awareness and mindfulness of these heritage months.

However, as with many things meant for good, there are distortions that lead to the exploitation of these attempts to bring attention to these month-long celebrations. This is also more likely as we live in an increasingly capitalistic society. A common criticism is that Pride Month is performative, pointing to the fact that although this annual month-long awareness celebration seems to be widely recognized, an actual positive change in society is not coming from these celebrations. While many companies hang pride flags to show solidarity during Pride Month, marketing and promotion during Pride Month and comparable months are featured in the months as a means to appear to show support and therefore keep their customers happy. Companies even show their support on social media. When we see these advertisements that are supposed to celebrate diversity, we ask ourselves questions because it is not enough to celebrate pride month for the incorporation of diversity and diversity tolerance and acceptance. Being aware of inequalities is important, but it is not enough if change does not accompany it. Diversity has become a marketing strategy for large companies.

Organizations and companies have noticed the societal discourse about diversity, and in order for them to capitalize on this, they need to demonstrate their commitment to diversity because it's obviously the right thing for society<sup>2)</sup>. Companies are partnering with organizations that represent

these marginalized identities by companies that these marginalized identities feel represent them. Should we account for intentions when we deal with the diversification in companies and in media? Should we worry that they are just checking a box? Is it not still getting the word out to be more inclusive? Is it not still promoting diversity? Or is it a bandaid effect? Of course intention matters, the question is really how much it matters<sup>3)</sup>. Companies are becoming increasingly responsible to have a good social image to maintain their business. So they are basically being required to accept and show support for diversity. It has become a selling point today.

1. What are the results of these advertisements and recognition from these large companies?
2. To be performative is also important because it brings awareness to diversity and discrimination. But does this really bring about change, or is it only loosely following an ideal of tolerance?
3. Who are these months really celebrated for? Who are these advertisements really for that display diversity? For the marginalized or for the majority?

## Diversity Training

**The supposed purpose of diversity training is to heighten awareness and moderate bias in the workplace Diversity training is growing in usage. Big firms and organizations use them and a variety of Colleges and Universities in the United States are incorporating them as mandatory for students and administration as well. Diversity training- corporate initiatives<sup>4)</sup>:**

The goals of diversity training include, but are not limited to managing managerial bias through training to address unconscious bias, address social isolation, and foster a more inclusive environment, and for some companies, they incorporate one or more of these initiatives by efforts to try and establish responsibility with diversity progress and initiatives.

  Abbreviation: DT, diversity training.

Source<sup>5)</sup>

What changes does diversity training bring?

Diversity training has shown over the past 20 years that its' effectiveness is questionable and that it is likely to increase bias. In many businesses, especially in larger corporations, diversity training is required. But all American Fortune 500 companies have mandatory diversity training in place. Enforcing diversity training in business is a top-down method of diversification. There have been many studies done since before World War II that have proven diversity training to be ineffective in influencing long-term change. For the first time in recorded history, companies can't just sell items or provide a service, their character as an organization is being questioned and criticized and criticized. Apparently, the studies also show that the training gives better results in management when people can decide for themselves to take the training.<sup>6)</sup>

## Examples

Questions to consider when watching advertisements that are supposed to celebrate or bring awareness to diversity:

1. Who are these videos created for? Or who is the intended audience?
2. Who are the creators/companies targeting?
3. What are the intentions behind the creation of the video?

## Conclusion

It is important for the companies that we support them with our money. It is becoming increasingly important for members of Generation Z and the following generations that the companies they consume from, share their values. Companies are learning more and more about how important this is. In a national American study conducted in 2018 with Morning Consult, over 55% of young adults believe that these companies that they support have “positive ethics”. Some of the companies mentioned were Starbucks, Nike, and Dove. The survey also indicated that young adults are paying attention to the ethics of the organization’s leaders and how this is demonstrated in the organization’s leadership<sup>7)</sup>. So we need to be more intentional with which companies we support because we have such a wealth of information that we now have available to us through the internet. We must recognize our power and operate in our purchasing power.

1) , 3) , 4)

Steven Vertovec, „Diversity” and the Social Imaginary“, (2013) URL:

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/european-journal-of-sociology-archives-europeennes-de-sociologie/article/diversity-and-the-social-imaginary/BCD313D23C789379C316A93038301B1D>

2) , 7)

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