

BUILDING

# Affinity

with Multicultural &  
LGBTQ+ Consumers:

LESSONS FROM AHZUL'S  
MULTICULTURAL BRAND  
AFFINITY STUDY

- Ahzul recently launched the **Multicultural Brand Affinity Study**, first of its kind research that explores what drives affinity with Hispanic, African American, Asian, and LGBTQ+ consumers, **which brands are succeeding with these audiences, and, just as importantly, why.**

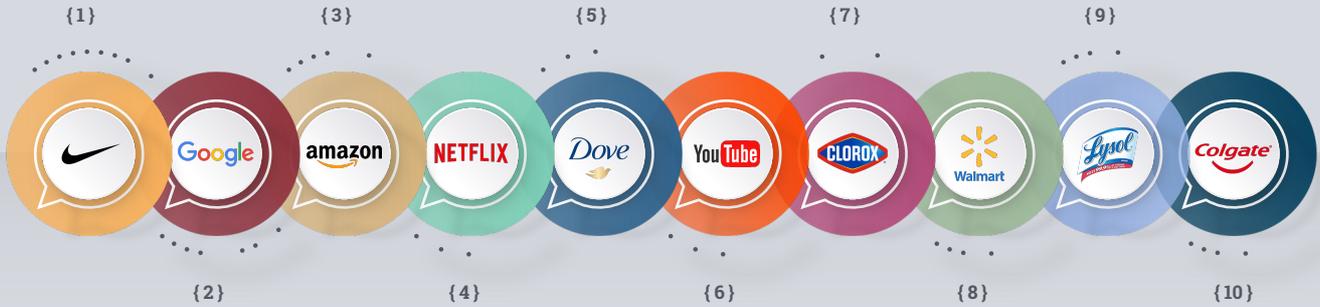
## First of all...what drives brand affinity among multicultural & LGBTQ+ audiences?

The Ahzul MCBA study looked at a wide range of drivers of brand affinity – from things like value and quality, to innovation, to making the world a better place and having consumers' best interest in mind. Our research revealed that, for multicultural and LGBTQ+ audiences, the biggest driver of brand affinity is relatability (“is a brand I can personally relate to”). Just as interesting, however, is that “understands me as African American / Hispanic / Asian / LGBTQ+” and “advocates diversity” are drivers of being able to personally relate to a brand, **indicating that “relatability” is intrinsically connected to culture and a brand’s ability to demonstrate an understanding of consumers as part of a specific culture or group.**

The ten highest affinity brands across segments, and the brand with the highest affinity in each category are included below.

# TOP TEN BRANDS

AMONG MULTICULTURAL & LGBTQ+ CONSUMERS



\*note: The MCBA was fielded during the pandemic (February 2021) which likely at least partially influenced the success of brands like Clorox and Lysol in this wave of the study

# TOP BRAND PER CATEGORY

AMONG MULTICULTURAL & LGBTQ+ CONSUMERS

X Overall Rank



# What can

## WE LEARN FROM TOP-PERFORMING BRANDS?

#1

### THEY'RE IN IT FOR THE LONG HAUL

First of all, nearly all of the brands that rise to the top with multicultural and LGBTQ+ consumers **have made a concerted and long-term investment in engaging multicultural audiences** – from products, to marketing, to internal policies and community engagement. Especially in today's environment, authentic and longstanding commitments to these audiences is rewarded, while “performative allyship” by brands is being increasingly called out.

#2

### THEIR MULTICULTURAL MARKETING IS DRIVEN BY DEEP CULTURAL INSIGHTS

The brands that have succeeded in building affinity with multicultural and LGBTQ+ audiences **take the time to understand multicultural consumers beyond stereotypes and tired tropes**. Using this deep understanding, these brands **speak to multicultural consumers in ways that reflect their humanity and their lived realities rather than simply their ethnicity**. Google's advertising, including the famous “Dear Sophie” ad portraying an Asian American father creating a digital scrapbook for his daughter, is a great example of this. **Nike's** work is also emblematic of deep cultural understanding (including of the societal issues these audiences care most about).

For some brands, connecting with multicultural audiences also comes through partnerships with culturally relevant brand ambassadors. **McDonald's** has done this for years, most recently with reggaeton artist J Balvin and rapper/singer Travis Scott. **State Farm**, the top performing brand in the insurance category, has also had success reaching multicultural audiences with relevant spokespeople like Chris Paul.

# What can

## WE LEARN FROM TOP-PERFORMING BRANDS?

# 3

### THEY START INSIDE

Today more than ever, employees are demanding that their employers be diverse, equitable, and inclusive places to work. And consumers are asking the same of these companies. Brands that are succeeding with multicultural & LGBTQ+ consumers are those that are **tackling issues of inequity within their own walls, ensuring that the makeup of board and leadership positions reflects more of the audiences they want to reach.**

While each company is in a different place on their DE&I journey, each top performing brand has made commitments and taken steps towards a more inclusive workplace. **T-Mobile**, for example, is helping to advance equality internally by forming an external Diversity and Inclusion Council that is made up of 14 prominent advocates and thinkers in the DE&I space across media, telecom, and public policy. **Netflix** recently appointed Bozoma Saint John as CMO, making her the company's first African American C-suite executive.



# What can

WE LEARN FROM  
TOP-PERFORMING BRANDS?

# 4

## THEIR ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN THEIR WORDS

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, **these brands have taken concrete action, beyond just marketing outreach, to support multicultural and LGBTQ+ communities.** For some brands, this support has taken the form of taking a bold stand on societal issues, like **PayPal** cancelling plans to open a new facility in North Carolina following passage of an anti-transgender law, or **Nike** taking a stand on police brutality and racial inequality in its advertising with Colin Kaepernick, or **Dove** tackling issues around Black hair discrimination with its championing of the Crown Act.

Other brands have focused their efforts on funding and even building programs to lift up multicultural and LGBTQ+ communities. **Amazon**, for example, in partnership with Howard University, developed the Howard Entertainment Program, an experience that sets up African-American students and other underrepresented groups to train and study alongside entertainment executives. **McDonald's** is widely known for its HACER scholarship program for Hispanic students and its more recent "Black and Positively Golden" movement to uplift African American communities, which includes scholarships and partnerships with community organizations.



# Summing it All Up

Over the next 40 years, 100% of US population growth will come from multicultural consumers, and in less than 20 years, the US will officially be “minority majority,” with Hispanics, African Americans, and Asians making up more than 50% of the total US population. Succeeding with multicultural and LGBTQ+ audiences isn’t just a “nice to have” anymore – it’s a business necessity.

## Looking at the brands that have built strong equity with multicultural and LGBTQ+ consumers, a clear set of recommendations emerge:

1

Start inside to ensure that diversity is represented at all levels of the company

3

Define what tangible actions your company will take to support multicultural & LGBTQ+ communities

2

Take the time to learn about and understand multicultural & LGBTQ+ consumers – and then reflect those insights in culturally-relevant products and marketing efforts

4

Make a long-term commitment to engaging multicultural consumers that goes beyond heritage or pride months

**i** Want to learn more about your brand’s current and potential multicultural and/or LGBTQ+ audience? Interested in learning more about the Multicultural Brand Affinity Study? **Reach out – we’d love to chat!**

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