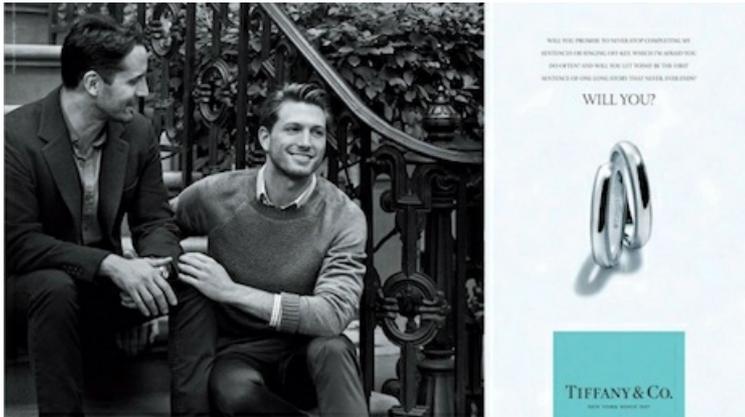


JEWELRY

Jewelers can open new market by courting gays, lesbians

January 10, 2018



Tiffany & Co.'s "Will You?" print and television ad campaign in 2015 made history when it featured a gay couple for the first time in its advertising campaigns. Image credit: Tiffany & Co.

By **Peter Sloterdijk**

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

When the United States Supreme Court legalized gay marriage in 2015, we may have expected an onslaught of inclusive jewelry ads targeting LGBTQ lovebirds. After all, this was a virtually untapped market of potential engagement and wedding ring buyers.

But two years since the ruling, the fine jewelry industry simply has not caught up with this reality: that not only is gay marriage legal across the country, but that LGBTQ couples demand and deserve real choices.

From engagements and weddings to Valentine's Day and Mother's Day, luxury jewelry brands have big opportunities to take the lead when it comes to connecting with the LGBTQ community. Consider these as chances for you to establish a lasting and loyal relationship with this key demographic.

A gay engagement ring? Good luck, dude

When I was on the hunt for an engagement ring awhile back, I wanted something truly special for my fianc. What I was not looking for was a diamond ring.

Let us face it: Most men do not want to flash a diamond on their finger. And for men who do want a little bling in their ring, the choices are still exceptionally limited.

However, because the traditional marriage construct is what guides ring selections from most jewelers, gay men often are not considered.

Typically, when jewelers do have alternative options available, they comprise a few plain gold bands.

Even Blue Nile, the online jewelry retailer cofounded by Ben Elowitz, **who is gay**, does not appear to have specific gay-focused engagement ring offerings. A visit to the site turns up a very diamond-centric selection for women.

All in all, I found myself with so few choices and such a severe lack of interest from the folks behind the counter that I was not exactly sure what to do.

When gay men go looking to spend hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars on an engagement ring, the jewelry industry seems to be telling them, "Good luck, dude."

Brands that want to attract LGBTQ engagement ring buyers should consider offering a wider selection of rings, from gemstone designs to out-of-the-ordinary bands. The opportunity for a fine jeweler seems clear.

Who says lesbians do not wear jewelry?

Tiffany struck a chord in 2015 with a television and print ad campaign featuring a gay male couple. To this day, the campaign is among the rare jewelry brand advertising efforts aimed at the LGBTQ audience, and that is commendable.

Tiffany & Co.'s "Will You?" television commercial from 2015 featured a gay couple for the first time in its advertising efforts

But when I think about this and other gay-targeted campaigns for other types of products, I am left to wonder, where are the lesbians?

This question is especially relevant for jewelry brands and retailers, particularly marketers who operate under the stereotype that lesbians do not wear jewelry. It is an absolute falsehood.

Take [Lyon Fine Jewelry](#), founded by Lauren Bedford Russell, jewelry designer and star of "The Real L Word" TV show. The lesbian-focused brand offers a variety of unique engagement rings, bracelets, earrings and other adornments incorporating black rhodium, sterling silver and gold paired with black and white diamonds.

If your brand is not engaging the lesbian and bisexual female audience, you are missing a valuable market.

Think about it this way: Gay men are in the market for an engagement ring, possibly only one time in their entire lives.

On the other hand, lesbians are more likely to buy jewelry for their significant others to mark all sorts of important occasions, from birthdays and anniversaries to the holiday season and Valentine's Day. And they are more apt to buy themselves a nice set of earrings or a bracelet, too.

Making the traditional inclusive on Valentine's Day

And that brings me to Valentine's Day, and Mother's Day for that matter the other big jewelry-buying holidays. There are wonderful opportunities for jewelry purveyors to connect with the LGBTQ audience when they are planning for these special moments.

Even a brand such as Hallmark with a traditional foothold during the Valentine's Day and Mother's Day gift-giving seasons has introduced greeting cards with LGBTQ themes. A [2014 Mother's Day Hallmark card](#) asked sweetly, "Moms are second to none How does anyone ever get by with just one?"

Clearly, there is a market that responds to tailor-made sentiments that speak directly to the LGBTQ experience on Valentine's Day, Mother's Day and, yes, Father's Day.

Many families with two dads or two moms celebrate their own customized versions of both Mother's Day and Father's Day, providing ample opportunities for jewelry makers and shops to carve out new ways to become part of those traditions as they are cultivated and instilled.

Recognize the uniqueness of the moment

Some of the most successful advertising aimed at LGBTQ consumers recognizes the as-yet undefined and sometimes even awkward experiences that this community may have when embarking on their own special versions of courting, engagement, marriage and family life all love-life stages we often commemorate with jewelry.

"Can both our mothers walk us down the aisle?" asked a 2013 ad from Boston-area [Long's Fine Jewelers](#) featuring Ben and Adam, a Provincetown, MA couple.

The LGBTQ-aimed campaign succeeded in its humorous acknowledgement of the uniqueness of planning a wedding ceremony for two men.

Long's spoke directly to an audience bound to sit up and take notice of a brand that bothered to pay attention to their unique situation, needs and concerns.

Why jewelry brands should take the lead

LGBTQ couples are, in many ways, still figuring it all out as they go. The rulebook is being written as the world

LGBTQ couples are, in many ways, redefining traditions as they get the relationship being married as the norm around us evolves. Do we celebrate Valentine's Day? Do lesbian moms do Father's Day, too? Do I need to ask for his parents' blessing to propose?

So many of us are asking these questions and looking for answers.

Here is where innovative and forward-thinking jewelry brands have the kind of opportunity most other brands do not. They can be guides, giving advice and demonstrating new traditions and beautiful ways for the LGBTQ community to celebrate their love. And they can laugh with us, too.

A few brands are already leading the way

Brilliant Earth

Brilliant Earth offers a selection of gay and lesbian engagement and wedding rings on a section of its Web site featuring distinct gemstones, bands in varying widths, accent gems and matching ring sets.

"We love that all couples can pursue their own personal styles when choosing wedding jewelry, whether forging new traditions or participating in classic ones," notes the website.

Equalli

Jewelry brand **Equalli** is dedicated to serving the LGBTQ community, offering an array of unique rings, bracelets, cufflinks, earrings and necklaces.

Still, the brand stresses craftsmanship, touting "the most amazing artisans and the best service to focus on the love stories of all couples."

Long's Fine Jewelers

When Boston-area **Long's Jewelers** spoke directly to the LGBTQ audience in its 2013 campaign, the fine jewelry retailer knew these consumers still had questions about how to take the important life step of marriage, and reminded them Long's could hold their hands in the process.

"Traditions are what you make them," noted the company in an ad featuring a lesbian couple. "From rings to proposals, Long's is here to help."



Peter Sloterdijk is vice president of global marketing at Grindr

*Peter Sloterdijk is vice president of global marketing at **Grindr**, Los Angeles. Reach him at peter.sloterdijk@grindr.com.*