8-3-2021

Queer Rhetorical Agency in Fort Lauderdale Tourist LGBTQ+ Advertisements

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Thesis of
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts
Composition, Rhetoric, and Digital Media

Nova Southeastern University
Halmos College of Arts and Sciences

August 2021

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February 2022

ABSTRACT

The following case study focuses on the implicit and explicit rhetorical messages in LGBTQ+ focused travel advertisements following Waitt and Markwell's (2014) observations of LGBTQ+ advertisements increasingly gaining prominence within mainstream promotional material. The case study investigates the queer messaging within Fort Lauderdale's national 2015-2017 Hello Sunny Campgain; heralded for its groundbreaking LGBTQ+ and Trans representation. The scholarship that informs this study are at the intersections of composition and rhetoric, queer composition, and queer tourism studies. The methodology for the case study includes a rhetorical analysis incorporating a new materialistic lens. The two promotional images were analyzed for their rhetorical creation of queer identity through a combination of Barthes' (1977) interconnectivity of cultural imagination and material rhetoric. Findings of the case study reveal LGBTQ+ promotional travel material ultimately privileges LGBTQ+ audiences as consumers first. These findings support claims of queer identities being enmeshed within marketing segmentation for the purposes of commercializing a community for profitability. Those who would benefit from this study would be queer tourist marketers, queer scholars, and rhetoricians.

Keywords: Composition, Rhetoric, Digital Media, thesis, LGBTQ+, Queer Composing

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Introduction

As a South Florida local and avid global traveler, I've had the experience of witnessing gay life all over the world. I marveled at how similar these queer accepting places were—across time, space, and geopolitical positions. Inspired by these trips I became a fixture in the Miami and Fort Lauderdale queer scenes[1]. As a young man from the Miami suburbs, it was not hard to find a community just an hour away from my home; however, it did prove to be difficult to find spaces that were authentically created for queer individuals in mind. To find such illustrious spaces, I relied on online chat rooms and in-group conversations to find accepting spaces. My experience showed me the exceptional difference between spaces created for and by queer people. Queer spaces, I noticed, were used in tandem with the tourism industry to siphon-in queer tourists.

Having established myself in queer circles, I noticed the rhetoric about these spaces did not necessarily reflect the type of queer communities that exist there. For example, when visiting popular queer tourist sites, I was mostly met with a rather indifferent group of persons scoping the location, as if attempting to find queerness hidden about the space. If it was not for my curiosity for these spaces, I too would have likely fallen into the queer consumption apparatus that advertises such voyeurism, as an international traveler myself, I've also fallen into frequenting queer spaces abroad finding them more similar than different in their approach toward identity creation, political leaning, and pop cultural callbacks. If these spaces all seem so similar then that begs the question, is there an interconnected network of similar traveler focused queer spaces? If so, could we then investigate the messages embedded in these spaces'

[1] I define Queer scenes as locations where queer individuals were open to discussing their lived experiences in relative safety.

advertisements toward the mainstream to deconstruct what aspects of queerness attract queer tourists?

The expansion of LGBTQ+ communities into the mainstream have changed the tourism industry's targeting of queer individuals (Tsai, 2010). In expanding the visibility of LGBTQ+ travelers, the gay tourism industry has developed a new definition of what it means to be a queer traveler. Now, out, and proud cities across the U.S. are opening their doors to new groups of queer people everywhere. In targeting queer audiences, travel bureaus and marketers are finding ways of *queering* the image of popular destinations (Waitt & Markwell, 2014). In framing the city as a queer-accepting space these marketers are re-defining advertisements with their use of inclusive advertising. With the expansion of growing social awareness, marketers are finding ways of advertising to persons from LGBTQ+ communities. In the expansion of political visibility, members of these communities see their representation severely limited within mainstream advertisements, instead being poised as figures in niche markets.

The typical representations of queer people in advertisements do not align with the true diversity queerness, by definition, offers. For example, many resort towns use images of physical fit men in their advertisement campaigns as a means of representing an LGBTQ+ affirming space, even though most of the clientele does not identify with conventions of masculinity or the apparent physicality (Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2016). Hence, there is a current disconnection between who is LGBTQ+ identifying and falsified identity markers used between members of the in-group. The identify makers have been co-opted by companies and organizations to market to LGBTQ+ consumers. In opening more niche pockets of consumers—marketers, city officials, and tourism boards—have turned to LBTQ+ communities for their spending power (Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2016). As the state of visibility and spending power increases, these stakeholders

are creating new forms of advertising that meld between conventional and unconventional advertising symbols. As noted by Tsai (2011), the concept of commercial validation is being usurped as a stand-in for the legal progression of civil rights for LGBTQ+ communities. Commercial validation is the concept of one's identity being validated through being the signified audience of a commercial endeavor (Tsai, 2011). Signified audiences are identified through message signaling they can discern (Kates, 1999). Queer messaging walks the line between explicit and implicit signaling, and this thesis moves to understand the cultural and rhetorical movements of advertisements focused on an LGBTQ+ signified audience.

This thesis examines identity creation through analyzing the messaging created in explicit and implicit queer imagery in Fort Lauderdale tourism posters targeting queer tourists. This project is at the intersection of composition, rhetoric, queer studies, and tourism studies with a focus on rhetorical identity. The scope of this work is concerned with the rhetorical use of queer codes (messages) in both texts and visual composition within the promotional posters. The two promotional posters, Figure 1 and Figure 2, display couples or groups engaging queer-friendly local tourist destinations in Fort Lauderdale. The promotional posters were curated for their inclusive efforts in the Fort Lauderdale Sunny Campaign of 2016-2017.

Figure 1

Hello Daily Grind - Hello Sunny Campaign Poster photographed at The Alchemist (2017).

Figure 2

Hello Groove Thing - Hello Sunny Campaign Poster photographed at Stach Drinking Den (2017).

The literature review tackles at which points queerness intersects within composing and the newly available positionalities created thereafter. To examine further, the literature review explores queer composing as a process of locating positionalities on the spectrum of "normalcy" (which are constructed ideals of cohesion amongst people). To be able to see these layers of positionalities, writers need to engage critically with queer composing, queer rhetoric, and queer coded elements to unearth unrealized knowledge. The combination of these factors I believe is seen through the perforation of LGBTQ+ focused advertising. Advertising media is used for this project because of the history surrounding queer communities and their shared conception of space. By deconstructing the media representing idealized queer space in advertisements, a wealth of information can be garnered about our own conceptions of gender, sexuality, shared identity, and consumerism.

The promotional images were analyzed for their creation of queer identity through a combination of Barthes' (1977) interconnectivity of cultural imagination and materiality. The promotional images were analyzed by their use of queer composition, queer rhetorical symbols, and Cultural Signaling (Alexander and Wallace, 2009; Gries, 2013). I build from Kate (1999) earlier definition of cultural signaling to include the process of presenting culturally resonating symbols or images for a desired and specified audience. The analysis illuminates the use of binary surfing between dominant and non-dominate forms of cultural signaling (Alexander and Wallace, 2009), Findings generated from this analysis illuminate a possible shift in LGBTQ+ messaging within mainstream LGBTQ+ focused advertisements.

Ultimately, I call for critical use of queer composing in the composition and rhetoric field (Alexander & Wallace, 2009). The case study at present is based in part on the investigation of

identifying queerness from Alexander and Wallace (2009) where they identified three commonly used moves in queer compositions: confronting homophobia, becoming inclusive, and queering the homo/hetero binary. Following these moves, I see connections to work by Coon (2012) and Oakenfull and Greenlee (2005) on the creation of a queer tourist persona (named, the global gay persona), which is global effort in targeting the LGBTQ+ tourist. The global gay persona is a neo-liberal identity used in intersections of queer tourism and social geography fields referring to a well-to do gay-identifying tourist visiting a site to revel in their identity (Coon, 2012). By considering queer composing, scholars can identify the heterosexist aspects of the binary surfing advertisements conduct, which in turn allows them to gauge shifts in expression.

As the globe becomes increasing cognizant of the commercial power of LGBTQ+ communities, the lengths marketers will go to advertise to them, I posit, will develop inclusive advertising showcasing the variety of LGBTQ+ communities. The transition between stereotypical imaging of the global gay persona (white, male, young, affluent) to other combinations of identity is held in the ideology of commercial validation—pushing forth the consumer identity *first* to then move the needle toward formal legal action and political action (Kates, 1999). In investigating these advertisements, I express how advertisements construct the identities of spaces, places, and patrons through their implicit, explicit, cultural, and symbolic use of cultural signaling in the advertisements.

Literature Review

The literature review develops the working hypothesis for how marketing queerness as an expressed consumerist artificial aesthetic is being used to fulfill westernized geo-political and cultural actualization through the queer deconstruction of a location-based advertisement. As the American LGBTQ+ community grows in visibility, marketers have in turn developed advertising practices to reflect the LGBTQ+ growing desirability as a niche consumer group (Branchik, 2019). LGBTQ+ focused marketing can be divided into three phases. The first phase as outlined by Branchik (2019), is the "Underground" phase (pre-1941). Due to urbanization and the industrial revolution, there was gay migration into major US cities; however, there was no explicit advertising toward LGBTQ+ audiences (Branchik, 2019). The second phase is considered the Community Building phase (1941-1970), where in after World War II and before the Stonewall gay riots, gay neighborhoods started to become established. As Branchik (2019) explains, the establishment of gay neighborhoods meant the creation of resort towns. These resort towns became the main destination of LGBTQ+ travelers. These resort towns advertised to their audience via mail-order or local publications. At this point, the community had largely been insular only distributing content in pre-established locales (Resort Town bars, clubs, restaurants). After the Stonewall gay riots in 1969, there was a greater shift in the American consciousness of who queer people were in the United States.

The third phase (1970-2010s), as Branchick (2019) describes, was brought out because of the consciousness produced by the Stonewall gay riots, and other notable factors including the Gay rights movement, sexual revolution, consumer movement, formation of religious right, the AIDS crisis, and gay acceptance into the mainstream consumer economy (Branchick, 2019). With the integration of queer communities into the mainstream market also came calls from

companies to capture the elusive "desirable gay market" (Brancick, 2019). Gay couples have been identified by marketers as a heavily desirable consumer market, in part because of their emerging consumer power, creating an opening for financial success (Brancick, 2019). While there has been strides in presenting queerness into the mainstream, advertisers at large are still reluctant to tap into the gay market year-round (Tsai, 2010). Currently, companies use special occasions such as pride month (June) to pursue inclusionary efforts into their branding (Tsai, 2011). Advertisers often illustrated their inclusionary efforts through thoughtful phrasing, and model selection within their public campaigns The collective resonance of the advertisements presents a designed presentation of LGBTQ+ identities using queer rhetorical practices (Kates, 1999).

Queer Rhetoric

In viewing queer focused advertisements, a queer rhetorical practice upends normative approaches to self-identification, leisure, and collective consciousness. Normative approaches are understood in the literature as referring to heterosexist ideologies (Palmeri & Rylander, 2015). Alexander and Rhodes (2020) define queer rhetoric as ". . . not about affirming an identity, but rather disrupting norms for thinking, particularly norms that reinforce heterosexist ways of being" (para. 1). As Alexander and Rhodes (2020) mention, a queer rhetorical practice is not strictly focused on "affirming" identities rather in the "de- and un-and re-composition" established in queer composing (#). Queer rhetoric focuses on disrupting "norms" to explore how texts uphold heterosexist[2] ideologies. In short, queer composing is how queer rhetoric is transmitted onto messages. Through understanding queer composing as the

[2] The term heterosexist in this context means the attitude, bias, and preference for opposite-sex pairings which result in discrimination toward queer individuals (Alexander and Wallance, 2009).

vehicle to transferring queer rhetorical messages, queer composing and queer rhetoric are held as the disruptors to heterogenous ideological messages embedded in the travel material.

Queer rhetoric amplifies disruptive rhetoric, which, as outlined by Banks et. al (2019), supports the freedom of contrarian messages which opposes, questions, or challenges ideological narratives. While queer rhetoric specifically is invested in challenging heterosexual ideological narratives, it is also a disruptive practice that specifically challenges heterosexual ideological structures of self. Along with its disruptive emphasis, there have been queer rhetorical practices identified that push forward reassembly of self (Banks et. al, 2019). A reassembly of self is the process of deconstructing aspects of one's identity, which can be a disruptive event captured through disruptive rhetoric (Banks et. al, 2019).

The three identified queer rhetorical practices Banks et. al (2019) define are intentionality, failure, and forgetting. These moves in queer rhetorical practice are useful when analyzing a text. Intentionality focuses on the intent of a text verses its "outcome" (Banks et. al 2019). Focusing on a creator's intention removes the text from its environment, allowing scholars to address why the object exists to being with—what is its aim? A rhetoric of intentionality allows readers to question the naturalness associated with the text's surrounding (Banks et. al 2019. For example, through using a rhetoric of intention queer advertisements can be analyzed by questioning why the text exists, presumably to attract LGBTQ+ consumers.

The second queer rhetorical practice formulated by Banks et. al (2019) is recognizing failure. A rhetoric of failure attempts to understand the limitations of a text's ability to denote the conditions for success (Banks et. al, 2019). In searching for what is deemed as failing, scholars can understand what is considered a success in relation to queer advertisements. The success is usually a reflection of heterosexist ideologies onto queer bodies (Banks et. al, 2019). For

example, LGBTQ+ focused advertisements "fail" to present opposite sex couples yet succeed in following heterosexist tropes (featuring and highlighting pairings). In short, a rhetoric of failure in the context of queer rhetoric asks the onlooker to denote how the scene in question fails to reach acceptable heterosexual standards, including forms of heterosexual coupling, nuclear family structures, and available romantic interest (Kates 1999).

The third queer rhetorical Banks et. al (2019) define is a rhetoric of forgetting. A rhetoric of forgetting involves a purposeful erasure of historical context in favor of upholding a unilateral progressive western narrative (Banks et. al, 2019). In short, a rhetoric of forgetting actively dismisses potentially violent, crude, or explicitly references to the past. A rhetoric of forgetting is evident in advertisements' intentional use of forward-thinking. That is, the media is a projection of a future state of self, unbridled by the status of the past that attempts to create a singular new consciousness for LGBTQ+ persons.

Banks et. al (2019) address specific forms of countering heterosexual ideological narratives through their three forms of queer rhetoric. In their work, Banks et. al (2019) apply queer rhetoric to investigating literacy narratives—which I have taken to observe the ideological narratives present in advertising. The terms of queer rhetoric, queer composing, and the various niches wherein allow for me and other scholars to name the performative (queer composing) present in everyday narratives that are embedded within a primarily heterosexual matrix and reverberate throughout ordinary media messages—some of which are travel related, as seen within this project's case-study.

Queer Composition

Queer composition involves the critical reflection of ideologically driven narratives and reduces the imposed barriers between hetero/homo, straight/gay, male/female, etc. (Alexander,

1999). The reduction of these binaries in favor of various points of positionality allow compositionists to question identity-based and performative conceptions of sexuality (Alexander & Wallace, 2009). Queer composing is a potential tool in recovering aspects of identity lost to heterosexual culture.

The act of queer composing has long been held as an elusive composing process (Alexander & Wallace, 2009). It eluded definition because of its ethereal quality; it escapes conventional processes because of its emphasis on deconstruction and reconstruction—the push and pull of re-creating, never finishing (Rhodes, 2004). Queerness itself has been defined by Eve Sedgwick (1993) as "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically" (p.8). Sedgwick comments on how queerness is the "openness" between elements of gender and sexuality. I am taking Sedgwick's view of openness and applying it queer composing. To further the concept of queer composing, I adopt Alexander and Rhodes (2020) definition of queer composing: "a queer rhetorical practice aimed at disrupting how we understand ourselves to ourselves. As such, it is a composing that is not a composing, a call in many ways to acts of de- and un- and re-composition" (para. 1). I am combining Alexander, Rhodes, and Sedgewick's definitions to illuminate the constant reconstruction of normative sexual performance.

As defined by Alexander and Rhodes (2018), queer composing is the constant "de- and un-and re-composition," the act of reassembling functional piece of text for disruption (p.155). The disruption is representative of the "normative." I designate "normative" as the self in society, the labels we attribute to ourselves such as, mother, father, daughter, son, straight, lesbian, gay, queer (Herz & Johannson, 2015). Queer composing in this context perceives the

self (or rather selves) as existing in tension with societal expectations. The tension between selves, according to queer compositionists, needs to be perturbed to reach new remediations of the self (Alexander & Wallace, 2009). Queer composing offers creators license to experiment with conceptions of the self. In short, queerly composed texts are invested in the recomposing social identity to disrupt "normative" conceptions of the self. The disruption leads to questioning what it means to be a constructed self. Queer composing offers that the disassembling of what consists of an identity to be the epicenter of new knowledge.

Deconstructing Texts

Queer composition embraces interrogating, and renegotiating constructed heterosexual narratives through queer deconstruction (Alexander & Wallace, 2009). Heterosexual narratives explicitly privilege heterosexuality and include labeling gender roles, family raising, (heterosexual) romantic interest, marriage, and sexual orientation. Heterosexual narratives permeate most media because of their supposed rootedness in normalcy (Herz & Johansson, 2015). In other words, heterosexual narratives collectively are viewed by readers as reflections of the larger in-person world regarding sexual orientation practices. As heterosexual narratives center themselves as the "normal," queer narratives have been deemed as the "other," or alternative narratives to the dominate heterosexual narrative.

A queer deconstructionist lens tampers with the dogmas of naturalness constructed by heterosexual narratives, redarning advertisements as useful sites of interrogation (Kates, 1999). According to Kates (1999), queer deconstruction "challenges the so-called natural relationship between signifier and signified to generate subversive ideas about advertising and sexuality" (p.28). Kates here proposes that queer deconstruction allows for the space to retort powerful narratives constructed within what is considered natural. Kates (1999) suggest the "naturalness"

of an advertisement is embedded into its messaging; the messages as proposed by the advertisement move to situate the advertisement amongst heterosexual culture (p.28). In challenging the dogma of "naturalness" (i.e., heterosexuality), advertisements pose as useful tools in cross-examining sexuality. Following the work of Barthes (1977), Kates (1999) asserts queer deconstruction is a tool used to dissemble layers of meaning to critique cultural forms (here, advertisements). Advertisements, as such, are known for upholding the heterosexual status-quo, therefore, useful in their approximations on heterosexual visibility usually understood as heterosexual sexual expression (Kates, 1999).

Scholars can deconstruct advertisements into their separate layers of meaning to expose the heteronormalizing ideologies within. This project applies Barthes' (1977) analytic codes to examining the advertisements under investigation. According to Barthes (1977), the layers of meaning present within a text are formed across linguistic, coded, and non-coded messages across signifiers and those signified. The signifiers are symbols or text which invoke the signified, of rather the audience. The combination of linguistic, visual, and cultural elements forms an *en abyne*; a natural disposition of the scene to each individual reader (Barthes, 1977, p. 153). The "natural disposition" itself can be amended by the specific audience present in relation to the signifiers (Barthes, 1977, p. 153). That is, if the audience is unable to recognize certain aspects of the text, they will not have the knowledge hidden within regardless of how explicit those symbols are in their approach.

In Barthes' (1977) discussions of "naturalness" in texts (p. 153), a large point of discussion centers on "naturalness" as a universal experience among all viewers. Barthes (1977) argued that "naturalness" is constructed through the explicit and implicit coding embedded in the advertisements (p.153). On the other hand, Olin (2002) argued that it is ultimately personal affect

bonded by a connection between one's personal iconographic memory which embeds "naturalness" within the reader. Moreover, Olin (2002) considers Barthes' understanding of the image to be a reduction of what "exists" to them.

Barthes' approach to understanding the rhetoric of an image only can be as extensive as the readers' positionality in relation to the image. The relation created by collapsing both heterosexual and homosexual signified audiences in advertisements is intentional. As expressed by Barthes (1977),

> . . . in advertising the signification of the image is undoubtedly intentional; the signifieds of the advertising message are formed a priori by certain attributes of the product and these signifieds have to be transmitted as clearly as possible. If the image contains signs, we can be sure that in advertising these signs are full, formed with a view to the optimum reading: the advertising image is frank, or at least emphatic. (Barthes, 1977, p. 152)

As posed by Barthes, advertising itself is laden with symbols made to be explicitly apparent to their intended audience (the signified). The signifiers use the "attributes of the product" to expel their intention (p.152) meaning the products in the advertisements speak back to the audience members who feel connected to those attributes. An example for this would be tourists finding relation with a travel-based advertisement as both the audience (tourist) and advertisement center around the attribute of travel. The attribute present in the Fort Lauderdale LGBTQ+ advertisements are queer values as displayed through gay iconographic symbolism. The queer values are placed within the advertising as a means of creating "the optimum reading" of the text. The "optimum reading" for audiences will seem "normal" as generated in the scene creation of the advert because these queer values are embedded within the rhetoric of the advertisement.

As posed by Olin (2002), if the image is outside of the viewers' field of normalcy, Barthes' (1977) approach fails to consider the possibilities hidden within the margins outside of the readers' experience. As suggested by Olin (2002), normalcy is a state of recognition organized in advertisements through their use of symbolic capturing. If a reader is unable to recognize the symbols in the text, they will be unable to understand the full optimum reading.

I believe there is valuable information to be gathered outside of the field of normalcy within a text. Rhodes (2004), in their stance toward queer text and naturalness in text, recognizes that "there is nothing natural in text; there are, however, material considerations in text. The material of a queer text dances in the openness of the margin between Signifier (Sr) and Signified (Sd)" (p. 388). In other words, Rhodes (2004) is asserting queerness is in the margin between the symbols we recognize and our understanding of how naturalness is constructed. There, in the "openness," is the opportunity for multiple perspectives to be imparted on audience. I agree with Rhodes (2004), in that there are opportunities for queerness within the margins but I cannot accept that queer texts all exist within their only silos of influence as texts. The text exists amongst a field of other objects which contributes to their supposed naturalness.

I turn to Ahmed's (2006) conception of using queerness as a phenomenological orientation to question the heterosexual normalcy exuded by advertisements. According to Ahmed (2006), "To become straight means not only that we have to turn toward the objects given to us by heterosexual culture but also that we must turn away from objects that take us off this line. The queer subject within straight culture hence deviates and is made socially present as a deviant" (p. 554). As proposed by Ahmed (2006), straightness is not composed in a vacuum, rather it is a positionality generated by heterosexual narratives (here, extended to advertisements). Through identifying with the objects which "take us off this line" readers can expose the heterosexual

identifying markers upholding heterosexual narratives (Ahmed, 2006, p. 554). An introduction of Ahmed's (2006) queer phenomenological orientation problematizes the advertisements' naturalness through prioritizing queerness as the primary signified. The field of objects which create a sense of "normalcy" challenge dominant narratives, accomplishing a goal of queer rhetoric.

A prominent goal for queer rhetoric is the exploration of the interconnectedness of heterosexist constructions underneath our communal narratives. As Alexander (1999) observes, "Most non-heterosexual people understand the pressures of the heteronormative regime, primarily because we've lived through them, fighting and resisting them in many ways. Many of us can tell horrific stories of having to resist this delimiting 'relational fabric'" (p. 301). Here, Alexander (1999) touches on the differences between the reading experiences of heterosexual and non-heterosexual groups. Alexander (1999) alludes that non-heterosexual audiences are aware of the pressures created by a heterosexist society as explicated through lived experiences against the "relational fabric" (p. 301). I extend Alexander's (1999) "relational fabric" to Barthes' (1977) conception of a field of normalcy (Alexander, 1999, p.160). Alexander's (1999) "relational fabric" is composed on heterosexual objects which reflect back onto the field of "normalcy" (p. 160). Through the introduction of LGBTQ+ symbols (or signifiers), the Fort Lauderdale LGBTQ+ focused advertisements invoke the LGBTQ+ signified. The signified audience understands the advertisements because of their personal affect toward the signifiers (symbols, iconography). The advertisements hence enter the relational fabric where they resist dominate forms of discourse because of their ability to signify to multiple audiences simultaneously. Therefore, the advertisements are queerly composed because they employ a space between the signifiers and the signified to participate in an exploration of what exists in the

margins. In other words, the Fort Lauderdale LGBTQ+ advertisements allow themselves the space to step off the line of normalcy by dancing on the line of what is normal. The reconceptualization of the normative resists the heterosexual relational fabric of objects naturalized by heterosexist ideologies. The texts that push against dominant heterosexual narratives are what Rhodes (2004) would consider queer texts.

Queer Texts and Queer Values

Queer texts are concerned with remediating the self against dominant forms of being composed (Rhodes, 2004). Queer texts offer a point of entry into understanding knowledge outside of heterosexual cultural systems. I use Rhodes' (2004) conception of queer texts, which are defined as texts that resist dominant language in favor of focusing on "the material" and "erotic realities of our bodies" (p. 388). Rhodes' (2004) definition of queer texts displays an understanding that queer texts are inherently constructed as transgressive vehicles to open spaces for self- and bodily reconceptualization. I agree with Rhodes that queernesss' transgressive quality is a constructed oppositional stance on the heterosexual relational fabric. For Rhodes (2004), the material objects in our world, which include queer texts in all forms, expose what is possible in our collective imagination.

Queer values are gestures in text that denote queerness and are known for their transgressive and subaltern messaging (Alexander, 1999). Queer values are usually in opposition to societal expectations within genre conventions and authorial emotional allowance; they often merge genre, emotion, and political commentary for effect. For example, Alexander and Rhodes (2020) identified the following as encompassing queer values: poetry, manifestos, graffiti, leaflets, erotica spontaneity, ephemera, anger, love, rage, and disruptive politics. The authors consider these texts to be forgotten modes of communications because of their flippant nature, or

more specifically, they are deemed as too human—too raw; too excessive—to be considered formal (or on the heterosexual line of objects) (Alexander & Rhodes, 2020). An example of a queer text that encompasses queer values (particularly anger) includes the leaflet *Queers, read this* distributed by GayNation (1990). Queer anger in the leaflet takes the form of a manifesto against heterosexual culture, which comments on the state of LGBT visibility and conceptions of a political queer utopia. As expressed in *Queers, read this*,

> For the last decade they let us die in droves and still we thank President Bush for planting a fucking tree, applaud him for likening PWAs to car accident victims who refuse to wear seatbelts. LET YOURSELF BE ANGRY. Let yourself be angry that the price of our visibility is the constant threat of violence, anti-queer violence to which practically every segment of this society contributes. (GayNation, 1990)

"Queers, read this" shows queer values in the purposeful incorporation of emotion, unexpected form, and political commentary to raise questions surrounding the experiences of LGBTQ+ persons. As witnessed in the quote, Gaynation (1990) uses anger to express the pressures set upon them by anti-LGBTQ forces. The text centers itself on reaching its specific audience with its use of second second-person perspective writing, "LET YOURSELF BE ANGRY." In addressing a queer audience, the text engages in the excess deemed necessary to reach a transgressive stance for its time. The text recognizes anger and creates space for others. Part of the "Queers, read this" (1990) rhetorical project is unleashing queer anger, which is foundational to the authors' message to engage in emotion to incite a subaltern counterpublic discourse.

Ambiguity & Iconography

A state of ambiguity in a queer text is employed to avoid a clear distinction between conceptions of hetero/homo cultural literacies using iconography to reach across cultural binaries. Ambiguity involves refusing to explicitly address queer conceptions of self (Kates, 1999). When investigating queer texts, the state of ambiguity needs to be identified to classify a text as appeasing notions of heteronormalized literacies (Kates,1999). The state of ambiguity is the midpoint between general heteronormalized discourse and queerness, where dependent on the reader (viewer), a text can hold multiple interpretations (Kates, 1999). The flux in meaning is derived from opposing reading strategies in members of the in-group, who can recognize gay iconography (Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2005). As stated by Oakenfull and Greenlee (2005),

> Examples of gay iconography include the rainbows, freedom rings, pink triangles, references to "family" and "pride." Use of implicit gay and lesbian imagery allows gays and lesbians to derive meaning from advertising messages that include gay-specific symbolism that is different from meanings derived by nongay consumers who fail to identify or understand the gay iconography. (Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2005, p. 427)

As Oakenfull and Greenlee (2005) outline, advertisements incorporate gay iconography to reach audiences across binaries. The use of iconographic messages is infusing advertisements with enough cultural substance to become relevant to the signified audience. Advertisements incorporating these iconographic markers purposely are creating an "in" with their target audience.

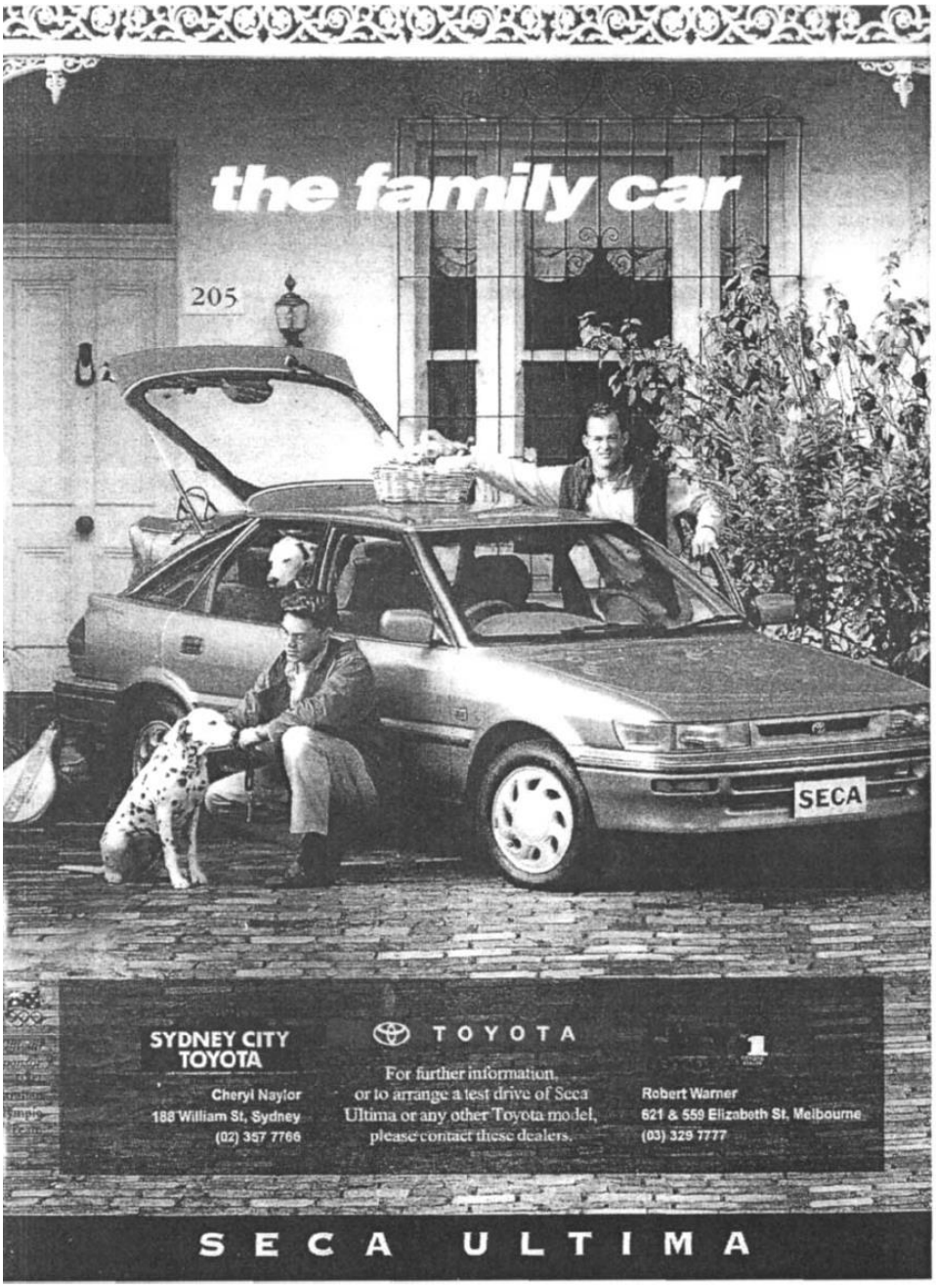
Marketers, through creating a second layer of meaning in advertisements, present an ambiguous layer of interpretation. Within the second layer of interpretation, audiences can explore different narratives at the level they are able to understand the ad (Kates, 1999). For

example, audiences that are unaware of the queer iconography may not realize the cultural implications of the Fort Lauderdale advertisements. The Fort Lauderdale advertisements are explicitly queer yet contain enough cultural symbolism to express familiar vacation scenes to heterosexual audiences. The advertisements carry both LGBTQ+ elements within the relational fabric of conventional travel promotional material.

As demonstrated by Kates (1999) in their article on using queer ads to assimilate queer values into the mainstream, advertisements present the opportunity to study how a queer optimum reading allows for queer rhetoric to permeate mainstream audiences with ambiguity. Kates (1999), in their article uses the below figure to explain the use of ambiguity in attracting LGBTQ+ audiences. Figure 3 is a 1999 Toyota advertisement which was distributed in New Zealand and Australian magazines. The advertisement incorporates ambiguity to attract an LGBTQ+ audience.

Figure 3

New Zealand / Australian based advertisements for the Toyota Seca Ultima Car Model (1999).



Regarding Figure 3, Kates (1999) argues, “The product is not just a car and not simply the family car, for the poetic device of metonymy (i.e., the part represents the whole in contiguous visual space) inscribes the car in a particular field of discourse—that of gay identity, gay families, and gay politics-implicating the car in a gestalt visual field” (p. 29). In other words, the signifiers are the car, textual, and visual agents of the advertisement being poised as a part of the “gay” relational fabric without explicitly naming itself so. The advertisement thus invokes a signified audience while withholding an explicit labeling on itself. In reference to Rhodes’ (2004) conception of a queer text, the advertisement is materially focused on engaging in a queer coupling (ie. familial iconographic symbolism). The distance between the signifiers and signified, that is the optimum reading and interpretation, leaves space for LGBTQ+ consumers to read between the lines. The ambiguity instilled in the advertisement allows for a melding of audiences, not just that the car is for gay couples, but instead gesturing toward itself as a family car. In short, ambiguity is a rhetorical factor in pervious iterations of queer advertisements used to circumvent mainstream discrimination. Ultimately, ambiguity is used as a remediation practice for unsuspecting readers to understand themselves using symbolism.

Inclusionary Efforts and Community Ethos

By identifying simple inclusionary efforts readers can discern the level of authenticity created in an advertisement The relevancy of identifying authenticity lies in the ethos of queer text, which operate in the margins (Hoogestraat & Glasby, 2019). As defined by Hoogestraat and Glasby (2019) “A queer ethos asks who does the legitimizing and interrogates why there is a need for legitimization in the first place. Queer(ness) undercuts the need for legitimacy and even laughs in its face” (p.1). Hoogestraat and Glasby touch upon the main difference between a queer ethos and queerness itself. A queer ethos asks of its audience to challenge notions of what is

considered legitimate. It is in the interrogation of legitimacy whereas queer ethos reclaims aspects of queer identity that have been striped to maintain public decorum. Hoogestraat and Glasby (2019) further pose a distinction between a gay ethos and a queer ethos. Whereas a gay ethos is centered around remaining palatable to the dominate heterosexual discourses, a queer ethos is centered around questioning the dominate heterosexual discourses at large. A distinction between a gay and queer ethos is important because it presents a space to interrogate how advertisements invoke the community building phase of the past into the current mainstream phase. In other words, advertisements are sites for interrogation that use their stance as visibility projectors to reflect socioeconomic opportunities. The opportunities (i.e., the product/services offered) are then in line to be incorporated into the field of objects that establishes one's identity.

To illustrate the possible tension between a queer and gay ethos, I present Cieri's (2003) findings from an investigation on queer tourism promotion and authentic queer building community locations in the greater Philadelphia area:

> Queer tourism promotion does not reflect the reality of lesbian and bisexual women's lives in greater Philadelphia, though it tries to create just such a reality rooted in the need to produce new spaces of capitalist consumption. What these women's statements ultimately point to is the necessity of creating new representations of queer women's space and culture that reflect the true complexity and fluidity of being as well as looking in a society where the presence and agency of lesbians and bisexual women is both ignored and overly generalized. (Cieri, 2003, p. 160)

As stated by Cieri (2003), the queer tourism promotion does not reflect the reality of queer individuals in the space. While promoted sites offer space for queer individuals to be commercially validated, the price for that validation is at the cost of "the true complexity and

fluidity of being as well as looking" (Cieri, 2003, p.160). Commercial validation is described as the ownness of receiving perceived equal representation for the purposes of obtaining capital (Cieri, 2003) The tension found between being LGBTQ+ and looking like a part of the LGBTQ+ community is at the heart of distinction between gay and queer ethos. A gay ethos seeks external validation for the purposes of mainstream assimilation, whereas queer ethos is embodied through queer values within queer texts. A queer ethos is thus the additive aspect of queer composing which is lost in advertisements focused on LGBTQ+ audiences.

Conclusion

The future of queer advertisements will center on explicitly segmenting the LGBTQ+ consumer market through a mixture of iconographic visuals and text. The emergence of such segmentations will dilute the progressiveness of queer ethos. While portions of the LGBTQ+ community will welcome these advertisement entries as reflecting social reform, others will consider their emergence as a marketing poly. That is, the advertisements in their appeasement to heterosexism will employee various queer values to engage their audience without disrupting the mainstream. A queer deconstructionist lens favoring queer composing, queer rhetoric, queer ethos, and queer text will illuminate the social affordances these advertisements promote.

Methodology

Rhetoric is a dynamic ever-unfolding event based on its ability to transpose itself across time and place—offering realities full of possibilities. In recounting rhetoric as a variable in messaging across time and space writing scholars should investigate the precise unfolding of messages to understand possible worldviews. To account for the rapidness of visual communication and remixing of language, the methods of this investigation follow Laurie Gries's (2013) new materialistic approach in uncovering the dynamic nature of rhetoric and subsequent fall-out.

The new materialistic approach is being employed based on its ability to understand the fluctuating nature of perspective, particularly on visual mediums (Gries, 2013). The approach understands an object as being itself a factor in producing consequences. Consequences, according to Gries (2013), are any action spurting from an interaction with the object in question. Followed by Kates' (1999) assertions that advertisements are sites of negotiation, reinforcement, and contest of sexual meaning, new materialism asks scholars to see these advertisements as extensions of intersecting motivations on the part of the authors.

I am merging queer composing and new materialism to address the conflicting nature of the images as both advertisements and queer texts. For the purposes of this case-study, the advertisements of were chosen based on two factors. Firstly, the advertisements are travel related, specifically, highlighting a notable LGBTQ+ friendly resort town, Fort Lauderdale. When considering the resort town as the location needing legitimatizing, a queer rhetoric lead interrogation would include the exploration of the use of a gay ethos verses a queer ethos. Secondly, the Sunny advertisements are pivoting toward LGBTQ+ audiences within a mass media market (billboards, magazines, newspapers, commercials, etc.).

Methods

The case-study was formulated to follow a rhetorical analysis of advertisements focusing on LGBTQ+ audiences in Fort-Lauderdale's travel promotional material. The rhetorical analysis was informed using queer rhetoric, queer composing, and new materialism as the main lens, to focus on implicit and explicit messages marketing to the LGBTQ+ audience. The rhetorical analysis was approached by defining textual, visual, and intertextual elements of an advertisements. The elements selected were based off the works of Barthes (1977), Kates (1999), Olin (2002), Alexander and Rhodes (2020). The elements identified were texts, symbols (visual), and intertextual context between the advertisement and physical spaces depicted. I define a text as typography above the visual layer; symbols as iconographic representations of cultural significance, and intertextuality as the relation between the visual presentation and text as concerned with the physical space represented (Barthes, 1977).

The advertisements were scanned for any connection to an LGBTQ+ audience and then analyzed to understand how the signals were laden throughout to achieve any semblance of queer composing. A relation between queer composing and cultural signaling would be specific references to LGBTQ+ material holding iconographic substance. Iconographic substance is text or symbolism holding significance, usually indicative of ideological leanings (hence the use of queer rhetoric, as the objective disrupter) (Kates, 1999). The results of the study poise the rhetorical elements alongside each other to unearth the use of queer composing in the advertisements. Queer composing in this case study includes dissecting the use of queer ethos and ambiguity as rhetorical devices in targeting LGBTQ+ audiences.

When analyzing the photographs, I was primarily focused on the composition of the bodies, sightlines, placement of text and representation of objects in space. I chose these facets to

focus on because of their symbolic evidence of queer composing within the advertisement. As Kates (1999) and Barthes (1977) have suggested, advertisements are laden with symbolic cues for their desired audiences. Hence, the Sunny Fort Lauderdale advertisements are suitable subjects for analysis.

Analysis

#HelloSunny Campaign

The #HelloSunny Campaign, which ran from 2015–2017, was heralded for its groundbreaking diverse, LGBTQ+, and specifically Trans, representation for being the first national travel campaign to feature trans models (Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau, 2017). The entire campaign consists of over six promotional videos and sixteen promotional posters. While not all videos or posters focused on an LGBTQ+ audience, the posters chosen for the case study satisfied the criteria of my research question: the posters are advertisements, LGBTQ+ focused, and disruptors in their field (mainstream marketing). The #HelloSunny 2016–2017 Campaign was created by the Fort Lauderdale Visitors Bureau and produced by Starmark International. This campaign was marketed in print and billboard spaces around the US including New York, Chicago, Boston, and in major publications such as, *USA Today* and *Travel Magazine* (Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau, 2017).

The campaign was well known for using three transgender models, included was notable community leader, Isabelle Santiago, 2014 Miss World Transgender (Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau, 2017). In the press surrounding the campaign, Richard Gray, Managing Director LGBTQ Market, Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention (2014), had this to say about using transgender models and the campaign's goal:

> Using Trans models in our mainstream campaign says who we are as a destination; cosmopolitan, edgy, diverse, inclusive, authentic and accepting. . . . We are the only destination in the world that is using Trans people in mainstream marketing initiatives. That is a huge statement in itself highlighting this destination's commitment to diversity, inclusion and equality. We want all travelers that visit our destination to be free to be

> themselves, to be free to be accepted, and most of all to be safe and respected. (PRNewsWire, 2017)

As suggested by Gray in their statement, the campaign directly engages in the third wave of queer advertising into the mainstream by way of engaging in trendy social conversations, such as Trans representation. By utilizing Trans models in a mainstream campaign, the campaign is creating commercial validity for LGBTQ+ audiences at large and Transgender individuals. A closer analysis of the advertisements will present a glimpse into a possible fourth wave of LGBTQ+ advertisements which focuses on further politicizing the LGBTQ+ market.

Advertisement 1: Hello Daily Grind

The first of the two advertisements being analyzed (see Figure 1) is of a male presenting same-sex couple at a local coffee shop sharing a laugh with the waiter presumably at the inside joke of an animal print in the served coffee. There is a yellow scripted font in the middle of the arrangement of the figures, written: “hello,” followed by an underlined cursive script that reads “daily grind.” On the upper right corner of the photo “Greater Fort Lauderdale” appears and under it flushed right is “hello sunny.” At the lower left corner of the image is the location of the photo written out in white font (Alchemist Cafe, Wilton Manors). The bottom of the visual is framed by a caption with blue font on an all-yellow background with the phrase: “Clear your calendar and your cares in Florida’s favorite LGBTQ destination. Get a taste of all things Greater Fort Lauderdale 24/7 on Hello Sunny TV Find us at sunny.org.” At the bottom right corner of the image are the social media handles and the hashtag #HelloSunny.

Texts & Phrases

The texts and phrases used throughout the campaign directly address the target LGBTQ consumer audience for the advertisement. As mentioned previously, queer advertisements do not reflect the reality of the spaces used by local LGBTQ+ folks (Cieri, 2003). The advertisements paint a narrative centered on seeing queer identities within desirable tourist spots.

In the middle of the arrangement of the figures, the primary text, “hello daily grind,” is placed in the higher register of the visual, almost paired directly in the gaze of the server. The pairing of these elements suggests the server is looking at the word “Hello.” The effect of the figure looking directly at “hello” is reflected in other photos from the campaign. The smiling gesture toward the” Hello” suggests a welcoming gesture toward the audience that understand the visual.

The aim of the advertisement through its text and phrases collapses the real-life experiences of attending the coffeeshop and the fantasy of a welcomed LGBTQ+ space. The fantasy being how Fort Lauderdale allows for the removal of the heterosexual veil. The heterosexual vile, I image, is the narrative shroud surrounding our spaces that reproducing heteronormativity. The collapse of realities is indicative of Cieri’s (2003) conclusions of LGBTQ+ travel promotional material. Cieri argued LGBTQ+ travel materials center on legitimizing queer spaces of consumption under the guise of social, political, and economic community self-reliance (2003). The presentation of text in the advertisement supports the idea that queerness is welcomed in spaces that can be consumed, which aligns the advertisement to the rhetoric of intentionality (Banks et. al, 2019). The rhetoric of intentionality posits queer texts are intentionally created to challenge the status quo, which Figure 1 certainly does in its portrayal of a same-sex couple. By intentionally centering the characters within a space of consumption,

their queerness is superseded by their roles as tourists. Here, the advertisement is naturalizing LGBTQ+ tourists within the imagination of a LGBTQ+ friendly Fort Lauderdale.

Visual Symbols of Cultural Identification

Symbols in the advertisement offer multiple points of interpretation through a use of ambiguity; moreover, the placement of the couple and rainbow scripting in the Alchemist sign in the background are subtly used to target LGBTQ+ identities. The male presenting same-sex couple at a local coffee shop shares a laugh with the waiter presumably at the inside joke of an animal print in the served coffee. The paw-print design symbolizes the "bear" community[3] (Waitt & Markwell, 2014). The narrative of the photo suggests onlookers have the specific LGBTQ + knowledge to understand the scene in question. For example, onlookers who are familiar with the prevalence of the subniche community in Fort Lauderdale or familiar with their iconography would be able to identify with the image.

In comparing Figure 1 and Figure 2, both advertisements suggest a same sex coupling, thus incorporating ambiguity as a rhetorical device. The shared laugh between the characters in Figure 1 is a stark difference from the couple depicted in Figure 2 (Kates, 1999). The Figure 3 advertisement showed two men on different sides of a car, implying their relation to each other without including any declarative statements. The product in Figure 1 is the coffee in the mug itself. Once more there is a collapse of gay identities being merged in the advertisement with that of a tourist/consumer. The advertisement in Figure 1 pairs the coffee shop within the relational

[3] The "Bear" community is a subniche segment of the LGBTQ+ community. The community is centered around larger bodied men and uses a paw-print within their community flag to identify themselves This community's presence in Fort Lauderdale is known through specific gatherings calling for this subniche.

fabric of the local Fort Lauderdale and then to a larger extent all LGBTQ+ communities with the inclusion of rainbow colors.

To further complicate the layers of understanding present inside Figure 2, the visual incorporates the Alchemist's sign's rainbow colors to cement its LGBTQ+ status and establish its LGBTQ+ friendliness. The colorful rainbow script of the coffee shop's name is a subtle, yet effective in creating an association between the location and LGBTQ+ history. The rainbow pride flag was originally created by Gilbert Baker in 1978 and rainbow pattering since has been used to signify public gay pride (Waitt & Markwell, 2014). The incorporation of a rainbow patterning is no mistake when cued with the name of the establishment. The close pairing suggests the location is a site of gay pride and signals to LGBTQ+ persons the coffee shop's positionality.

The subtleness of iconographic symbols and colors throughout the visual subliminally present the viewer with two different perspectives of the visual narrative—that of a simple coffee order and that of an in-group finding comradery. The advertisement's ability to move between heteronormative expectations and queer signaling is an example of binary surfing commonly found in queer advertising (Kates, 1999). Through showing both homosexual and heterosexual narratives, the LGBTQ+ tourist sees how they may move through the location of Fort Lauderdale as member of an in-group (Kates, 1999).

Intertextuality—Space and Place

The intertextual pairing of discrete codes of queerness creates a dynamic moment of binary surfing that allows the ads to reach the largest audience possible. The Hello Sunny campaign finds itself able to appeal to both heterosexual and LGBTQ+ audiences through its movement between subtexts. The main argument of the advertisements is, of course, the appeal

of the spaces, tempting audiences to imagine themselves there. With Figure 1, The Alchemist (and Fort Lauderdale in general) offers itself as the backdrop to the binary surfing present in the real lives of LGBTQ+ persons, who move between areas of (in)visibility (Ahmed, 2006). Historically, companies have used sub-texts of queer iconography to their advantage in appealing to LGBTQ+ audiences by allowing them to identify with the ad's characters (Branchik, 2019). As Branchik outlined (2019), the history of LGBTQ+ focused advertisements incorporate various subtle cues to signal LGBTQ+ audiences—most of which involve posing ambiguous characters within the context of a good or service.

The advertisement's positioning of the characters as intermingling physically and communally allows for possible entry points for LGBTQ+ audiences to connect with. The composite of iconographic substance (symbols) and texts (specifically naming the grander LGBTQ+ community, not the subniches), allows for the great expanse of potential onlookers. However, the characters of the ad and their positioning as good patrons to in the space contributes to the commodification of a gay identify by falling into stereotyping, or being "good homosexuals" (Smith, 1994). Smith (1994) view of the "good homosexual" includes the commodification of gay men's identities as products that can be advertised for and with—an approachable perspective claiming gay identities as being "safe" or "homely." In recognition with the variety of persons within the queer community at large, such reduction of self-understanding is potentially harmful to queer expression (Smith, 1994).

Aligning with Rhodes' (2004) queer texts, the characters in the ads are not moving the needle of progress enough to be considered transgressive. Although Alexander and Wallace (2009) do not imply that all queer texts need to be in a constant state of pushing against heterosexual hegemony, there is an acknowledgement that queer texts aim to reconceptualize

queerness in all forms. With the advertisement depicted in Figure 2, there is no discernable transgressive political substance within the advertisements that would correspond to Branchik's (2019) outlined second wave of LGBTQ+ focused advertising. Instead, an example of a transgressive quality according to Branchik (2019) would be explicit commentary on LGBTQ+ visibility/rights. While the advertisement in Figure 1 can be praised for its use of in-group observance, it falls into patterns of contextualizing identities within a slim dichotomy where homosexual men need to *see* and *be seen* as living desirable lifestyles (including being affluent and childless consumers) to satisfy viewer expectations. In this regard, the ads are leaning into stereotypes about potential tourists. The potential tourist through the advertisement is placed as desirable stand-in for the onlooker, expunging the optimum reading of the advertisement. The optimal reading of the advertisement is only exposed by understanding the intricacies of knowledges of the strongly associated subniche bear community and Wilton Manors.

Advertisement 2: Hello Groove Thing

The second side of the advertisement (see Figure 2) is of two female presenting persons on a dancefloor, surrounded by others in a crowed night club. The people are dancing closely together and smiling while confetti falls on them. Similar to the text on Figure 1, imposed over the people dancing in Figure 2 is the yellow "hello" tagline of the advertisements with "groove thing" following in script and underlined. Similar to Figure 1 the lower left corner of the image is "Stach Drinking Den, Downtown Fort Lauderdale." The bottom of the visual is framed by a caption with blue font on an all-yellow background with the phrase: "Discover Florida's favorite LGBTQ destination, where being out is perfectly in. Live it up with all thins 24/7 Greater Fort Lauderdale on Hello Sunny TV. Find us at sunny.org." At the bottom right end are the social media handles and the hashtag #HelloSunny.

Text & Phrases

Figure 2, like Figure 1, uses real-world locales to expand its narrative of the queer fantasy of a space welcoming of queer people in all facets of possible desire, here, made to be seen through the guise of tourism. The excitement of the advertisement is the inherent joy of enjoying oneself on a night out, but the concept of a space that exists to serve as counter-narrative to heterosexual hegemony (Marcus & Johannson, 2015). The counter-narrative expressed within the image is inclusion of two women being presented in a similar light of a heterosexual coupling.

The text in Figure 2 presents an opportunity for advertisers to experiment with conceptions of "in" (normative) and "out" (non-normative) groups. The use of the phrase "being out is perfectly in" from the caption in Figure 2 speaks to an audience who sees themselves as wanting to be "out." The term "out" here is used to denote someone who is open about their sexual orientation publicly. The advertisement is incorporating the play on words through the use of "out" to specify the ads signaled audience. By presenting the binary of either being "out" or "in," the advertisement explores an exigence of surfing perspectives. Through shifting between what is seen and understood, the audience reading the advertisement understands the characters as being connected to an LGBTQ+ audience whereas before, such figures dancing could exist as "friends"—a typical misreading of queer relationships. The redirection of the audience's attention toward the queer coupling shows a shift in presentation toward what is considered an LGBTQ+ affirming space (Tasi, 2011).

Visual Symbols of Cultural Identification

Figure 2's lack of object specific symbolism, through the use of product placement, is an unfortunate by-product of the general lack of lesbian centric travel promotional material;

however, it does not mean there is no possible symbolism to be witnessed (Cieri 2003). The scene as constructed in Figure 2 holds the main couple in clear focus on a crowed dancefloor. The main couple obscures the surrounding and hold each other in an intimate embrace. In the scene, the couple's intimate embrace is the symbolism, pushing away the ambiguous nature of their relationship together. The characters in Figure 2 use their bodies to distinguish their relationship from the lack of distance between the characters and bright lights illuminating their faces. These characters and their physical connection are evidence of the power of ambiguousness. The characters do not need to engage with objects that allude to their sexuality; rather it is their positioning that signifies their relationship to each other.

Intertextuality—Space and Place

The characters in Figure 2 present themselves as a close unit, engaging in physical contact on the dance floor. In placing the characters in such a close radius to each other, the viewer is left reconceptualizing the figures' relationship to each other, showing it is possible to be in a same sex presenting coupling in the city. Fort Lauderdale, being a known gay resort town in this advertisement, is establishing a recentering of who exists in the space. According to Ahmed's (2006) queer phenomenology, viewers are asked to reconsider what's natural in the space, to challenge what we consider to be natural using a queer phenomenology. A queer phenomenology hence asks of its readers to question the origins of the narratives they consume (Ahmed, 2006). The advertisement is reconstructing who is seen in the greater Fort Lauderdale area by reconsidering the placement of sexualities in the space, regardless of if the scene is truly happening. To be more specific, the advertisement in Figure 2 uses a queer phenomenology to accent its intentional choice of highlighting the joy brought onto a same sex couple out in the fantasy world of Fort Lauderdale.

As presented in Figure 2, the queer composition of having the couple physically intimate attached with the joyful expressions on their faces exacts a queer joy indicative of queer values. Queer values present an unbridled expression of queer experience. As poised by Cieri (2003), the advertisements open themselves to being representative of queer spaces of consumption. However, if these spaces of consumption are a reality still needs to be determined. The reliance on spaces of consumption raises questions about whether the advertisements are engaging in a gay vs. queer ethos. Based on the advertisements in Figure 1 and 2 alone, it is unclear if they work toward assimilation within the grander heterosexual narrative or queer ethos, which is expression for expression's sake.

Mixed Analysis – Side by Side Comparison

When comparing both advertisements, it is clear they are attempting to resonate with a largely LGBTQ+ audience through their use of implicit signaling. The implicit signaling is conveyed through character positioning, as the models in both ads display grand smiles toward each other and subsequently associate comfort with their respective spaces of leisure and pleasure. Much like the advertisements of the community building era (Branchik, 2019), the advertisements in Figure 1 and 2 are conceptualizing the LGBTQ+ consumer identity as being rooted in communal address of fellow in-groupers and the spaces that allow them to express themselves. However, unlike the advertisements in the community building era (Branchik, 2019), the Hello Sunny advertisements incorporate explicit signals through their text and phrases to ensure the proper message is being conveyed to the subniche communities within the grander LGBTQ+ consumer bubble. The audience (onlooker) of these advertisements is then hyper specified through the symbolism represented within the visual iconographic messages (i.e, the paw-print in Figure 1). The intertextuality of both the explicit and implicit signals situates

LGBTQ+ specific audiences throughout the Fort Lauderdale landscape, offering a hyper stylized optimum reading for a niche consumer base.

Implications and Conclusions

In the growing web of LGBTQ+ friendly content, it is up to scholars at the intersections of cultural criticism to mindfully understand the consequences of narrative creation. Positioning local businesses as LGBTQ+ safe havens is a specific result of advertisements' project in general; however, when placed in conjunction with subaltern groups, it is important to clarify who is meant to be the focus. Is it the characters in the ad or rather, as I have argued here, the consumer-power audiences hold in making their desires into reality? To further study the consequences of advertisements on their specified audiences, a larger analysis of a collection of advertisements focusing on product/service-based ventures would be appropriate. I echo the thoughts of Cieri (2003) and Barret and Pollack (2005), who explore the desire in promotional materials centered on experiencing luxury.

The queerness depicted in the advertisements of this case study center on the extravagance of enjoying heterosexual privilege—where the once "out" group becomes the "in" group—in spaces as themselves. In showing LGBTQ+ characters enjoying their lives, it can be said these advertisements are being inclusive of the lives of LGBTQ+ audiences. Unlike other media centered around LGBTQ+ themes, the advertisements in this case study present LGBTQ+ audiences as other patrons (all-be-it removed from conceptions of pervious depictions of queer individuals). In connection to LGBTQ+ advertisements and social progress, the Hello Sunny advertisements fall into pink-dollar trend where LGBTQ+ consumers leverage their economy for social change in the form of local LGBTQ+ businesses, economic protest, and in narrative reconstruction about and in their neighborhoods (Tsai, 2011).

The advertisements, because of their centering of queer narratives, meld themselves to conceptions of being queerly composed with references to queer values that signify LGBTQ+

audiences who will interpret them. The values witnessed in the advertisements use unambiguous physical contact between characters to result in a peusdo-queer text (Kates, 1999). The advertisements in the Hello Sunny Campaign, while being inclusionary (and as mentioned in Gray's (Greater Fort Lauderdale Visitors Bureau, 2017) commentary, revolutionary), are not yet considered queer texts. These advertisements are not queer texts because of their pivot toward assimilation: hence, they are invoking a gay ethos rather than a queer ethos (Hoogestraat and Glasby, 2019). A focus on a gay ethos keeps the advertisements within the relational fabric of heterosexual Fort Lauderdale. While the places depicted in the advertisements are real locations tourists can travel too, but they are now laid within the greater LGBTQ+ Fort Lauderdale fantasy world. A transition to a queer text would involve shifting toward a solely queer ethos, which can be considered non-profitable or transgressive.

In constructing a scene where queerness is centered through the texts, phrases, symbols, and intertextual play, the advertisements in this case study offer a look into an established queer rhetoric of intentionality, where the intentionality of the advertisements explore sexual and gender identities into the Fort Lauderdale landscape. Fort Lauderdale as a resort town holds itself now in line with other gay-focused social spheres of queer affirmation, which is evident through the advertisements themselves.

Recommendations

As the third wave of LGBTQ+ focused advertisements centers on assimilation rather than expression (Tsai, 2011), the future of queer composing in advertisements will surely be held in tension with financial gains. Expressions will be at odds with the mainstream relational fabric until proven to be profitable under the guise of minority group empowerment (Tsai, 2011). As such, the takeaways from the case study reveal how future travel marketers should use Hello

Sunny as a base line for their campaigns' rhetorical underpinnings. Future LGBTQ+ focused travel advertising should adhere to three practices: incorporating local knowledge of LGBTQ+ communities into promotional material (through symbolic gesturing), uplifting resources and awareness of LGBTQ+ initiatives (through explicitly stating the specific communities for the intended address), and removing seasonal approaches to their launching strategy.

1. Incorporate local knowledge of LGBTQ+ communities into promotional material (through symbolic gesturing): In connecting local spaces with their LGBTQ+ histories, campaigns can establish themselves as representing a larger breadth of the community's uniqueness. As proposed by Banks et. al (2019), a queer rhetoric of forgetting often tampers with a continuous representation of LGBTQ+ persons. Local campaigns should reinforce local LGBTQ+ histories to show that locations hold cultural value outside of the products they sell. A symbolic gesturing allows for more consumers to recognize LGBTQ+ persons and organizations as groups who do not need discovery, rather a spotlight.
2. Uplift resources and awareness of LGBTQ+ initiatives (through explicitly stating the specific communities for the intended audience): Campaigns should use a queer rhetoric of success to establish their own metrics of what is considered safe for LGBTQ+ tourists. While Fort Lauderdale may historically be LGBTQ+ accepting (Coon, 2012), the same cannot be said for all popular vacation destinations. Thus, it is important for tourism boards to acknowledge the actual spaces for what they are and not for what they can produce. In being forthright about the spaces, LGBTQ+ tourists should be supported with resources, which is more in line with the community building era of LGBTQ+ advertising (Branchik, 2019).

3. Remove seasonal approaches to their launching strategy: LGBTQ+ persons are not seasonally queer, hence there is no need for a semi-seasonal approach to courting LGBTQ+ consumers. A queer rhetoric of forgetting adds to the idea that LGBTQ+ persons do not exist in a vacuum and thus are entitled to continuous representation.

As presented in the case study, an incorporation of LGBTQ+ focused scenes can construct a narrative of queer citizenship within a specific space; however, if the scene is incongruent with the reality of the space the naturalness of the scene can be called into question. Questioning the naturalness of the scene is indicative of a queer rhetoric of intentionality; that is, the incongruency allows for a challenge against the open nature of the space. In one way the advertisements analyzed in this case study are upholding the queer values of disrupting space and ideological patterns through invoking a challenging response to the onlooker. In another way, the advertisements are still reflective of heterosexual conceptions of coupling, leisure, and safety. In such cases, the advertisements must use symbolism as the triggers for understanding while texts anchor the message and audience to circumvent negative feedback at the cost of not truly invoking a queer ethos. I posit the upcoming turn for LGBTQ+ focused advertising will focus on creating a queer ethos driven advertising campaign.

In this case-study I have conducted a rhetorical analysis at the intersection of composition and rhetoric, queer composition, and queer tourism studies onto ads from the Greater Fort Lauderdale's 2015-2017 Hello Sunny Campaign featuring queer narratives to address narrative constructions surrounding queer identity in tourism promotion. In approaching the study literature on queer composition and rhetoric, tourism studies, geo-political studies, writing studies were intersected to construct a framework allowing for the investigation. Through analyzing the advertisements, it was concluded that inclusion efforts were made to address a

large faction of the LGBTQ+ community. The visuals used for this subset of the Hello Sunny Campaign offers a slight peek into the in-group conversations created by the LGBTQ+ community that depict possible ranges of real-world experiences. In conversation with pervious queer advertisements, the Hello Sunny Campaign does attempt to show the inner conversations happening amongst LGBTQ+ folks through its use of inner narrative creation (e.g., the paw print in coffee in Figure 2).

While the campaign is moving consumers toward a more inclusive atmosphere, the stage-setting of the characters in real LGBTQ+ friendly spaces ultimately privileges LGBTQ+ persons as consumers first. Critiques of queer-focused advertisements have been largely centered around stereotypes and desirable locales for self-expression (Kates, 1999); by allowing our spaces to become visible, LGBTQ+ communities risk having these locales of resistance and inter-group unity co-opted by those who seek to monetize their likeness (Kates, 1999). The advertisements in this case-study reveal there is a subtle power in utilizing local symbolism to reflect the consumer opportunities in the spaces depicted. The power is in cultivating the optimum viewing of the image as a reflection of the consumer space and not of available resources for the LGBTQ+ community once they arrive in the physical locations.

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