Multicultural Advertising and Updated Branding for Wedding Photographers

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Research Question

• Do contemporary wedding photographers adhere to portrayals of the traditional image of couples when posting photographs to their websites, or is there a shift toward diversity in featured couples?

Background

• Changes to the broader cultural, political, legal, and market contexts can affect how consumers interpret a brand’s meaning (Allen et al., 2008).

• Growing diversity in demographics has encouraged multicultural advertising targeting minorities, while trying not to alienate those in the majority population (Johnson & Grier, 2011).

• Why photography?: Photography is an extremely visual communication style, so it is easy to see how marketing occurs (Strano, 2006).

• Why wedding photos?: People choose professionals rather than smartphones for important milestones, like weddings (Cherlin, 2010; Gray, 2012).

• Traditional image of a couple in a wedding photo: one man and one woman, young, white, no children.

• U.S. demographics as well as marriage and family patterns are changing: increases in non-whites, the average age at first marriage, remarriage, blended/step-families, and same-sex marriages (Cherlin, 2010).

Summary of results

• Overall, photographers are still adhering to the traditional image of couples.

• Lowest non-traditional representation: older couples (i.e., in their mid-30s or older).

• Same-sex couple representation was low in Indianapolis, but the lowest was in Chicago.

• Non-traditional age and family structure representation was highest in Indianapolis.

Summary of results

• Highest non-traditional representation: non-white couples.

• Race-ethnicity generally represent demographics in each region (Chicago is exception with lower representation).

Note: % non-whites (all except for the “white alone, non-Hispanic” category) in the population for each city was found in the U.S. Census Bureau website, “Quick Facts.”

Method

• Content analysis of photos from photographers’ WeddingWire profiles, personal photography websites, and professional Facebook pages (N = 960).

• Sample:
  
  ▶ Four photographers from the two largest cities in the Midwest.
  
  ▶ Four photographers from the two largest cities in the West Coast.

  These photographers were selected from those who appeared on WeddingWire.com by using the highest and lowest average ratings received among those with a minimum of 20 ratings.

• % representations of four types of “non-traditional” groups were examined: non-whites, older than in their early 30s, same-sex couples, and couples with children.

Recommendations

• Wedding photographers should look to the demographic data for their area to better represent possible clients.

• Couples’ children—from delayed marriage or remarriage—and older couples are rarely shown in pictures. The changes in timing of marriage and family structure should be better represented to attract possible clients.

• This project is based on my Honors Project (HNRS 4980 & 4990). Faculty advisors: Dr. Kei Nomaguchi (Sociology) and Dr. Doug Ewing (Marketing).