

Does Gay Pay: How does the Walt Disney Company manage the risk and reward of increasing LGBTQ representation?

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Figure 1: CNBC, 2022. *Disney vows to help repeal 'Don't Say Gay' law.* [Online] Available at: <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/28/disney-vows-to-help-repeal-dont-say-gay-law.html> [Accessed August 2022].

Background

LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) representation in Film & TV is increasing faster than ever.

In the past, on-screen LGBTQ representation was often inaccurate and harmful - or completely ignored. In 2022, a record 11.9% of US primetime broadcast TV characters were LGBTQ.

The way that Film & TV represents LGBTQ people can change opinions, for better or for worse. This makes my research around this subject timely and of real-world impact.

Why Disney?

Disney has a truly unique relationship with LGBTQ representation.

Global audiences: they must satisfy conservative and progressive markets.

Diversified sectors: resorts, film, TV, merchandise - each has different customers, expectations, and risks.

Nostalgic and American: Some customers have a firm idea about the type of representation Disney should portray.

Younger target market: Is LGBTQ representation appropriate for children?

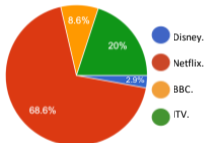
History: In 2022, LGBTQ representation has evolved at Disney over 98 years.

Audience survey

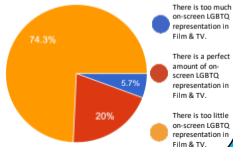
35 respondents answered questions concerning LGBTQ representation in Film & TV.

The results indicated a clear desire for increased LGBTQ representation, and dissatisfaction with Disney's LGBTQ representation.

Which of the below companies has the most progressive on-screen LGBTQ representation?



Which of the below statements do you agree with the most?



Industry interviews

I interviewed Film & TV professionals, about their thoughts of LGBTQ representation in the industry.

Rich Ferreraro, GLAAD Chief Communications Officer: "What people see in the media, whether it's news or entertainment, it shapes our culture, and it changes behaviour".

Ollie Wiggins, BBC Studios Lead Creative, Disney Channel Creative: "Disney said it's not our responsibility to educate people, to change perceptions, they were there to sell a programme".

Tom Duthie, Marvel and Lucasfilm script editor: "Disney is a legacy corporation, there's a lot of dinosaur-like attitudes lingering in the background. They seem to be changing quickly now"

Conclusions

As Disney operates across many countries and sectors, LGBTQ representation has tentatively improved across the company at different speeds. In 2022, Disney's chaotic response to the so-called 'Don't Say Gay' bill was widely condemned. This sparked a lasting change at Disney to bold and progressive LGBTQ representation. This trend continues today, across the Film & TV industry.



Figure 1