DOES A TICK MAKE IT ALRIGHT?

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Abstract

The objective of this project explores transgender and non-binary consumers' perception of the Rainbow Tick brand and how companies being affiliated with it affects their purchasing decisions. It addresses the historical limitations of Rainbow research that has mainly been focused on gay, cisgender, white men. Rainbow consumer studies have tended to homogenise Rainbow identities and have primarily failed to understand consumption behaviour, which depends on a specific identity. This research focuses on non-binary and transgender consumers that consumer research has seldom addressed directly. While studies exist on third-party certification, few focus on consumers' perception of third-party diversity certifications.

To examine this topic, fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted, in-person, online via video conferencing platforms and over the phone. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data and extract key themes that relate to the research objective. The focus of this research is not to determine conclusively the efficacy or impact of the Rainbow Tick but to understand the perceptions and judgements of some in the Rainbow Community. Based on the analysis, rationale as to how and why these judgements are formed can be theorised and implications drawn from the study for future improvement.

The findings from this research show that Rainbow consumers believe that the Rainbow Tick, as a third-party certification measuring firm inclusivity, is inadequate. There were 7 themes that contributed to the overall perceived inadequacy (an overarching theme) of the Rainbow Tick. They include lack of depth and rigidity for the evaluation process; misrepresentative information about transgender and non-binary identities; non-responsive to feedback; ineffectiveness of leadership; Cynicism; lack of transparency; and little accountability.

Findings also indicates that the Rainbow Tick has come across as an instance of woke washing. This is the second overarching theme. This summations occurred due to these consumers' experiences working in affiliated companies and their observations of company practices. This represents a brand image problem for affiliated companies. The major theoretical contribution of this research is a framework that tracks non-binary and transgender consumers' decision making and behaviour towards third-party diversity certification. Additionally, this research is novel because it has applied woke washing to third-party diversity certifications, and certifications in general, which has not been explored before. In

the conclusion, managerial implications are provided that the Rainbow Tick and affiliated companies can use to address these issues.

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1.1 Problem Orientation

The gay liberation movement intensified in New Zealand in the 1970s even though it began in the 1960s with the Dorian Society (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2014). This liberation accelerated with the creation of liberation groups in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch in 1972, motivated by Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, who was denied a visa to the United States because she identified within Rainbow communities (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2014). Consensual sexual relations between men were illegal for many years. It was not until 1986 that parliament passed legislation that allowed men, 16 years and older, to have consensual sex with each other without criminal prosecution (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2016). Sex between women was not illegal, but lesbians still faced social discrimination and marginalisation (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2016). Even with legal reform liberating non-heteronormative couples at the time, the Coalition of Concerned Citizens opposed the bill and gained 800,000 signatures for a petition against that legislation because citizens feared that HIV would rapidly spread (Heritage", 2020).

It was not until 1993, after years of activism, rallying and marching from groups like New Zealand Homosexual Law Reform Society, the Gay Task Force, Heterosexuals Unafraid of Gays (HUG), the Lesbian Coalition and the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, did a bill get passed that protected Rainbow people. The Human Rights Act. The implementation of this bill made it illegal to discriminate against someone based on their sexual orientation and gender (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2016).

Other laws have also shifted given activism efforts for fair and equal treatment of Rainbow people[1], namely the Civil Unions Act and the Marriage Amendment Bill of 2013. The Civil Unions Act also came into play in 2005, which allowed couples of same-sex (and also straight couples) under the law to register their partnership or union legally. This afforded them specific rights under the law including social benefits, income tax structures and consideration as next of kin where necessary (Statistics New Zealand, 2010, as cited in Baker & Elizabeth, 2012). Though civil unions were a step in the right direction, some studies found that the Unions Act had many limitations in other areas compared to marriage (Brickell, 2020). One of the main differences is that those in civil unions cannot adopt

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[1] Rainbow people is a terminology used to describe people that that are a part of the LGBTQIA+ community – refer to section 2.2. for further discussion of this definition.

children under the law (Baker & Elizabeth, 2012). Following the Unions Act, the Marriage Amendment Bill was introduced by Louisa Wall and created marriage equality (Brickell, 2020). It meant marriage between two Rainbow individuals would be legally recognised by the state in the same way as a heterosexual couple (Brickell, 2020).

Given the reality of Rainbow people, along with deprecating news articles and disturbing conversations with Rainbow people, the researcher decided to investigate the existing landscape of third-party diversity certifications. There is a gap in the Human Rights Act in the context of today's world. The Human Rights Act does not include gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics so that transgender, non-binary or intersex people can be explicitly covered under the law (Ministry of Health, 2017). That creates a problem because the actual relevance of the Human Rights Act and its ability to protect people is called into question.

Thus far, the discourse shows the history of the life that Rainbow people had to endure (Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2016). Rainbow inclusivity progressed by the law is a reasonably new reality (in the scope of human existence). Even though laws have changed, there is still remnants of socio-cultural attitudes that view identifying outside of cis-heteronormative practices is wrong. It has compounded the experiences of Rainbow people negatively. Rainbow people end up being marginalised and victimised because they cannot conform to socio-cultural expectations regarding sexuality and gender norms. Social context and the nature of the context can affect one's well-being (Frost & Meyer, 2012). Research has shown that one's identity is an essential component of self-perception (Gardner & Garr-Schultz, 2017). Having one's identity devalued can have serious cognitive and emotional effects on an individual (Feinstein et al., 2019).

Studies have been completed in Aotearoa New Zealand exploring Rainbow well-being in society showing a disparity in well-being outcomes between heterosexual, cisgender people, and Rainbow identities. One study being the Honour Project Aotearoa that the Te Kotahi Research Institute conducted (Pihama, Green, Mika, Roskrudge, Simmonds, Nopera, Skipper and Laurence, 2020). They found that Takatāpui and Māori LGBTQI+ people experience homophobia, transphobia, racism and misogyny. These negative encounters have caused them to experience a disproportionate amount of anxiety, depression, isolation, and loneliness compared to heterosexual, cisgender people (Pihama et al., 2020). Another example is the Counting Ourselves survey that calculated specific well-being measures for transgender and

non-binary people (Veale, Bryne, Tan, Guy, Yee, Nopera & Bentham, 2019). It found alarmingly high disparity in well-being measures for transgender and non-binary people compared to the general population (Veale et al., 2019). For example, 67% of the participants reported that they experienced discrimination compared to the general population measuring at 17% (Veale et al., 2019). Even further, 57% of them had suppressed their identity at work to protect themselves from discrimination (Veale et al., 2019). Additionally, 71% are experiencing or have experienced a high level of psychological stress due to the nature of their experiences given their identity and the environment they live in (Veale et al., 2019).

These studies have shown that though the law is more progressive in terms of Rainbow rights, there is still evidence that Rainbow people are actively mistreated in society. That is why a concept like the Rainbow Tick is crucial. The law can push people, organisations, or other parties to conform to specific rules. The acquisition of the Rainbow Tick and putting in place justified diversity workplace policies is a voluntary action in comparison. The Rainbow Tick recognises companies that have implemented diversity and inclusivity workplace policies that address the needs of Rainbow people. It is a third-party certification that companies can attain to show that they are objectively diverse and inclusive. Companies carrying out these practices purport to aim to create an accepting and open working environment.

There are benefits to using third-party certifications. Studies have shown that having third-party certification is more representative of actual practices than self-declared standards to consumers. For example, Delmas and Gergaud (2021) found that consumers can perceive self-declared eco-brands as greenwashing – i.e presenting an image that is sustainable and environmentally friendly when that does not match reality. These consumers find that eco-label third-party certification is a more reliable source for representing environmentally conscious firms (Delmas & Gergaud, 2021). However, there is no research looking into third-party diversity certifications and their effects on branding and consumer behaviour.

Ultimately, the Rainbow Tick scheme should reduce the perceived risk that Rainbow people face and encourage them to engage with affiliated companies because they are Rainbow friendly or allies. The Rainbow Tick acts as an authority figure that has assessed the workplace and concluded that it is a safe space. The Rainbow Tick certifier would have evaluated the working environment and its potential effects on Rainbow people. Thereafter, it rewards that company with the certification once they have met an acceptable standard of

inclusivity. Unfortunately, consumers do not have access to the inner workings of an organisation's workplace culture. They have to use different measures or factors to deduce the Rainbow friendly nature of a specific company. Therefore, the Rainbow Tick should reduce information asymmetry and signal that the affiliated company is safe and inclusive. It should allow Rainbow people to have confidence in knowing that the company is taking deliberate steps to ensure that they are accepted in that working environment.

Additionally, the certification provides training for employees in these organisations. As a result, it brings more awareness about Rainbow identities into the marketplace. That should create a flow-on effect because these employees are then more aware and can adjust their interactions with consumers in a more understanding and inviting way. Consequently, the Rainbow Tick has the potential to affect the quality of the offering of a company. Hence, it shows the strong potential to improve the experiences of Rainbow people as consumers in the marketplace. It could create a lasting impact because it creates positive associations and positioning for the Rainbow Tick and affiliated companies. That is why it is crucial to investigate how Rainbow consumers view the Rainbow Tick as it stands now.

A company has its own image and reputation given their product offering. Associating themselves with the Rainbow Tick and projecting a pro-social position affects how Rainbow consumers interpret their actions and intents. What is consumers' assessment of the Rainbow Tick brand? What is their interpretation of the affiliated companies' actions and messaging? What are their expectations when a company is affiliated? Are these expectations being met? Marketing managers need to understand the nature of the influence the Rainbow Tick currently has and how these consumers have interpreted it. Monetary, time, and human investment has gone into acquiring this Rainbow Tick, but what is the nature of its impact on Rainbow consumers' decision-making and behaviour? No research has investigated the influence of third-party diversity certifications on consumer decision making and behaviour. That is why this research is so important. It has the potential to inform strategic marketing and branding decisions for affiliated companies.

There are also potential benefits of completing this study for the Rainbow Tick affiliation organisation. It can provide information that the Rainbow Tick certifier can use to assess their actions and how some Rainbow people interpret them. This research could help them to understand from first-hand accounts the nature of their influence on Rainbow communities.

To sum up, a mix of history, legislative reform and social pressures is why third-party diversity certification is essential. Though the Rainbow Tick is a branding tool that can be advantageous for business, its primary value is the signal it sends to Rainbow communities. The question is whether these companies are acting in the capacity that is expected when one is Rainbow affiliated? Is it servicing Rainbow communities? This research aims to understand non-binary and transgender consumers' perception and behaviour towards the Rainbow Tick. This research captures the voices of a subset of the Rainbow population because it is too vast to capture all identities in Rainbow communities in the scope of a master's thesis. It also focuses on non-binary and transgender consumers, as there is very little previous research in marketing on this group. This thesis will offer academic contributions and make recommendations where necessary. It will provide an evidence-based rationale for either shifting current practices by the certification body and affiliated companies or maintaining their current trajectory. Furthermore, it can provide a blueprint for other third-party diversity certifications to follow as it represents the mind map of non-binary and transgender consumers. It will show their interpretation of third-party diversity certification and pro-social messaging by affiliated companies.

1.2 Research Objectives

The Rainbow Tick is a marketing tool signalling to consumers that a company is Rainbow friendly or a Rainbow community ally. Depending on the experiences and evaluations of the consumers, there will be value attached to the Rainbow Tick. There are no studies that have explored Rainbow consumers' perception of third-party diversity certifications and how it affects their purchasing behaviour. This thesis will look at understanding that phenomena. Some studies have looked at Rainbow symbols, icons and graphics and how that affects consumer behaviour, but none focused on the signal being one from a third-party diversity certifier. Studies have looked at workplace rankings, but none have paid particular attention to third-party diversity certification and explored its effects on Rainbow consumers' attitude and behaviour.

Additionally, a relatively small number of consumer research studies focus on the concerns and opinions of transgender and non-binary consumers specifically. The majority of the research that does include these identities is in conjunction with other identities, decreasing the possibility of great depth in the information discovered about non-binary and transgender people. Additionally, it can cause homogeneity of Rainbow or LGBT+/ Rainbow consumers' experiences, which is a limitation of many consumer studies.

Given the problem orientation, literature gaps, and previous research limitations, this thesis seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do non-binary and transgender consumers perceive the Rainbow Tick?

2. How does the Rainbow Tick affect transgender and non-binary consumers' purchasing behaviour?

Semi-structured interviews were used to answer the research questions. Interviews were chosen due to the exploratory nature of the study. Since this is a new area of research on a novel concept (i.e the Rainbow Tick), semi-structured interviews would be appropriate - more rationale for the research method is discussed in chapter 3. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. From the analysis, themes were developed that aided the researcher in understanding the experiences of the participating transgender and non-binary consumers. Thereafter, the themes were discussed in more detail so that the research questions could be answered.

1.3 Thesis Overview

This document is segmented into five chapters. The first chapter has already been illustrated. It introduces the topic and the research questions that this research aims to resolve.

The next chapter reviews the extant literature related to transgender and non-binary identity. It focused on Rainbow branding and what literature has described in terms of its effect on Rainbow consumers' purchasing behaviour. After that, it illustrates information regarding third-party certifications. Throughout this chapter, limitations and gaps in research were presented, which further justified the need and merit of completing this thesis and the research questions.

Subsequently, chapter three details the methodology of this research. It shows the fundamental beliefs of the researcher and how that affects the way he interprets the data. It will also highlight the motivation for choosing a qualitative method over one that was quantitative. Thereafter, the characteristics of the participants and how they were selected is discussed. Following that, the method for data collection and how the data was analysed is highlighted. The chapter then closes by illustrating how trustworthiness was established in this thesis.

The fourth chapter includes the main findings from the data collected. These would have emerged from the analysis done by the researcher. Overarching themes are presented

including any relevant sub themes related to the overarching themes. Themes are also accompanied by quotes from the participants that showed how and why the theme emerged.

The final chapter presented is the discussion. The discussion further analyses and summarises the data presented in chapter four and compares critical points back to existing literature. Theoretical and managerial implications are offered based on the discussion. Finally, the chapter concludes by presenting limitations and future research directions.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This section will highlight relevant literature that gives background and sets a foundation for this research project. There is a lack of research regarding LGBT+ consumers and their perceptions and behaviours toward LGBT+ specific third-party certification. These certifications are established to help reduce the perceived risk that Rainbow consumers have in the marketplace. Firstly, sexual orientation and gender identity will be defined. The theory that will be used as a basis for understanding these concepts is Queer theory, which will be discussed in more detail. Following that, the review will discuss other factors that may influence how an individual chooses a gender identity or sexual orientation. The constraints of LGBT+ history will be explored. For example, the available data are limited, in part, due to the negative stigma associated with identifying as a Rainbow individual or being involved in research related to Rainbow communities in the past. With the civil rights movement, gay activism, changes in human rights laws and emergence of support groups for Rainbow communities, the societal stigma against Rainbow people has decreased. Today, society is more open to identities in Rainbow communities which allows for more research that relates to the Rainbow population (Maliepaard, 2015). For example, researchers in New Zealand can proceed without fear of serious mental or physical repercussions arising from social stigma. The thesis focuses specifically on the perspectives of transgender and non-binary individuals by defining concepts and highlighting literature related to their circumstances and lived experiences.

Activism has played a key role in the emergence of Rainbow communities in consumer research even though Rainbow communities still face marginalisation and stigmatisation (Nagle, 2020). The review will touch on the development and perceived value of Rainbow consumers as a segment in the market and the limitations of research on these groups of consumers thus far. For example, marketing research has been criticised for being narrow and too idealistic in the way Rainbow consumers have been categorised.

This thesis will further examine gay friendliness in the workplace as an emerging area of research, including the outcomes and limitations of research to date. Finally, branding and third-party certification will be discussed as important tools for appealing to Rainbow communities. The Rainbow Tick (a certification that companies can acquire to show that their

working environment is diverse and inclusive) is a fairly new concept. As a result, there is no marketing literature related to the Rainbow Tick, nor available research that has captured consumer opinions and sentiment toward its use as a branding signal by companies, or any other third-party diversity certification.

2.2 Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Development

2.2.1 Key Definitions

LGBTTQIA+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, takatāpui, queer, intersex and asexual and all other gender and sexual orientations (Table 2.1). It is an umbrella term that encapsulates a variety of gender identities and sexual orientations that do not align with heteronormative values and expectations.

Table 2.1[2]

Key Terms

Term	Definition
Lesbian	A woman who is sexually attracted to other women (Chase & Ressler, 2009).
Gay	A man who is sexually attracted to other men. Sometimes used as an umbrella term to include lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people (although transgender people often are not gay or lesbian). Such usage can be inclusive and marginalising depending on context (Chase & Ressler, 2009)
Bisexual	A person for whom gender is not the first criterion for sexual attraction, and who may be attracted to women and/or men and/or transgender people (Chase & Ressler, 2009)
Transgender	Someone whose chosen gender does not directly align with the sex that they have been ascribed (Griffin, 2017).
takatāpui,	A Māori (Indigenous Peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand) word, historically meaning 'intimate companion of the same sex'. The term was reclaimed in the

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[2] See table 2 and appendix A for more identities. The identities in this able have been defined because LGBTTQIA+ is a popular acronym used to allude to Rainbow communities.

	1980s and used by individuals who were gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex or part of the Rainbow community (Kerekere, 2017).
Queer	Queer is fluid; rejects categories and heteronormative (and patriarchal) standards; unapologetically promotes non-normative sexualities; shows the flaws, contradictions and incongruencies in the heterosexual (and gay) fairytale. Queer is radical and challenging and questions norms. However, recently Queer has come to be used as an umbrella term for LGBT sexualities, losing some of its political impact in favor of a politically correct and inclusive meaning (Chase & Ressler, 2009).
Intersex	A person who is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not fit the typical physiological characteristics of females or males (McKeage, Crosby & Rittenburg, 2018) .
Asexual	It is a sexual orientation characterised by different degrees of lack of interest in sexual activity, or by the absence of sexual attraction to any partner, irrespective of gender (Venir & Lundin, 2016).

Different terms, acronyms and phrases have been used over time to identify people who are part of the Rainbow population. These terms include non-heterosexual, homosexual, gay, LGBT, LGBTTQIA+, LGBT+, Queer and Rainbow communities. For the purposes of this thesis, the main terms that will be used are Rainbow communities, Rainbow population and Rainbow people, even though terms like homosexual and LGBT have mostly been used in literature. **Sexual orientation** refers to one's emotional and sexual preference for other people and the resulting behaviour and social relations (American Psychological Association, 2015).

Gender as a criterion for market segmentation has long been an important strategy used in industry (Kumar & Varshney, 2012). Gender and sex are not synonymous and cannot be used interchangeably. Sex is based on the biological characteristics of the person which include "variables such as body morphology (e.g., the appearance of genitalia or secondary sex characteristics) chromosomes or hormones" (Barnes, Morris & Austin, 2020, pg. 424). **Gender identity** for the purposes of this research will be defined as a person's inner conviction of being a man, woman or an alternate gender that is disparate from the sex they were given at birth or a person's main or alternate sex characteristic (American Psychological Association, 2015). It is how a person chooses to be identified by those around them.

2.2.1.1 Theoretical Foundations

The development of the characteristics and attributes of Rainbow individual's sexual orientation and gender identity can be traced back to the 20th century when sexology developed (Dobscha, 2019). Work by early sexologists established the foundation for clear distinction between those who identify as heterosexual versus those who identify themselves as homosexual (Foucault, 1978). Richard, Baron von Krafft-Ebing was one of the earliest researchers that put forward the definition of homosexuality from a biomedical perspective (Oosterhuis, 2012). In his work, he noted that sexuality or sexual inversion is a "degenerate neuropsychiatric condition", meaning a mental biological anomaly (Rosario, 2002, pg. 81). During that early time period, gender had been based around biological identification (Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015).

That definition has been critiqued and arguments for a different frame for examining these identities have since emerged. This study steps away from the dichotomous logic of gender and the normative expectations around sexuality. It will follow the notion put forward by van Anders (2015) that sexual orientation is continuous, and people can be attracted to strictly men or women or somewhere in between—for example, being attracted to mostly women and a little bit to men, attracted to both men and women, attracted to mostly men and a little to women, or having no feelings of attraction at all. This aligns with what is known as Queer theory.

Queer theory critiques normative expectations and creates a clear lineage between what is acceptable or deviant behaviour (Sedgwick, 1990). One of the notions of Queer theory is that divergence between reality and socially constructed identities related to sex and gender prompts an approach that is more reflective of people's actual lives (Jagose, 1996). Queer theory rejects normative categories of identity and sexual orientation in a binary system and focuses on the identities that have been socially constructed and self-identified by an individual (Monro, 2005). This is where the logic of sexual orientation and gender identity being on a continuum comes from. It is appropriate to use this logic given the constructivist epistemology of this thesis (see section 3.3.1). According to Watson (2016), a Queer theory lens allows for "deeper engagement with the complexity of subjectivity; how people resist, transform and enact their positions (regardless of the constraints of identity categories)" (p. 79). Given this frame, in the given context, the identity of the non-binary and transgender consumers can be explored without the strictness of gender dualism and normative sexual identities.

2.2.2 Intersectionality in Rainbow Identities

Steele et al. (2018) notes that you cannot fully understand one form of inequality (for example, heterosexism) without looking at how that measure of inequality interacts with other measures of inequality. For example, greater levels of discrimination are experienced by LGBT ethnic minorities compared to LGBT White people (Collins, 2004). Even with American LGBT imagery permeating across the world (Altman, 1996), cultural context is an important factor influencing gay identity and gay culture. Hammack (2005) has put forth the argument that sexual identity is a culmination of cultural and personal factors in an individual's environment. From his cross-cultural studies executed on behaviours and desires, he found that there are different extensions of homosexuality in various cultures (Hammack, 2005).

Despite recent research developments into the intersection of race and gay identity, most research has been focused on a majority White Rainbow sample (Dobscha, 2019; Ginder & Byun, 2015). LGBT people of colour are under-researched and underrepresented, also partly due to discomfort around sexual and race identity (Choi et al., 2013). LGBT identity development has mostly examined signposts in the development of one's identity but only a small portion of these studies have enough discourse about LGBT ethnic minorities development compared to White LGBT individuals (Rosario et al., 2004).

LGBT people of colour tend to focus more on developing and understanding their ethnic identity before sexual identity because of socioeconomic and environmental hindrances (Wallace et al., 2002). The studies that do take notice of a difference in identity development show that Latino and Black LGBT individuals build and realise their identity before their White counterparts (Savin-Williams, 1998). Black people also have an even higher probability of choosing bisexuality versus White and Latin individuals (Rust, 2001). Interestingly, however, a cross-cultural study by Whitam et al. (1998) regarding lesbians found that the rate of identity development was symmetrical across different ethnicities. In socio-political contexts that are not as welcoming to Rainbow individuals, the development of gay identity becomes delayed (Peterson & Marin, 1988). Research has found ethnic minorities in contexts that are not as welcoming would identify as bisexual (attraction to males and females) instead of gay or a lesbian as a tactic to protect themselves by conforming to a social architype (Peterson & Marin, 1988). But one must err on the side of caution

because these conclusions arose from a Western context. Consequently, they may not be generalisable across all cultures.

2.2.3 History and Activism

There have been many attempts by Rainbow organisations and gay rights groups to influence political structures to try to decriminalise the act of homosexuality, advocate for rights equal to those who identify as heterosexual, and create social influences that try to increase acceptance, promote inclusion, decrease marginalisation and minimise social segregation (Blasius, 1994). The origins of the gay rights liberation movement within literature is typically attributed to the Stonewall riots that occurred in New York City at the Stonewall Inn in 1969 (Nappo, 2010). The Stonewall Riot ensued because members of the Rainbow population resisted the police that tried to raid the Stonewall Inn which was supposed to be a haven for them to live their true identity (Poindexter, 1997). However, this conclusion that the gay liberation began as a result of the Stonewall riot has been criticised because it is argued that it only represents a Westernised view of gay history and ignores other influences that bring rise to gay rights and liberation that may have been present in non-western countries (Chatzipapatheodoridis, 2014). For example, in Thailand, kathoey cultures (homosexuality) were present in Bangkok and recognised long before the Stonewall riots (Jackson, 2009).

There are also limitations to consider in observing Rainbow history. Ferentinos (2014), in her book, describes a limitation of Rainbow history in terms of misidentification. She found that the problem with observing that history is that contemporary interpretations on sexual activities in the past may be misconstrued because the culture that existed in the time period under investigation is not considered (Ferentinos, 2014). She also noted limitations in curating LGBT history documents because research was destroyed or never publicly discussed due to probable negative repercussions from society against those that authored them, and even for their family long after their death.

A similar rhetoric is amplified by Judith Halberstam (1998) who coined the term 'perverse presentism', where modern constructions are not projected on the past but "apply insights from the present to conundrums of the past" (p. 52-53). If you look at the terminology of the acronym, you can see historic changes in the meaning of the terms. For example, within a Westernised context (Gibson et al., 2013):

- Lesbian has changed over time from a geographical term to an identifier.

- Gay acted as a label for prostitutes.

- Bisexual was a term used to describe men and women who had sex without procreation. Today, it describes someone with desires for men and women.

- Queer has been reclaimed from being an oppressive term to a representational one for the Rainbow community.

Another limitation of Rainbow research and history is the context of the research. The majority of research that has been done on Rainbow communities has mainly focused on cisgender, middleclass White men (Dobscha, 2019), although over time more research focuses on other ethnic groups, sexual orientation and gender identities. Cisgender is an individual whose gender identity matches the sex they were born with (Cava, 2016). In other words, they keep the identity that they were assigned at birth.

This section provides background in regards to development of Rainbow identities and the lens that this thesis will be using to understand Rainbow identities. Specifically, this lens is Queer theory that views sexuality and gender identity on a continuum. This choice is based on the epistemology of the researcher (further explained in Chapter Three) and the recommendation put forward by Dobscha (2019), which found a limitation in the literature. She states that marketers and researchers need to look beyond a dualistic view of gender and examine identities that do not fit within that dichotomous logic (Dobscha, 2019) . Furthermore, research on Rainbow communities has mostly been focused on White cisgender men in a Western context. This research contributes to literature by deliberately focusing on other gender identities (i.e., transgender and non-binary). These identities will be discussed in the next section.

2.3 Transgender, Non-binary and their Experiences

Transgender is an umbrella term for those whose gender identity and/or gender expression is deviant from what is socially associated with the sex they were assigned at birth (Currah, 2006). Transgender[3] can include those that have chosen not to conform to a dichotomous logic of gender and choose to exist outside of that space (Currah, 2006). Trans/Transgender

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[3] The researcher acknowledges that non-binary can fit within the Transgender umbrella. The definitions that have been chosen are based on the literature. As a result, in keeping with academic practice, the researcher chose to define transgender and non-binary identities in this way. Gender Minorities Aotearoa (GMA) is Aoetearoa New Zealand's nationwide organization that provides information, support and advocacy for gender minorities. GMA provides resources on their website and defines trans or transgender as an umbrella term that encompasses all gender minorities - see https://genderminorities.com/database/glossary-transgender/ . These are valid deductions regarding Rainbow gender identities.

men are those that are born as female but change their gender to male. Trans/Trans gender women are those that are born male and change their gender to female. These individuals have also been called gender non-conforming or gender non-binary. However, the direction this thesis takes pulls non-conformity from that definition and places it within the non-binary umbrella. Non-binary gender identity can be an individual that does not align to their socio-historically, assigned sex or does not want to conform to the definitions of being either male or female. A more formal definition would be those "individuals who identify as both male and female, neither male nor female, outside of the gender binary, and/or reject all gender identities" (Goldberg et al., 2019, p. 62). It can also be treated as an umbrella term for genders that exist out of the binary classification of gender including, but not always, genders like genderqueer, neutrois, agender and others (McKeage, Crosby and Rittenburg, 2018 ; see appendix A) – see Table 2.2.

Table 2.2

Definition of Non-Binary Gender Identities

Gender Identity	Definition
Androgyne	(1) A person whose biological sex is not readily apparent; (2) a person who is intermediate between the two binary genders; (3) a person who rejects binary gender roles entirely
Gender Fluid	A gender identity where a person identifies as (1) neither or both female and male; (2) experiences a range of femaleness and maleness, with a denoted movement or flow between genders; (3) consistently experiences their gender identity outside of the gender binary. People who are gender fluid may feel that their gender identity or expression is constantly changing, or that it switches back and forth.
Gender Neutral	Denotes a unisex or all-gender inclusive space, language, etc. For example, a gender-neutral bathroom is a bathroom open to people of any gender identity and expression.
Gender non-conforming	(1) Gender expression or identity that is outside or beyond a specific culture or society's gender expectations; (2) a term used to refer to individuals or communities who may not identify as transgender, but who do not conform to traditional gender norms. May be used in tandem with other identities.

Genderqueer	People who possess identities which fall outside of the widely accepted gender binary. The term can be used as an umbrella term for all people who are gender nonconforming, or as a specific non-binary gender identity.
Neutrois	An identity generally having to do with feeling one does not have a gender, a gender identity, or a defined gender. Some people who identify as neutrois also identify as agender or genderless, and some neutrois people desire to minimise their physical gender markers and to have a more gender-neutral appearance
Pangender	A person whose gender identity is comprised of many gender identities and/or expressions
Polygender	Identifying as more than one gender or a combination of genders.

(McKeage et al., 2018, p. 86-88)

Transgender and non-binary individuals may go through medical procedures such as sex reassignment surgery, voice therapy, hormone therapy, change in pronoun identification (for example he/him, she/her, they/them and ze/zir) and/or how they choose to express their identity in terms of their aesthetic (for example the type of clothes they wear or the hair style they have) and kinesics (for example the way they walk or run) (Barnes, 2020). It is paramount that transgender and non-binary individuals build up a strong social network that can support them physically and emotionally as they go through immense life changes including transitioning to their desired gender identity or coming out and being transparent about who they are to social and familial circles (Stone, Nimmons, Salcido and Schnarrs, 2020).

McKeage et al. (2018) categorises these consumers as vulnerable. This is due to the fact that the marketplace tends to be strongly binary, and non-conformity goes against the norm and creates invisibility (McKeage et al., 2018). They suffer from negative mental health outcomes as a result of cultural invisibility, mis-gendering, and ignorance regarding their gender identity (Matsuno & Budge, 2017). Thus, having a support system is paramount for the resilience of a marginalised group (Hawkins & Abrams, 2007). Support systems include, but are not limited to, family, friends, partners, and social support services. On many occasions, they must decide whether to come out about their gender identity, which can also lead to

negative health outcomes (Nadal et al., 2012). Transgender and non-binary individuals are under catered for in the market and have difficulty finding products and services that align to their needs (McKeage et al., 2018).

Social and economic factors are important components of an individual's experience. Stone et al. (2020) uses Hames-Garcia (2011) concept of multiplicity and describes it as identity that is built upon different layers of attributes that interact with each other that both creates the frame that an individual exists in and the social experiences of that person. That multiplicity includes a person's ethnicity, gender identity and economic status among other personal factors (Stone et al., 2020). Thus, their identity as a Rainbow person, as well as other identity markers, interact to uniquely shape their lived experiences. For example, McGinely and Horne (2020) have shown that White cisgender gay and lesbian individuals can incorporate themselves into the social norm with more ease than other identities within Rainbow communities. In addition, they proposed that White cisgender gay and lesbian individuals are focused more on gaining socio-cultural normalcy rather than pushing for gay liberation (McGinley & Horne, 2020). These individuals would abate their support for gay liberation (which encompasses more nuances and themes within freedom and social liberation of Queer people) thus leaving behind those who cannot conform and merge in the same way - including transgender and non-binary people, Queer people of colour and intersex people (Horne & White, 2019).

Without gay liberation, the incidence of direct or indirect prejudice towards Rainbow people would be rampant. These direct or indirect prejudices have been collectively labelled 'transphobia' which in its own merit is different from homophobia. Transphobia can be defined as "societal discrimination and stigma of individuals who do not conform to traditional norms of sex and gender" (Sugano et al., 2006, p. 217). Transphobia is an understudied area of research compared to homophobia (Nagoshi et al., 2008). It is different from homophobia because homophobia encompasses the irrational fear and prejudice against those who are transgender but also those men who are more feminine, as well as masculine or 'butch' women, and crossdressers (Weinberg, 1972). They endure this treatment because they do not conform to society's expectation of gender and expression. Society's expectations concerning gender roles stem from historical roles and expressions of cisgender heterosexual people. This is a default position that individuals are expected to take, and it is called heteronormativity. Heteronormativity is a construct that is generally used to define this exact phenomenon. Marchia and Sommer (2019) in a recent systematic review redefined that

construct and presented different layers of heteronormativity. Table 2.3 gives the breakdown of those layers:

Table 2.3

The Different Extensions of Heteronormativity

Term	Category	Definition
Heterosexist-heteronormativity	Sexuality	Non-heterosexuality seen as unnatural, deviant, or undesirable; having prejudice against non-heterosexuality. Unrelated to gender or patriarchal forces
Gendered-heteronormativity	Patriarchal gendered norms	Heterosexuality and heterosexist privilege are gendered phenomena relating to the socialisation of men and women
Hegemonic-heteronormativity	Hegemonic masculinity or idealised femininity	Persistence of heterosexual sexuality as the norm is linked to constructions of gender and desire, rendering them normative or non-normative. Heterosexuality/patriarchy are linked to presumptive sexual and gendered manifestations of idealised femininity or hegemonic masculinity established by discursive categories
Cisnormative-heteronormativity	Gender and sexuality	Separate but overlapping relationship between heterosexual privilege and cisgendered privilege stemming from patriarchal forces; having prejudice against non-heterosexuality and gender deviance
Contextual usage	Power Matrix	Contextual usage. Use heteronormativity to describe one of many systematic oppressions such as race, class, gender, or sexuality (i.e. a process that leads to oppression)

(Marchia & Sommer, 2019, p. 282)

Within this thesis, any reference to heteronormativity is in terms of cisnormative heteronormativity. The Rainbow Tick acts as a signal that should let consumers know that companies are not bound by heteronormative practices and perspectives. Instead, those

companies should be more open to various gender ideals and expectations erupting from Rainbow communities. The perpetuation of heteronormative practices isolate transgender and Rainbow people because they face backlash from not fitting in with gender norms. This may cause homophobic or transphobic responses to occur and create negative experiences for non-binary and trans people. A company with the Rainbow Tick should not partake in practices that negatively affect Rainbow people. Given this notion, the concept of tolerance and allyship should be considered.

Tolerance is an agreement that groups within society that do not fit into the social norms, or whose values are controversial, should still be allowed public expression (Twenge et al., 2015). A study by Dunn (2010) compared biological determinism to demographic factors to see which motive was more linked to a person's tolerance for LGBT. She found that biological determinism has stronger explanatory power than demographic factors like gender, race and education at predicting tolerance (Dunn, 2010). This means that people are more likely to tolerate Rainbow people because they believe that their orientation is uncontrollable and it is something they are born with. Dunn's (2010) study provides strong evidence in comparison to other studies of tolerance towards people in Rainbow communities (for example Hegarty, 2002; Jayaratne et al., 2006; Whitley Jr, 1990) because it involved both heterosexuals and Rainbow individuals in the study, whereas others involved the perspective of heterosexual individuals only.

Rainbow tolerance is more passive compared to allyship. An ally is "someone who identifies as heterosexual, yet actively works to develop an understanding of the needs and experiences of Rainbow groups and chooses to align with the social and political causes of Rainbow groups." (Jones, Bewster and Jones, 2014, pg. 1.). Previously, scholars have applied different measures to identify what the characteristics of an ally should be. Jones et al. (2014) identifies themes within allyship scholarship. According to Jones et al. (2014) allyship includes having:

1. Knowledge of lived experiences of Rainbow individuals past and present
2. The internal gumption to engage in action that promotes change in their circumstances
3. The skills and confidence to support those in the community.

Allies improve the experiences of Rainbow individuals in an environment that stigmatises and oppresses them by offering social support (Meyer, 2003). Support from allies helps to

reduce the grief, stress, and agitation that people in the Rainbow population face (Meyer, 2003).

Rainbow consumers clearly face a myriad of issues that make it difficult for them to traverse the market. They face marginalisation and discrimination because of how they choose to identify which might be different from the norm, i.e., heteronormativity. The foundations of the Rainbow experience has now been set (with specific focus on transgender and non-binary consumers), and the next section discusses the attitudes and behaviour of Rainbow communities in the marketplace.

2.4 Rainbow Consumer Research – Past and Present

The section focuses on different areas or themes within Rainbow consumer research. The table below summarises key areas research in literature related to Rainbow consumers. Following this table, this review synthesises these areas.

Table 2.4

Selection of the Main/Key Literature.

Area Studied	Demographic	Findings	References
Historical/ Present demographic description of Rainbow population	Gay cis men	• Well educated with high discretionary income • DINKS (high Disposable Income and No Kids) • Socially and politically informed • A lucrative market	Kates (1999); Raffo (1997); Badgett (2003); Kates (1998); DeLozier and Rodrigue (1996)
	Lesbians	• Potentially lucrative market • Researchers have been biased in their perception of women (heterosexism) • Lower earnings compared to cis gay men	Bristor and Fischer (1995); Gudelunas (2011); DeLozier and Rodrigue (1996)
Rainbow visibility and viability as a market segment	Gay cis men	• Search for gay friendly companies. • Their identity has an effect on their perception of gay friendliness by brands/companies • Viable market to target	Hughes and Deutsch (2010); Keating and McLoughlin (2005); Hughes (2003); Oakenfull (2013); Marshall (2011); Wang et al. (2015)
	Lesbians		Oakenfull (2013)
	Gay cis men and lesbians		Pritchard et al. (2000) ; Lukenbill (1995) ; Peñaloza (1996); Gardyn (2001) ; Chasin (2001); Kates (1998)

	All groups[4]	• Highly valuable market • Marketers collect large amounts of socio-cultural information to make decision	Sender (2018) ; Witeck-Combs Communication (2006)
Consumer behaviour and attitudes among Rainbow communities	Gay cis men	• Subculture of consumption distinguishes them (affects the brand they choose). • Consumption is dependent on group appeal. • Their consumption and behaviour has entered mainstream consciousness. • Choose brands related to their understanding of themselves (and their community.	Sha et al. (2007); Kates (1998) ; Kates (2000); Rinallo (2007) ; Hildebrand et al. (2013); Johnson (2010)
	Gay cis men and lesbians	• Consumption helps to self-affirm people's identity. • Searches for Rainbow friendly companies. • Gender affects the type of consumption.	Wardlow (1996); Hebdige (1995); Weeden et al. (2016); Hebdige (1995); Reilly and Rudd (2007); Weeden et al. (2016)
Representation of Rainbow people in media.	Gay cis men	• Search and engage with companies that can reflect their understanding of themselves.	Branchik (2007)
	Lesbians		Descubes et al. (2018)
	Gay men and Lesbians	• Companies incorporate gay and lesbian imagery. • They find gay and lesbian themed imagery appealing. • Use advertising and promotion to aid in identity establishment.	Oakenfull et al. (2008); Borgerson et al. (2006); Ginder and Byun (2015); Um (2012); Puntoni et al. (2012); Puntoni et al. (2010); Burnett (2000); Angelini and Bradley (2010); Puntoni et al. (2010); Puntoni et al. (2012)
	Heterosexuals	• Rainbow imagery has a negative effect on brand perception and purchase behaviour. • Those with low levels of tolerance have lower purchase intentions.	Hooten et al. (2009); Pounders and Mabry-Flynn (2016); Um (2016); Hester and Gibson (2007)
	All Rainbow groups	• Steady increase in mainstream representation. • Ideologies are linked to people's emotional response to Rainbow related media.	Northey et al. (2020); Shepherd et al. (2021)

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[4] Encompasses more Rainbow genders beyond gay cis men and lesbians

Most of the literature that is available regarding Rainbow consumers had a narrow focus in the past. It has mainly focused on middle class urban and western cis-gendered, thus rejecting other identities including lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals, queer, asexual, pansexual and other non-heterosexual persons (Dobscha, 2019). This exclusion of other Rainbow identities from past research stemmed from the idea that gay males were more likely to provide substantial amounts of revenue due to their purchasing behaviour (Lukenbill, 1995). Their profile included high discretionary income, well-educated, informed, dedication to work and strong social networks (DeLozier and Rodrigue, 1996). However, this conclusion has been criticised because it is a short sighted and restrictive (Gundelunas, 2011; Kates 1999).

Rainbow communities have become a growing segment of interest in recent times as a result of de-stigmatisation and increase in visibility (Dobscha, 2019). Rainbow representation in media and advertising in 1917 shows an entry point of interest into a segment of Rainbow communities - in this case gay men and lesbian (Branchik, 2007). According to Turow (1997), it was not until the 1980s that the non-heterosexual segment emerged as a serious target for marketers. One should note, though, that the early implementation of segmented advertising towards Rainbow communities was mainly towards gay men and to a lesser extent, lesbians (Gundelunas, 2011), At that time, what is known now about variations in gender identities and sexual orientation was seldom understood and had not been implemented in targeted advertising and promotion activity. Sender (2005) found that lesbians, as well as transgender men and women and bisexuals, are overlooked when companies try to market and capture the LGBT market and put emphasis towards gay men. This has changed throughout the years as more theoretical contributions have been made concerning Rainbow communities. The visibility of the Rainbow segment has grown, thus, one of the challenges that researchers face is trying to understand this growing market segment.

Dobshca (2019) tells us that most research done on the LGBT community view their consumption within a subculture framework. The subgroups in these subcultures have the same consumption practices and hierarchical social structures which includes similar means of expression, social identity, values and beliefs independent of the norm (Dobscha, 2019). One of the limitations of consumer research on Rainbow communities is that it homogenised

characteristics of the Rainbow population using insights from studies into gay men without giving individual focus to other gender identities and sexual orientations (Rowe and Rowe, 2015). It poses a limitation in literature because, though sound research has been completed, entire groups within the Rainbow population have either been alienated or mis-represented. A rise in Queer theory opens space for more focused research into different identities in the Rainbow population. There is a need for more research that captures the changing needs and desires of a variety of gender identities and sexual orientations as visibility and recognition of Rainbow communities' increases. Dobscha (2019) proposes a decentralisation of traditional standard segmentation and calls for greater depth in understanding of Rainbow consumers. The restriction that researchers will continue to face is that people in Rainbow communities are still a marginalised and stigmatised group, which causes people to remain circumspect about revealing their identity and participating in research even with stringent privacy and anonymity practices (Coffman et al., 2017).

This research pulls on the experiences of transgender and non-binary consumers in the marketplace to address the current gap in the literature. Specifically, this research will focus on non-binary and transgender individuals in an Aotearoa New Zealand context. This research makes a concerted effort to ensure that a variety of gender identities and sexual identities are captured, providing quantitative data that can inform marketers and researchers. As a result, it is important to include in-depth information regarding the consumption experiences of non-binary and transgender consumers in the New Zealand context.

The next section draws on branding literature and applies it in the context of targeted branding towards Rainbow consumers. It reflects on dimensions of branding and then focuses on what marketing cues have been implemented thus far. The Rainbow Tick can be seen as a form of branding that companies can leverage to garner positive engagement from Rainbow communities. It sets the theoretical foundations for examining the Rainbow Tick.

2.5 Branding Targeting Rainbow Communities

The use of branding is an important consideration for marketers when developing a marketing strategy. Branding is linked to firms creating a brand image that is recognisable by consumers (Kapferer, 1994; McEnally & De Chernatony, 1999). Brand image that builds a positive reputation enhances differentiation which allows a firm to be competitive and influential within the market (Keller, 1993). Branding provides purchase confidence,

reducing consumer's perceived risk and uncertainty resulting in customer satisfaction (Mudambi, 2002). Three key aspects of branding that marketers deemed to be relevant according to Aaker (1996) are general name awareness, purchase loyalty, and brand reputation. However, this conclusion depends on the amount of information that the consumer knows about the brand and how they perceive it (Keller, 2003). He describes brand knowledge as a brand node (stored information) with associations that an individual creates about that node (Keller, 2003). It is these resulting brand associations that affect consumers' behaviour (Collins & Loftus, 1975) and influence how consumers evaluate the brand (Keller, 1993). These associations and deductions about a brand create a perspective of the brand and thus the brand image (Keller, 1998).

2.5.1 Brand Image

Brand image, formed through the combination of signals from a brand (Roth, 1994), is how the consumer perceives the brand based on individual's physical or symbolic brand associations (Engel, Blackwell and Miniard, 1993). Simply put, a positive brand image is a product of consumers making positive associations with the brand (Aaker, 1991). A perpetuated assumption is that company managers and directors have the ability to manage brand image by being cautious, circumventing any downfalls (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Keller, 1998). Thompson (2004) opposes this restricted view of brand image and how it is managed. He found the direct control that marketing managers had over the brand, and the meaning that people place on the brand, is quite small - which, in general, opposes findings in brand literature (Holt, 2003; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

Additionally, there is an element of culture that directly affects a brand's image separate and apart from what the marketing practitioner does. In this case, an important point to consider in this thesis is the other antecedent factors that may affect how a consumer engages with a brand. Thompson (2004)proposes that there is a relationship between marketing, brands, and subcultures where "marketing discourses actually help to crystallize a subcultural identity and its ideological outlooks."(p 98).

With an established image and reputation, managers and decision makers within these companies use brand management techniques to maintain positive positioning and reputation for the company (Mudambi, 2002) even though, as stated before, there are other factors that may come into play that build a company's brand image beyond the efforts of the marketer.

Although that is the case, it is still important to note that maintaining brand image is an important activity in any marketing or branding strategy (Roth, 1995). Brand management is essential in doing that. Brand management is adaptive and responsive to outcomes from the past, performance indicators, changing market forces, actions of competitors in the industry and perception and behaviour of consumers (Shocker et al., 1994). It is important to manage and maintain a positive brand image because brand image can affect the way consumers evaluate features of the brand (Zhang, 2015). In assessing these features, they are looking for a brand that can meet their needs and desires. Moreover, a well-established brand image, beyond the service or product, can encourage customer satisfaction and commitment to the brand (Neupane, 2015). A brand that can meet those perceived needs increase purchase intention and engagement with the brand (Cretu & Brodie, 2007; Kotler et al., 2016).

Brand image is perpetuated through marketing communications, but the marketing environment has been changing over time. Keller (2009) proposed that the customer-based brand equity model should be used by marketers to interpret the brand effects of this changing environment. The customer-based brand equity model states that brand equity should be calculated based on the brand knowledge of consumers (Keller et al., 2008). This brand knowledge develops due to consumer interaction with marketing communications (Keller, 2008; Keller et al., 2008). This brand knowledge includes the perceptions, emotions and ideas that an individual has about a brand (Keller, 2009).

2.5.2 Gay Friendly Branding

Rainbow consumers pay attention to gay friendly branding and are willing to make a final purchase with that company even if the price is at a premium (Tuten, 2005). In literature, scholars use the phrase gay friendliness but that is not restricted to gay men only- it is an umbrella term. To respectfully represent the language used in the following literature, gay friendliness will be used[5]. Gay friendly branding cues would involve using tools and techniques that are identifiable to Rainbow communities and are analogous to who they are and their consumption (Tuten, 2005).

In examining the theory of self-congruity and signalling theory, one can see why this conclusion by Tuten (2005) is justified. Self-congruity theory tells us that an individual will choose a brand that aligns with their self-concept (Usakli & Baloglu, 2011), with self-concept

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[5] Rainbow friendliness may be used.

being an individual's perception or idea of who they are (Sirgy, 1982). Wassler et al. (2019) even found empirical evidence that self-brand congruity is a significant predictor of brand attitude. Also, Najeem and Puolakka (2020) supports this conclusion through their own research on self-congruity. Their study looking at gender neutral skincare products found a positive relationship between gender congruency and attitude towards advertising. Signalling theory stipulates that consumers use signs and symbols from brands to gain information about it. The associations that are attached to these signs help to reduce information asymmetry (Bergh et al., 2014). These signals come from different touchpoints that share information about the company and its value proposition.

There are several tactics that companies can use to signal to Rainbow communities. These tactics could include using the Rainbow flag, Rainbow colours, jargon from Queer subcultures, using popular Rainbow icons etc. Variety is important (Tuten, 2005). Using a singular method or tactic to appeal to Rainbow communities is ineffective (Tuten, 2005). For example, Kates (2004) research found that gay advertising as a standalone effort to appeal to Rainbow people is insufficient. The limitation of Tuten (2005) is that the sample was mainly gay men and lesbians. It is another example of a study that has attributed the experience of a subset of Rainbow communities to the entire population (see Table 4). It is the same problem that Ginder and Byun (2015) and (Dobscha, 2019) identified in their assessment of marketing literature related to Rainbow communities. They found that research has been highly skewed and mostly representational of the experience of only a part of Rainbow communities (Dobscha, 2019; Ginder & Byun, 2015).

The Rainbow Tick can be used as branding to target Rainbow communities. Companies can use the Rainbow Tick to show their support for inclusivity and diversity in businesses. It projects an image that the company is gay friendly. That should foster positive reaction and continuous purchasing from Rainbow consumers (Tuten, 2005). However, there is no literature that has investigated consumers' perceptions and behaviour towards diversity ranking from the perspective of the consumer. Tuten (2005) stipulates that consumers focus on internal and external activities of a company to determine whether they are gay friendly. Internal relates to the policies and workplace culture of an organisation, whereas the external relates to how they treat customers, visible support of Rainbow causes, and physical Rainbow branding among other efforts. Though the Rainbow Tick measures workplace diversity

practices, it is also used externally to signal a company's willingness to appropriately engage with Rainbow communities.

It is important to understand the reputation of a brand and how that affects Rainbow consumers and their purchase intention. Establishing the reputation of companies that use this form of branding has significant implications for marketing managers and how they manage their company's Rainbow friendly brand image. This then raises the question of perceived legitimacy of a company portraying an image that is Rainbow friendly. There has been no research on authenticity versus woke washing in regard to certification ranking/certifications used in the marketplace based on the perceptions of a subset of the Rainbow population – discussed in section 2.7.2. Woke washing is the disparity between a companies' activism through pro-social messages and their actual actions (Vredenburg et al., 2018). These companies would market themselves as one that is actively concerned about social and political issues but does not engage in discernible practices that address these issues (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Understanding how firm actions and messaging are perceived concerning social and political issues have important implications for marketing managers. Before going into more detail regarding the Rainbow Tick as a third-party diversity certification, there will be discussion of literature regarding internal and external gay friendly efforts. This is in keeping with the conclusion put forward by Tuten (2005). The next section focuses on external gay friendliness and what companies have done to try to appeal to Rainbow communities. Following that, the review will look at internal gay friendliness.

2.5.2.1 Using Rainbow Related Marketing

Marketers use Rainbow[6] related marketing and cues to create a brand image that is one of support and allyship. Companies develop and implement Rainbow branding strategies in response to a changing political and social environment that is more open and accepting of Rainbow individuals (Nölke, 2017). However, negative attitudes towards Rainbow communities, including homophobia and transphobia, are still evident even though these anti-Rainbow sentiments have been decreasing over the years (King & Cortina, 2010; Laythe et al., 2002). Even though the negative attitudes are there, companies still implement Rainbow related marketing, communications, content, and media in an attempt to appeal to the Rainbow population (Chasin, 2001). Evidence that corporations and businesses have growing

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[6] Related to Rainbow communities not an actual Rainbow

interest in the Rainbow community can be seen in television, where there is more Queer representation through television networks like LOGO TV and Queer TV, targeted Rainbow specific radio shows and more gay friendly advertising (Baxter, 2010).

Developing and distributing content in this fashion is important for both the business and for Rainbow or allied consumers. Rainbow-themed branding helps to increase consumer brand engagement, which is an important marketing principle (Payne et al., 2017). There is still more research needed regarding consumer brand engagement because parameters for individuals engaging touchpoints and the process of getting to a purchase decision is not fully understood (Baxendale, Macdonald and Wilson, 2015). Though Baxendale et al. (2015) is speaking about consumers in general and their engagement, the same conclusion can be made regarding Rainbow communities. Rainbow people as consumers have been under researched compared to other aspects of inclusivity and diversity, for example, race or ethnicity (Colgan and McKearney, 2011). This research extends the area by focusing on non-binary and transgender consumers. As vulnerable consumers, non-binary and transgender individuals and their participation in the market and engagement with companies are under researched because of the sensitive nature of their experiences and the challenges associated with relaying those experiences in a research context (McKeage et al., 2018). Individuals who exist outside of the social norm—such as non-binary and transgender consumers (see section 2.3)—are under-researched (Henderson, 1998). Although previous studies have assessed the Rainbow population and their reactions to marketing, these studies are limiting and exclusionary because most have overrepresented gay men and lesbians who comprise a disproportionate amount of the target group (Table 4, Ginder and Byun, 2015).

Rainbow-related marketing and branding can be found by consumers at different touchpoints. Consumer touchpoints are spaces that the consumer and the firm use to communicate or correspond (Neslin et al., 2014). Research argues that frequency (or iterations) of consumer-brand touchpoints along with the positivity of those touchpoints influences consumers when considering different brands (Baxendale et al., 2015). The definition of positivity set out by Aaker et al. (2008) is real-time emotional responses that are imperfectly remembered and biased. Maechler et al. (2016) argues against that point stating that a multitude of symbiotic touchpoints is good but is insufficient in fostering a positive experience for the consumer. Instead, they emphasise the importance of mapping the consumer journey and adding value in

that way (Maechler et al., 2016). In other words, positivity is about the value the cumulative experience of the consumer from different touchpoints (Maechler et al., 2016).

Campbell (2015)hails the start of Rainbow related marketing in the form of publications and advertising in the 1970s. There are implicit and explicit cues that have been used by companies to communicate with Rainbow communities. An explicit form of advertising that conveys a specific message is out-of-closet advertising. Out-of-closet advertising explicitly uses gay themes, dialogue, and icons, to convey messaging about the company's products or services and support of the Rainbow community (Tsai, 2012). There has been growing scepticism and caution regarding using homosexual icons or individuals in advertising because of the possibility of alienating mainstream consumers or even eliciting a negative response from them (Um, 2012). One of the solutions used by marketers to alleviate this prospect is to use gay window advertising that uses cues and pointers that can be identified by gay consumers and not their heterosexual counterparts (Borgerson et al., 2006). However, Tuten (2005) found evidence that responses of heterosexuals are not necessarily solely negative and found that they may also respond positively or neutrally, although these responses are conditional depending on the nature of the advertisement and the composition of the consumer's values (Dotson et al., 2009). As a result, contributing to gay related causes, using symbols and icons in advertising and promotion, and using third-party gay certification and rankings are some of the many ways that firms show their external gay friendliness, increase customer-brand engagement and thus cause positive positioning in the minds of Rainbow consumers.

Companies that want to appeal to this target group would contribute to gay-centred organisations or causes before even attempting to advertise or promote gay-related content (Gudelunas, 2011). It is another form of brand engagement that fosters awareness and builds brand equity for a company. Kates (2000) found that gay and lesbian consumers relied more on word of mouth rather than traditional marketing communications because they viewed the latter negatively in comparison to their heterosexual counterparts. Burnett (2000) came to a similar conclusion that homosexual consumers do not like or trust mass media and prefer direct and interactive communication. These causes and gay-related events allow companies to have the face-to-face communication that is desired by Rainbow consumers. Consequently, this creates value for both the consumer and the company itself.

Using Rainbow community related symbols and icons in mainstream advertising is the company's or brand's way of showing support to the community and validates the social movement propelled by Rainbow activists and influencers (Oakenfull & Greenelee, 2005). In addition, using these icons and symbols help to bring across messages that a company wants to convey based on their messaging strategy (Oakenfull & Greenelee, 2005). Self-congruity, again, provides a theoretical justification for using Queer imagery to attract Rainbow consumers.

In summary, in the context of this research, the Rainbow Tick (third-party certification) is a visual cue that communicates potential value for a Rainbow consumer. Literature shows that using Rainbow related marketing content and communication benefits Rainbow communities and they are likely to engage with companies that actively use that type of content. As a result, the Rainbow Tick should foster positive brand image, continuous engagement, and make touchpoints quite positive for Rainbow consumers. The question that looms is whether it is being used in an authentic way or is it a form of gay washing? How do Rainbow consumers view the use of the Rainbow Tick and is it adding value to them as it should? There will be more discussion around this idea in section 2.7.2 as a gap evident in literature.

2.6 Workplace Gay Friendliness

Before going into more detail regarding the focus of this research (i.e the Rainbow Tick), the following section discusses workplace gay friendliness. The Rainbow Tick certification body assesses whether a workplace is open and inclusive which shows their gay friendliness. Despite social progress and political developments, exclusion and discrimination is still faced by members of the Rainbow community in the workplace (Conley et al., 2007). Most research done on the experiences of gay workers has been in the context of workplaces that are discriminatory, oppressive, and homophobic (Seidman, 2002). Gay friendliness can take place in different forms, whether it be gay-friendly workplaces, schools, cities, countries, or tourism.

Tuten (2006) defines gay friendliness in the corporate context in the same way that you define environmentally friendly or family friendly which is a company that is "proactive in addressing the needs of gays."(p.80). The aim of being labelled as gay friendly or attempting to be gay friendly is to build a positive reputation and foster interaction with Rainbow people (Tuten, 2006). Most studies have come to a similar conclusion that there is a positive

relationship between favourable Rainbow policies and working environments and business results (Badgett, Durso, Mallory and Kastanis, 2013). For example, a study by Wang and Schwarz (2010) found a positive relationship between existence of gay friendly policies and stock performance. Gay liberation and activism have played a key role in influencing organisations to implement Rainbow friendly policies to protect Rainbow workers. Among the cues previously discussed in section 2.5.1, organisations use third-party certification. It provides an objective assessment of firm's efforts towards being gay friendly. However, there is a research gap around consumer views of companies' use of third-party certification to show their gay friendliness and how that impacts consumption behaviour towards the company.

There is little formal recognition of sexual orientation and gender identity (outside of the binary system) as an under researched topic in management and organisations studies in comparison to other inclusion and diversity measures like race or ethnicity (Colgan & McKearney, 2011). The research that does exist around Rainbow issues in the workforce mainly focuses on gay men and lesbians, although in more recent literature there has been recognition and analysis of the views and treatment of bisexuals and transgender individuals (Lloren & Parini, 2017). Research has also identified types of discrimination LGBT people face in the workplace including "stereotyping, sexual harassment and gender discrimination" (Giuffre et al., 2008, p. 255) in addition to career issues including dissatisfaction, discrimination, lack of confidence, and problems with networking (Parnell et al., 2012). Companies that attempt to implement gay friendly policies in business strategies decrease the likelihood of these things happening. However, it is possible for these Rainbow support policies to cause conflict and friction in the workplace as a result of workers with strict conservative or religious values that do not support the Rainbow community (Kaplan, 2006). It becomes a balancing act for these companies in implementing these policies to foster harmony within the workplace.

The number of policies that have been implemented by companies are vast but there is no authoritative typology for these policies (Lloren & Parini, 2017). Badgett et al. (2013) conducted a meta-analysis on LGBT- supportive policies in the workplace and found that they have the ability to increase the health and wellbeing of LGBT individuals by allowing them to be open and build relationships as their true self, which led to better productivity, job satisfaction, and positive behaviour. It even empowers individuals to report breaches in these

policies to management (Tejeda, 2006). This is important because one's sexual orientation and gender identity is a critical part of self-identification and suppressing these can have serious impact on their life and their relationship with others (Subhrajit, 2014).

One of the limitations that exist in this space is that most literature that discusses gay friendly practices in organisations and associated institutional change, is based in an American environment (Pulcher, 2018). More research is emerging in EU countries resulting in various case studies and comparative studies (Lloren & Parini, 2017). This shows a need for research into corporate gay friendliness in other contexts. The social, political and historical pressures of different contexts affects what is conceived as gay friendly practices. As a result, it would be beneficial for future research to capture nuances in the experiences of Rainbow people and attempts at gay-friendliness by companies in different contexts.

The floating point of reflection is the idea of authenticity. Companies can put in place policies and rules that help to build a workplace culture that is open and inclusive. But to what extent is this gay friendliness apparent? To what extent are the activities that companies implement to be gay friendly authentic? Do Rainbow consumers view it as real or do they deem it fake? Is there the possibility of woke washing? This thesis explores these elements, but from the perspective of non-binary and transgender consumers. There is nothing in the literature that captures these consumers' perceptions of companies using the Rainbow Tick as a show of gay friendliness or its effects on their consumer behaviour. To get the Rainbow Tick companies would need to meet specific criteria. Part of the criteria includes companies having inclusion and diversity policies that foster an inviting working environment. The spill over effect is that it appeals to Rainbow consumers because it should give them confidence in knowing that they are acknowledged and accepted by affiliated companies.

The next section narrows down the focus to third-party certification. It details what diversity third-party certifications exist and their significance. It is important for marketers to note the sentiments of Rainbow consumers towards company's gay-friendly activities. Given that information, shifts can be made to make the image of a company more socio-culturally relevant. According to Gudelunas (2011) Rainbow consumers know "about where, how, and why companies and brands reach out to them as a demographic focus" (p. 63). One of the major emerging tools companies use to show and communicate their commitment to gay

friendliness is through third-party diversity certification. Again, the third-party certification in question is the Rainbow Tick.

2.7 Third-party Certification and Diversity Rankings/Indexes

Third-party certification is another branding signal that brands use to show their gay friendliness. It is the main communication tool that will be researched in this project. The third-party certification in question is the Rainbow Tick. Third-party certifiers are an independent and credible entity that manages, evaluates and certifies companies against a specific standard in the marketplace (Anders, Souza Monteiro and Rouviere, 2007). Meuwissen, Velthuis, Hogeveen and Huirne (2003) describes certification as the evaluation and approval given by an accredited certifier that has deemed that a company has met a specific standard (for example food production for kosher purposes). These external certifiers need to be experienced and have authority regarding the standards they are measuring and can show that they have a well-developed and relevant system for doing that (Tanner, 2000). The credibility of a certifier is highly dependent on how independent and objective they are (Busch et al., 2005). Tanner (2000) also agrees that independence is the most important function that a third-party certifier can have. Credibility also comes from the certifier being accredited as well because they are more likely to be impartial and competent (Manning & Baines, 2004).

An important benefit of the third-party certification is that it decreases information asymmetry but the quality of information is dependent on the certifier's objectiveness (Deaton, 2004). Another reason is that signal senders and observers have the ability to distinguish between low quality and high-quality actors based on that signal (Bergh et al., 2014). For these reasons, properly established gay third-party certifications are important as a signal to consumers that a company is committed to addressing the needs of those in Rainbow communities.

There are many types of third-party certifications that have been studied – including kosher, halal, and green certification. Once certified, a company can used the logo or symbol associated with the certification to act as a signal to consumers. Parkinson (1975) had research that shows that consumers attach a great value to these symbols. His research found that those companies with external credible certification would influence individuals more than those without it (Parkinson, 1975). His research was based around seals and

certifications around products. The main focus here is a ranking or certification that is representative of a work environment (Parkinson, 1975). Another study into third-party certification that came to the same conclusion as Parkinson (1975) looked at kosher certification and found that people's perception of a kosher certified company was enhanced and led to more favourable attitudes to the brand and purchase intention (Kamins & Marks, 1991). Third-party certification has even been deemed to be more effective than companies that use self-declaration of a specific standard (D'Souza et al., 2007). However, the previously stated research is in regards to a seal or certification attributed to the quality of a consumable product. The third-party certification that is key in this thesis is different. Quality of a company's working environment and culture is more subjective and harder to measure than the makeup of the product.

Rainbow workplace rankings and indexes have emerged as a system that ranks and monitors businesses based on set criteria from a third-party regarding their organisation, performance, and commitment to workplace inclusion and diversity (Tayar, 2017). The problem is the viability of these rankings and indexes are limited because of issues with ways of quantifying representation (Tayar, 2017). Roberson and Park (2007) tells us that diversity ranking involves focusing in on representation in an organisation at different functional levels. The reason why there are issues with quantifying representation is due to low transparency of Rainbow individuals with sharing their identity in the workplace, making it hard to accurately measure the distribution of diverse people in an organisation (Tayar, 2017).

Table 2.5

Global Rainbow Inclusion Rankings

Country	Organization	Ranking	Key criteria
Australia	Pride In Diversity	Australian Workplace Equality Index (AWEI)	Assesses personal and organizational support, internal communications, prevention of bullying or negative commentary, awareness of the business case for LGBTI inclusion and questions on the lived experiences of LGBTI employees (Pride In Diversity, 2015).
Canada	Pride at Work Canada	LGBT Workplace Inclusion Index	A 25 question survey but results are not widely published and instead members receive individual feedback to help them improve in future years (Pride At Work Canada, 2015).
France	l'Autre Cercle	QuickScan	Assesses corporate culture, HR processes and tools, commitment and visibility, equal treatment in HR policies, LGBT workplace network, and appropriate internal communications (L'Autre Cercle, 2015)
Germany	Prout at Work Foundation	Proutemployer	Assesses how well corporations communicate internally and externally and their overall commitment to creating an LGBT-inclusive work environment (Prout at Work, 2015)
Hong Kong	Community Business	Hong Kong LGBT Workplace Inclusion Index	Assesses the policies, structures, training, employee benefits, corporate culture, positioning, monitoring and community advocacy (Community Business, 2015)
Ireland	Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN)	Workplace Equality Index	Assesses the diversity of leadership, inclusion policies and practices, LGBT visibility, diversity culture, and diverse business practices (GLEN, 2015)
Italy	Parks Diversity	GLBT Diversity Index	Assesses the involvement of senior management, extension of benefits to same-sex partners, training employees on non-discrimination issues, as well as internal and external communication (Parks Diversity, 2015)
Netherlands	Workplace Pride Foundation	Workplace Pride Global Benchmark	Benchmarks "to measure and address the mis-match between (international) LGBT workplace policies, and their actual implementation." (Workplace Pride Foundation, 2014, p. 2)
New Zealand	Affinity Services	Rainbow Tick Certification	Audits in five areas: policy, training, engagement and organizational support, external engagement and monitoring (Rainbow Tick, 2015)
Slovakia	Diversity PRO	Rozbehnime rozmanitos	Acts only as a declaration of support for employers which intends to be open, supportive and inclusive of LGBT talent (Diversity PRO, 2015)
United Kingdom	Stonewall	Workplace Equality Index and Global Workplace Equality Index	Policies, training, employee networks, staff engagement, monitoring, line manager support, procurement, community engagement, career development plus feedback from employees on disclosure, visibility and support (Stonewall, 2015a)
United States	Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation	Corporate Equality Index (EI)	Non-discrimination protections including for contractors in the US and prohibition of philanthropy where non-religious organizations discriminate against LGBT people (Human Rights Campaign, 2015)

(Tayar, 2017, p. 199)

Research by Tayar (2017) found that these rankings legitimise diversity and inclusion practices by companies and publicly shows companies' support for Rainbow communities. The rankings only have symbolic value, however, and do not add much value to the group. Meaning, there rankings do not have much of a positive effect on the experiences of those in Rainbow communities. Suchman (1995) describes legitimacy as a "generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions." (p. 574). Tayar (2017) found that the indexes and rankings reward conformity to the archetype of inclusion but has the danger of being a superficial representation rather than the truth of what is actually happening. She defined archetypes using the description put forward by Greenwood and Hinings (1993). They state that archetypes are "a set of structures and systems consistently reflexive of a single, underpinning interpretive scheme" (Greenwood and Hinnings, 1993, pg. 1057). An interpretative scheme according to Ranson et al. (1980) involves one's beliefs, ideas and values. Organisations shift their structures and system to fit the institutional archetype that exists in their industry (Greenwood and Hinnings, 1993). The archetype in this

case would be an organisation that is open, diverse, and inclusive of a variety of identity markers to align with changes in social ties (stronger positive acknowledgement of varied identities whether it be race, language, gender identity etc.). Do consumers share the same sentiment as Tayar (2017)? Again this research examines how consumers feel and react to these certifications (i.e the Rainbow Tick).

The fundamental issue though is that the overall results and effectiveness of these policies and practices are virtually unknown and come down to conjecture (Kalev et al., 2006). These rankings and certification agencies have created their own evaluation and measurement criteria. Cochran and Wood (1984) even stated that some corporate social and environmental rankings (which the Rainbow Tick aligns to) are based on subjectively built criteria on insufficient information. Evans (2014) believes that if these programs and policies are going to work, even with its limitations, there is a need for radical archetypal change. This would mean creating a culture shift with the implementation of inclusion and diversity programs throughout an entire organisation (Tayar, 2017). The focus of research is not measuring the effectiveness of policies and practices in organisations. There have been best practices published that direct managers in facilitating a diverse and inclusive workplace. The focus here however is engaging in research that tries to understand consumer's perception of the certification/ranking and their resulting purchasing behaviour.

A mix of companies trying to fit to institutional archetypes and the difficulty of measuring and evaluating diversity in a workplace creates a problem. The issue is in terms of legitimacy versus woke washing. Are companies authentically and faithfully representing their inclusivity or is it a case of a box ticking exercise that creates social value of the company and helps them to gain competitive advantage? Lai (2019) took a legal approach to analyse the legitimacy of the Rainbow Tick. The paper described the Rainbow Tick as misleading because it coins itself as a certification when it is not (Lai, 2019). According to the law, certifications should be comparable to a publicly available standard (Lai, 2019). In this case, there is no publicly available standard for inclusivity measures within an organisation. Based on analysis by Lai (2019), it should not be called a certification in the first place and if the desire is to remain a certification there needs to be more transparency that comes from the Rainbow Tick organisation about how it is evaluating organisations for their level of diversity and inclusivity (Lai, 2019).

The Rainbow Tick is a certification mark that companies can get as an objective representation that they are an inclusive and diverse working environment based on sexual orientation and gender identity (Rainbow Tick, 2020). They must undergo a diversity and inclusion assessment and training process before attaining the mark (Rainbow Tick, 2020). It focuses on different areas within an organisation namely policies, staff training, staff engagement, staff support and external engagement. These areas are monitored and reviewed on an annual basis (Rainbow Tick, 2020). The Rainbow Tick is a service of Kāhui Tū Kaha - a not-for-profit Ngāti Whātua organisation that aims to get worthwhile health and social outcomes for all. According to their website, the Rainbow Tick should provide great benefits for companies in terms of the community-brand relationship, variety in labour acquisition, job satisfaction, and greater job confidence for those seeking employment. .

There have been a few issues associated with the Rainbow Tick and affiliated companies. Fletcher Building became the first construction company to attain the Rainbow Tick in 2015 (Radio New Zealand, 2019). Kim, a now transgender worker, had been told by her manager that she should not be in a client facing position (Radio New Zealand, 2019). She endured countless forms bullying due to her change in gender identity even though Fletcher was Rainbow Tick affiliated (Radio New Zealand, 2019). Another incident occurred at Massey University – another Rainbow Tick affiliated party (Desmarais, 2019). They were willing to host a Feminism convention that was outwardly transphobic and did not believe transwomen should have the same rights as biological women (Desmarais, 2019). After heavy public criticism and backlash from the campus' pride group, UniQ, they cancelled the event (Desmarais, 2019). These are just two relatively public examples of moments where Rainbow Tick organisations faltered in their commitment to the wellbeing of their stakeholders.

Using and acquiring the Rainbow Tick by an organisation should contribute to their overall social value. Vredenburg et al. (2020) proposed a typology that can be used to look at business and determine if they are authentic (in their use and implementation of diversity policies and practices) or engaging in woke washing. Again, woke washing is a practice in which companies market or project a certain message but their practices do not reflect that message (Vredenburg et al., 2018). These are pro-social messages that reflect pertinent issues in society (Vredenburg et al., 2018). Plainly put, they said this typology measures whether brands are actually doing what they say they are (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

One of the typologies that they discuss is authentic brand activism. The four factors that need to be symbiotic to show authenticity from a brand based on this framework (see figure 1) are purpose, value, messaging, and practice. Every company has a purpose and value by which they should operate. Based on their values, companies will choose to tackle socio-political issues. Their market messaging will reflect that. Moreover, they will engage in strategic actions that reflect their stipulated advocacy for the socio-political cause. If a company is to be perceived as being authentic, their values and purpose must line up with their messaging and actions.

Figure 2.1

Typologies of Brand Activism

(Vrendenburg et al., 2020, p. 449)

If there is a gap between the connection of these components, there is a lack of authenticity (Vredenburg et al., 2020). A company with the Rainbow Tick potentially should exist in the second and third quadrant. The difference between those two quadrants is the high versus low use of activist marketing messages. To achieve authentic brand activism, companies should be producing activist messaging that aligns with social and economic issues faced by Rainbow communities. Their practices should be progressive and take into consideration variations in needs of individuals in Rainbow communities. For example, having family policies for same gendered couples and policies around name changes for transgender employees. Their values and purpose should be reflective of a company that believes in inclusivity and diversity. For the scope of this research there will not be extensive detail that goes into using the typology set out by Vredenburg et al. (2020). That would change the aim

of the study and a more appropriate research method should be used (for example multiple case study of companies with the Rainbow Tick). The typology provides a theoretical lens that can be used in discussion regarding the experiences of non-binary and transgender consumers' and their interpretation of the authenticity of a Rainbow affiliated company's commitment to diversity and the resulting consumption behaviour.

2.8 Conclusion

In summary, there are many gaps in literature identified within Rainbow consumer studies. The two gender identities being targeted in this research have been discussed. The multiplicity of their identity and experiences as well as their vulnerability in the market make them an important group to research. Scholars have stated that they are still an under researched group of consumers. Companies have adopted Rainbow related marketing to appeal to Rainbow communities. It shows their allyship and commitment to Rainbow communities. The question is, how legitimate are Rainbow Tick affiliated companies' efforts from the perspective of Rainbow consumers. The major gap here is that there has not been research that has investigated Rainbow consumer's perception and behaviour towards the a third-party diversity certification such as the Rainbow Tick. Existing consumer literature on Rainbow consumers is focused on gay cis gender men. There is very little research that is purely focused on the needs, desires and behaviours of non-binary and transgender consumers.

As a result, given the gaps in literature presented in this review, the following research questions were developed:

1. How do non-binary and transgender consumers perceive the Rainbow Tick?
2. How does the Rainbow Tick affect transgender and non-binary consumers' purchasing behaviour?

Chapter Three – Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology and methods used to answer the following research questions:

1. How do non-binary and transgender consumers perceive the Rainbow Tick?

2. How does the Rainbow Tick affect transgender and non-binary consumers' purchasing behaviour?

This chapter begins by focusing on the researcher's epistemological approach before outlining the appropriate methodology to answer the research questions and achieve the overall research aim. From here, details regarding the methods adopted are presented. Thereafter, the chapter provides a description of how the data was analysed. Subsequently, the steps the researcher took to establish trustworthiness are shown. Lastly, the chapter concludes by discussing the ethical considerations accounted for during the research project.

3.2 Research Purpose

The Rainbow Tick recognises companies that have implemented diversity and inclusion workplace policies which address the needs of Rainbow individuals. Companies carrying out these practises aim to create an accepting and open work environment. The law obligates people and organisations to conform to certain rules, however, acquiring the Rainbow Tick and implementing workplace diversity policies is entirely voluntary. Rainbow communities represent approximately six to 15% of New Zealand's population (Ministry of Health, 2017). The next census, set to be held in 2023, will give a more definitive measure of the size of the Rainbow community because the survey will include a wider variety of gender and orientation options for the first time. As a result, developing and using a system such as this is critical. Rainbow individuals face risk because they do not conform to cis-heteronormative practices which are deemed acceptable by society (Hull, 2016). It should help Rainbow individuals to identify working environments and companies that would be deemed as safe for them in terms of their ability to freely and fully express themselves without retribution and victimisation, which is crucial for their quality of life and wellbeing. Transgender and non-binary consumers are the main focus of this research. Existing literature shows that they are vulnerable consumers (McKeage et al., 2018). The question is, how do they view and behave towards the Rainbow Tick? A tool that should be improving their experiences and protecting them.

There is currently no research that has been carried out to capture Rainbow consumers' views of third-party Rainbow diversity certification, a major gap this research fills. Additionally, research on transgender and non-binary consumers is limited in consumer research studies. This research will add to the small body of literature currently available on this group of consumers. Many of the articles written have focused on cisgender, White, gay men. More knowledge and understanding of transgender and non-binary consumers' experiences in the marketplace can help Rainbow friendly companies. It will help them to learn and adopt their practices and policies where necessary in order to properly cater to the needs of Rainbow people working within their organisation and in the general Rainbow population.

3.3 Research Approach

Embedded in this section is discourse related to the beliefs of the researcher. The first part involves the epistemology of the researcher. In short, it illuminates the researcher's perspective on what constitutes "truth" and how knowledge is created. Following this, the theoretical approach will be divulged. This research is based on the conceptualisation of Crotty (1998) which posits the basic elements of social research are the methods, methodology, theoretical perspective, and the epistemology.

3.3.1 Epistemology

The epistemology that underpins this research project is constructivism. One's epistemological beliefs have to do with "socially shared institutions" about what constitutes knowledge and how it is learnt (Jehng et al., 1993, p. 24). Also, when looking at epistemology, the focus is on how one views or defines the relationship between the researcher and participants (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Constructivism relates to how an individual creates meaning about their surroundings based on perceptions built up from past experiences, whereas constructionism focuses on combining each person's meaning-making to create collective understanding (Crotty, 1998). Consequently, constructivism takes into consideration social influences in one's environment and how it may affect their learning, how they build knowledge and the way they create meaning. These social influences include individual's interactions with people and other actors. Knowledge is then formed from those social influences when individuals interpret their own and other people's behaviour in addition to social settings in general (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Greene, 1994). These interactions are different for each person and as such, their interpretations may differ even if the stimuli observed is the same.

As a result of these varied social influences that help to develop an individual's construction of the world, within constructivist epistemology, it is understood that there can be multiple realities created based upon each person's circumstances (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Constructions are people's interpretations of stimuli. In the context of this thesis, the interpretation would be the value and suitability of the Rainbow Tick certification. As opposed to constructionism which believes that meaning is created from the collective of social interpretations, within constructivism, each person's interpretation of reality is considered individually and is equally valid in its own right (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). It is on the onus of the researcher to understand why specific meanings arise from an individual's interpretation of things around them (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). The general agreement of these constructs forms a viewpoint towards the subject in question (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Smith, 1989). In this case, it is non-binary and transgender consumers' interpretation of the Rainbow Tick and its significance to both consumers and the organisations/brands.

Constructivism also acknowledges the relationship between the researcher and participants (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Of the multiple realities previously stated, one of the realities is of the researcher and their evaluation of the constructions from the participants (Schwandt, 2000). Researchers that claim to be constructivist must be introspective and thoughtful in their interpretation of meaning because they must understand the reasoning or significance behind the construction of a specific reality (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

3.3.2 Theoretical Perspective

Given the epistemology of the researcher, an appropriate theoretical perspective would be the use of hermeneutics. The theoretical perspective gives the philosophical premise for choosing a specific methodology (Crotty, 1998).

According to Lincoln and Guba (2000), constructivists adopt a relative ontology (relativism), a transactional epistemology and a hermeneutic, dialectal methodology. As a result, hermeneutics is the theoretical perspective used in this thesis. Ezzy (2002) summarises hermeneutics as the "art and science of interpretation" (p. 24). It is a suitable frame to use in qualitative research (Lalli, 1989; Polkinghorne, 1988). Hermeneutics recognises the difference between a variety of individual's constructions and why they may arise as a result of their differing backgrounds and experiences. Moreover, the constructions are seen to be social and can only arise due to social interaction or influences (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). As a result, the researcher must interpret the individual's constructions of reality using

hermeneutical techniques (Arnold & Fischer, 1994). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) believe researchers that use the hermeneutic technique adopt the perspective of Dewey (1916) in their analysis. Dewey (1916) believed individuals take on the values, role and norms of the social group they identify with and from that, their view of the world is formed, helping them delineate what is essential and what is not. Hermeneutical analysts need to know what these criteria are in their work (Madison, 1988; Mullen, 1999).

3.3.2.1 The Role of the Researcher

However, this is not only attributed to research participants. It also applies to the researcher. Hermeneutics is about sharing meaning (Crotty, 1998). Researchers have their own criteria for evaluation and what they deem valuable based on their relational orbits (Kincheloe, 1991; Lugg, 1996). This means that the researcher has their own notions and pre-conceptions before even beginning to interpret or analyse stimuli. It is the prior knowledge of the researcher that gives them a point of reference when comparing and analysing participant constructions. Understanding what those constructions are is key. This prior knowledge could relate to the research topic or the participants themselves. Tate (1998) sums up why focusing on the researcher in this way is crucial by stating that, "meaning is always negotiated between one's own pre-conceptions and those within the horizons of the other" (p. 13). As a result, the researcher has used their own experience identifying as gender-fluid to aid in construction interpretation (see Appendix A for non-binary gender identities) within his context. Furthermore, a personal reflective journal has been written to track the thoughts of the researcher during the data collection and analysis process.

Another reason that makes it essential to acknowledge the role of the researcher is in accordance with the work of Arnold and Fischer (1994). There are different stages to consider when looking at what an individual remembers and shares about a lived experience. The first evaluation happens at the time of the event, the second occurs when they recall it and share it with the researcher and the third time is when the researcher hears the experience themselves (Arnold & Fischer, 1994). As a result, it is important to note the significance of the researcher as a participant since they play a role in interpretation. The interpretation that the researcher provides also influences the research just as the participant's does (Arnold & Fischer, 1994). This thesis accepts the role of the researcher as a participant.

Within this same vein, language plays a role. Hermeneutics is concerned with the way that understanding is communicated in terms of language and the nature of communication

(Arnold and Fischer, 1994). It is through language that participants can communicate with the researcher. Language helps the researcher to discern the individual's constructions (Crotty, 1998). Not just to discern it but to gain a deep understanding of it beyond even what the participants know themselves. Thus, meaning explicated is culturally and historically bound (Crotty, 1998). It is through language that these constructions are linked to meaning (Arnold and Fischer, 1994). Based on the epistemology of the research, understanding is socially constructed. In hermeneutics, the shapes and nuances of this understanding are assumed to be transferred through language (Arnold & Fischer, 1994). This research uses semi-structured interviews which allows for perpetual discourse between the researcher and participant (using language) and attempts to elicit meaning regarding the research topic. Details on the method will be further discussed in section 3.5. Hermeneutics is appropriate because the method being adopted uses verbal language as a form of communication between the researcher and the participants. Again, within hermeneutics it is about the interpretation of language and looks at each individual's constructions and why they arise. Therefore, a hermeneutic perspective would be suitable since the researcher has to interpret the experiences of each participant in relation to the research topic.

3.4 Methodology

The methodology for any research answers the question of what "governs our choice and use of methods" (Crotty, 1998, p. 2). It is the approach that a researcher deems fitting for exploring and understanding a given proposition (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The methodology was chosen based on the philosophical beliefs of the researcher outlined in Section 3.3. Additionally, the methodology chosen is in keeping with the assumptions of qualitative methods. Justification for choosing to use qualitative methods versus quantitative methods is discussed below. The method that will be used in this study aligning with qualitative research is semi-structured interviews. The section concludes by discussing key points related to semi-structured interviews.

3.4.1 Qualitative vs Quantitative

Qualitative and quantitative methods each have different definitions and associations. However, they do not need to be mutually exclusive and work done by Creswell (1994) found that a confluence of the two can reap compelling insights into social phenomena. The difference lies in terms of:

- How each method is defined.

- The motivation for choosing to use either method.
- The researcher's underlying epistemology.
- The methods that are most appropriate to the research questions.

Qualitative research is associated with discovering or exploring an event or idea while quantitative methods are associated with justifying why something occurred (Park & Park, 2016). Research involving discovery begins by understanding what has been done or researched in the past, creates research objectives or propositions, collates data from a chosen source and then analyses it to derive new insights (Zaltman et al., 1973). On the other hand, justification involves evaluating results, propagating information, explaining and making predictions from that information, and lastly ensuring control activities take place (Zaltman et al., 1973). More formally, and in a traditional sense, qualitative research methods explore more extensive and comprehensive information about an individual's attitudes, behaviours and motivations towards a specific phenomenon (Barnham, 2015). Comparatively, quantitative research methods try to establish what the 'facts' are and elicit data points that justify why something occurs (Barnham, 2015).

In regard to epistemology, qualitative research is associated with constructionist/subjectivist research that ascertains the meanings that people have developed towards a specific thing (Crotty, 1998). Quantitative research is correlated with an objective/positivist epistemology (Crotty, 1998). The methods that are most commonly be used to complete qualitative research are interviews and focus groups which include questioning that tries to elicit in-depth answers and reasoning (Jackson et al., 2007). It answers the "how" and "why" questions that would be used to explore the research objectives or hypotheses (Hair, Bush and Ortinau, 2006). Quantitative methods include experiments and surveys that capture more statistical type data (Jackson et al., 2007). These methods generate numerical data divulged from a sample derived from the target population of a study. The results from quantitative research can generate generalisable results regarding that specific population (Marshall, 1996). Results are not generalisable for qualitative studies on the other hand. Because of smaller sample sizes, qualitative research is often not generalisable to a wider population, but is instead valued for its particularisation by telling the story of a particular perspective, perception or action. However with detailed description of the findings, the findings of qualitative studies can be transferable to similar contexts. Given this comparison of qualitative versus quantitative research methods, the next section justifies why the researcher decided to adopt a qualitative approach.

For this research, a qualitative approach was used. It is the most appropriate type of research to use for this exploratory research topic to explore the research questions (Hair et al., 2006). The research questions seek to understand how non-binary and transgender consumers perceive the Rainbow Tick and how it affects their consumption choices. Qualitative research, in this case, will illustrate non-binary and transgender consumers' experiences in the market as opposed to merely attempting to create a causal relationship or statistical inference about what is happening to that group of consumers. Qualitative research provides more depth in gauging individual's attitudes, values, and motivations compared to what quantitative analysis can do (Calder, 1977). The Rainbow Tick is also a relatively new concept and there is currently nothing in marketing literature that has explored the use of this new form of diversity branding. As a result, uncovering perspectives of these vulnerable and under-researched groups and their interaction with this new tool in the marketplace calls for exploratory/discovery type research. Therefore, a qualitative approach is suitable.

The epistemological beliefs of the researcher also call for the use of qualitative research. The researcher's constructionist epistemology means that the researcher seeks to understand the meaning making of each individual based on what they have observed or been exposed to (Crotty, 1998). Hence, a qualitative approach is fitting to understand the experiences of each person related to their exposure to the Rainbow Tick.

There is currently a lack of understanding in the field of Rainbow or LGBT+ consumer research because it is seldom understood by scholars (Creswell, 2007), and research involving Rainbow communities has only just increased due to society being more open and inclusive of Rainbow people. What we know socially and psychologically about Rainbow communities has continued to evolve through the years as social and legal restrictions in many places continue to ease (Dobscha, 2019). Our knowledge of sexual orientation, gender identity and how people express themselves differs from that of ten years ago because of gradual shifts in attitudes towards the community (Perry et al., 2015). Consequently, consumer researchers must ascertain knowledge about Rainbow communities' choices, evaluation criteria, and preferences since the socio-culturally context in terms of Rainbow acceptance has shifted (Dobscha, 2019). The benefit of adopting a qualitative approach is that it helps the researcher figure out precisely what that "newness" and "evolution" is. Though there is more research emerging regarding transgender individuals, research related to non-binary consumers is not covered in many current research pieces that are within Rainbow community research spaces (Van Schuylenbergh et al., 2018). Therefore, qualitative research

would be appropriate to gain more understanding about the lives and experiences of non-binary people because research that is available is currently extremely limited, and this approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences and perceptions.

3.4.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the method of data collection to capture the perceptions and behaviours of non-binary and transgender consumers. It was used to answer the previously outlined research objectives (see section 3.2). Taylor and Bogdan (1998) state that this is an appropriate method to use when research objectives are unambiguous. Also, according to Renzetti and Lee (1993), sensitive research topics have the potential to affect any level of the research planning and implementation process. Non-binary and transgender individuals, though they are living in a marginally more accepting social environment (Meyer, 2016), still face discrimination and marginalisation that adds to their vulnerability (Ansara & Friedman, 2016). "It is not unusual for the powerless or disadvantaged to treat the researcher with scepticism, fearing that cooperation will bring in its wake only further exploit" (Renzetti & Lee, 1993, p. 101) . Consequently, it is important to be careful in the method that is used to collect data from this target group.

Privacy and confidentiality take on an even more significant role because participants share personal anecdotes or intimate information regarding their identity and experiences within society (Burton et al., 1995). The researcher should work towards creating an environment that is not intimidating or threatening (Robson & Foster, 1989). The researcher identifies as a part of the Rainbow community and as such, has the potential to add a sense of comfort during the interviews. Consensual validation justifies why the researcher identifying with Rainbow communities is important and aids in the interview process. Consensual validation results in positive affect and liking (Hampton & Sprecher, 2017). It arises as a result of people interacting with others that are akin to their beliefs and attitudes (Byrne & Clore, 1970; Hampton & Sprecher, 2017). According to Hampton et al. (2019) "The positive reinforcement received from being consensually validated in turn leads to liking for the other" (p. 2223). Thus, there are benefits to having an interview that allows for conversations between people that identify within analogous communities.

Interviews also provide privacy and comfort because they mitigate other actors that might influence the respondents negatively. They not only allow for rapport to be achieved (which adds to consensual validation between the interviewer and the interviewee in an informal

setting), but also give participants the time to think and respond to prompts from the interviewer (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). In addition, interviews eliminate the need for an observer (Gill et al., 2008) which positively adds to the level of comfort participants feel and removes the probability of them reacting negatively in the interview or withholding important information (Robson & Foster, 1989). It is difficult to measure the influence of an observer (Robson & Foster, 1989). Semi-structured interviews are a method used by many other researchers to explore and discover the experiences of non-binary and transgender individuals around sensitive topics (Barnes, 2020; Darwin, 2020; Haley, 2019; Johnson et al., 2019; McKeage et al., 2018; McSpadden, 2020).

The researcher considered other potential qualitative methods to use but they would not be an ideal choice to answer the research questions. The research topic is quite sensitive because the participants are prompted to share both positive and negative experiences. These are a vulnerable group of consumers (McKeage et al., 2018) and they come with a plethora of varied experiences. Focus groups create a setting that is not private enough to allow the participants to feel comfortable to be open about their perspectives (Acocella & Acocella, 2012). The interviews create a setting that allows the researcher to build more rapport with the person and foster open dialogue in a safe environment (Elmir et al., 2011). Ethnographic research is another qualitative technique that the researcher considered, however, although the researcher is a member of Rainbow communities, there are not many Queer spaces available that would allow them to observe non-binary and transgender consumer's discussions about the Rainbow Tick, nor would the time limit of a Master's thesis allow for this approach.

3.5 Methods

This section will elaborate on how the previously discussed methodologies will be used to acquire data from the target group of this thesis (Crotty, 1998). This section discusses the participants and how they were selected. Furthermore, it will look at the data collection procedures that the researcher conducted in order to attain the dataset to analyse and answer the research questions.

3.5.1 Participants

This section illustrates the selection criteria and the sampling involved in this research. Fifteen interviews were completed involving non-binary and transgender consumers. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) affirm that for interviews, six participants are enough.

3.5.1.1 Selection Criteria

To judge if a participant could be chosen, they had to identify as being transgender male, transgender female or one of the non-binary gender identities. Moreover, they had to be available to participate in the interview process and willing to take part in the research project. The age of the individuals was open but slightly limited in order to capture a variety of voices with varying perspectives based on life experiences. The only age restriction is that participants had to be older than 17 years old (in keeping with the approval of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee). As stated in the literature review, the majority of the research presented on Rainbow communities is centred on gay, cis-gendered White men in westernised countries. This sample diversified that recurring sample demographic by exploring the views of gender diverse people. Table 3.1 shows the breakdown of the demographics of the sample:

Table 3.1

Participants

Aliases	Gender Identity	Age	Pronoun
Devin	Trans Woman	31	She/her
Tyler	Trans Man	57	He/him
Louise	Intersex	57	She/her
James	Trans Man	37	he/him
Tea	Non-binary	32	They/them
Orange	Trans Man	28	He/him or they/them
Hunter	Non-binary (Gender queer, gender fluid and gender vague)	32	They/them
Kai	Fakaleiti[7]	41	they/them
Astrid	Takatāpui and genderqueer	25	They/them
Alex	Non-binary	34	they/them
Danny	Trans Man	27	he/him

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[7] Men are not just cross-dressers but often males who have been reared as females and see themselves as females. This may happen where there is a shortage of girls to help a mother or where a boy expresses a wish to undertake traditional female tasks. Today as in the past, they are valued for their skills and strength (Farran, 2004)

Grayson	Trans Man	26	He/him
Robin	Gender diverse	46	They/them
Morgan	Non-binary (Gender queer)	51	They/them
Kamareira	Non-binary male. Trans history	27	He/him

3.5.1.2 Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to source participants to explore the research questions. Rainbow communities include large groups of consumers which would prove difficult to capture because of the nuances in gender identities and sexual orientations. As a result, this study will focus on a subset of the Rainbow population that has been considered in research to be an under-provided for group in society (Samelius & Wägberg, 2005). Non-binary and transgender consumers were chosen because they represent an under-catered for and vulnerable group in the marketplace (McKeage et al., 2018) and their thoughts and opinions could be useful for future marketing and business practices.

There were difficulties that the researcher had to overcome in attaining a sample. He initially asked Rainbow organisations and advocacy groups around the country to help spread the word about his project. They used their social media pages to post about the research project and help the researcher reach potential participants. The researcher also joined the Transgender and Intersex NZ Facebook page and posted a message with the aim of recruiting more participants once the pages' administrators granted permission. The participants then sent an email or private message to the researcher to show their interest in the research. From that point, the researcher either responded to the email or obtained their email address and sent them the information sheet and consent form. It was from that point that the pre-interview process began which is discussed in section 3.5.2.3. The problem was that initially there was little interest.

The researcher did not understand the depth of the issues that transgender and non-binary people have had with not just the Rainbow Tick but market researchers that they believe only want to exploit them. This made people hesitant to take part in the research. He even received strong backlash from people that believed that he was only there for economic gain and not out of a genuine concern for the welfare of the transgender and non-binary people. He spoke

with the university's Rainbow advisor and his supervisors to help with these issues. In addition, the researcher was told to reach out to Gender Minorities Aotearoa (GMA) by a moderator of the Facebook page. GMA is responsible for moderating the Transgender and Intersex NZ Facebook page and ensure that it remains a safe online environment of transgender, intersex, and non-binary people. They wanted more clarity about the research topic. Those conversations between GMA and the researcher revealed why people were so cynical or resistant to the researcher asking them to participate in the project.

After a few compelling and eye-opening conversations with GMA, the researcher rewrote the post. One of the moderators of the page, as well as the Rainbow advisor, also commented showing support. They are well known and trusted in the community due to their work and as a result, the researcher gained more interest and obtained 15 interview participants.

3.5.2 Data Collection Procedures

3.5.2.1 Development of an Interview Guide

According to Kallio et al. (2016), one should ensure that the researcher has built a knowledge base surrounding basic ideas, themes and concepts within the field of study. Given what has been elaborated on in the literature review, the next step they propose is to develop the preliminary interview guide (Kallio et al., 2016).

The interview guide was created with the recommendations of Denzin and Lincoln (2018) in mind. The interview guide was simply structured and began with protocols that the researcher (e.g. the interviewer) read to the participants. It started with guidance points for those who had to use the Zoom Video Conferencing platform to participate due to location restrictions. Following that, the guide prompts the interviewer to introduce themselves and relay aspects of their identity. Subsequently the guide had prompts that ensured the interviewer described the project and its significance. Thereafter, it lists the privacy and confidentiality procedures that the researcher would adhere to given the recommendations from general literature and the Human Ethics Committee at the university. Following that, contact information was provided for Rainbow community support organisations in the event that the discussion becomes triggering or causes any emotional distress due to the participant recalling significant moments in their life. Finally, the guide ends with a layout of the actual interview questions. Each question had additional follow up questions that the researcher believed would help to foster rich conversations that would help them obtain data relevant to the research questions.

These questions were developed by the researcher based on information he believed was required to answer the research questions and the literature. While developing the questions, the researcher was informed by literature he read regarding Rainbow people in consumer and marketing studies and created the questions accordingly. A draft of the guide was sent to the researcher's supervisor in order to gain feedback and ensure the questions were related to marketing and consumer studies. The researcher made the necessary adjustments given their feedback and then proceeded to pre-test the questions.

3.5.2.2 Pre-testing

The researcher selected three people to be involved in the pre-test stage. Two were recent graduates from the university that identified as cisgender and gay. The other person was a working professional that identified as non-binary. The researcher also consulted with their supervisor after pre-testing to add more guidance in terms of managing the discussion between the interviewer and the interviewee. Given the pre-test the following changes needed to be made or added to the interview guide:

- Add a question that plainly states how the Rainbow Tick would affect purchasing decision.
- Needed to add a question that prompted the participant to describe how they felt about the way affiliated companies communicate their affiliation.
- Added a little prompt that reminds the interviewer to get the participants' opinion from a consumer's point of view. This ensures that the discussion does not diverge into best practices for management and still has a marketing flavour to it.
  - Statement is "From a consumer standpoint…"
- If the participant only worked for an affiliated company and did not interact with a company that was affiliated, then there was a prompt added. They would be asked to think about their experience in the company and answer the following question:
  - If this were happening in another company, how would that affect your buying behaviour?

3.5.2.3 In Preparation for the Interview

There were fifteen interviews that took place with individuals of varied ages and gender identities (see section 3.5.1.1 for a breakdown). The researcher used different forms of communication due to the contextual issues that most of the participants faced. These issues included location restrictions, time limitations and access to required technology. The

different forms of communication included phone calls, online video conferencing platforms (Zoom and Skype) or in person conversations. More specifically, there were seven interviews done online, one over the phone, and seven in-person.

There were different pre-interview protocols used depending on the medium of communication. For all modes the processes began by interview participants receiving an information-based email. It included the information sheet and the consent form that they needed to read. The information sheet provided them with information about the research topic they would be questioned on. The consent sheet was a document that showed their rights as a participant and what practices they agree to involvement in. The procedure then changed depending on the medium of communication:

1. Online (via Zoom or Skype) – The participants were asked to sign the consent form and submit it early (before the day of the interview). This strategy was chosen due to the intricacies that participants may face in trying to sign a document and send it back on a computer system (mitigates the risk of unnecessary time loss during the interviews). Following that, the participants were sent another email detailing the Zoom link and the individualised password required to access the meeting. For the participant that preferred skype, the researcher sent them their skype name and added them as a contact prior to the day of the interview.

2. Phone – there was a participant that had time restrictions and limited access to technology. They shared that problem in response to the initial email that was sent including the information sheet and consent form. They provided their number so that the researcher could contact them at a time that suited them. They fully consented to the researcher contacting them in that manner. In a similar sense to online participants, they had to send their signed consent form prior to the day of the interview.

3. In-person – compared to online and over the phone procedures, the participants were asked to bring a signed copy of the consent form after they had read the information sheet they were sent upon agreeing to participate in the research study. This again was sent to them via email.

3.5.2.4 Interview Process

3.5.2.4.1 Introductory phase:

Prior to the start of the formal section of the interview containing the prompts related to the research questions, the basic introductory procedure took place. The same basic procedure was followed regardless of the medium of communication. The only difference was online or over the phone participants had a few additional steps.

1. Online (via Zoom or Skype) - The researcher checked audio and video settings to ensure that they are in working order. Participants were asked to keep their audio and video on during the interview and only turn them off when there was a break during the interview proceedings.

2. Phone– The researcher called the participants and requested that they stayed on the phone unless they were on a break. If there was a break, the call would be terminated and resumed when the break was over.

Those in person did not have to deal with technology issues so there were no additional protocols needed in conjunction with the ones outlined below. The basic procedure followed, no matter what the medium of communication was, included:

1. Introduction of the researcher – this includes information about his name, what he was studying towards, his gender identity, sexual orientation, and preferred pronouns. This introduction was aimed at getting the participants comfortable with the researcher because the researcher is also a part of the Rainbow population.

2. Discussion of any issues or questions they had about the information sheet and the consent form.

3. Introduction of research topic so that the participants were reminded about what the point of focus of the discussion was.

4. Reiteration of basic privacy and the confidentiality procedures that have been recommended by the Human Ethics Committee at the University of Canterbury.

5. Remind interviewees that participation in the interview is voluntary and they can opt out of the interview at any point if the conversation is triggering or makes them uncomfortable. Additionally, they were reminded to contact support services if they

needed it before the formal questioning began and the contact numbers were provided to participants.

6. Gain final consent from participants to record the meeting before starting the recording devices.

Before the formal interview process began, the participants were asked to share demographics with the researcher. They were asked what their preferred pronouns were and how they would like to be identified during the interview and the thesis write up. These pronouns could be single-gendered pronouns (for example he, him, she or her), neutral pronouns (for example ze, hir), no pronouns, or a mixture of masculine and feminine pronouns.

3.5.2.4.2 Formal Interview Process:

The interview followed a semi-structured style. Engaging in semi-structured interviews involved creating questions about a research problem that has objective data about it but there is a shortfall of subjective information available (Morse & Field, 1995). It creates a structure for the interview because there are open ended questions developed by the researcher that guide the discussion and help to illuminate participants' thoughts and perspectives (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). There were pre-set questions that the researcher had pre-tested. Given that the guide was properly created and tested, it ensured the interviewer did not ask leading questions (Chan et al., 2013). Leading questions affect the purity of the data in reflecting an individual's experience because they are subliminally coerced into giving a certain response (Bowles & Sharman, 2014).

Once the pre-interview phase concluded, the interviewer began asking the pre-prepared questions – see Appendix D for interview guide. The questions were open ended and attempted to elicit participants' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours. The questions allowed the participants to talk about how the Rainbow Tick affected their buying decisions, what they know about the Rainbow Tick, any experiences they had working for or engaging with affiliated companies, and possible areas of improvement for both the affiliation body and affiliated companies. The researcher listened to the participants and prompted follow-up responses where necessary. Moreover, there are a few things that the interviewer kept in mind during his approach to the interview process.

Firstly, the researcher kept the interview conversational. The researcher tried to build a positive and amiable relationship with the participant. He shared stories from his own

experiences, not with the aim of de-validating the participants' experiences but as a way to build rapport and connection with the participants through shared experiences as Rainbow people. The interviewer and the participants were subsequently equalised in the room because they were then speaking on a 'level playing field' as opposed to a group interview where the interviewer is the moderator; and more of an authority figure in that space (Gruber et al., 2008). This also helped establish trust and allowed participants to open up about their experiences without fear of retribution. Moreover, cultivating that type of open environment allowed the interviewer to gain in-depth information from participants, especially when the subject was very personal in nature (Clarke, 2006)

Additionally, the interviews held in person were done on the university campus. The advantage of planning this allowed the participant to be in a safe and private environment. The safe and private environment allows participants to freely express themselves in any way they desire. It fostered open conversation regarding their experiences and the research topic.

For the online interviews, the researcher booked a meeting room on campus. The advantage of having it online is that participants can see who is logged into the meeting giving them a sense of security in knowing that the researcher is the only one present. Furthermore, the participants can find a convenient and safe environment of their own choosing due to flexible technology which can make the interview process less strenuous (Gruber et al., 2008). Interview participants tend to share more personal stories on a web-based platform in an interview due to more private self-awareness (Joinson, 2001).

The ideas and opinions served by the participants were identified using an emic approach. An emic approach involves the researcher garnering a description or dialogue from a participant (Harris, 1964) and then associating facts with what an individual says within that setting (Smith, 2005). The responses from participants are based on what they have experienced and communicated in their language. Therefore, who they are is connected to history and culture (Morris et al., 1999). This follows along the lines of a constructivist epistemology versus one that is etic which looks at the 'facts' that are present (a more positivist view).

In addition, the researcher took written notes that helped guide the conversation. It allowed him to capture the mood and attitudes of participants during the interviews. This would complement the audio recording that he would listen to during transcription. Having notes in parallel to the recording is important because it helps with recall and analysing what

participants have shared (Brounéus, 2011). Additionally, the researcher wrote down self-reflection notes about the train of thoughts that came to mind during the interviews.

3.7 Data Analysis

The step proceeding the data collection stage is data analysis. The researcher used thematic analysis to probe the transcripts and develop themes that helped create a description for the research phenomenon (Daly et al., 1997). The six-phase approach for thematic analysis created by Braun and Clarke (2012) was used by the researcher to guide them during the analysis process. Braun and Clarke (2012) describe thematic analysis as a methodical approach that identifies, organises, and provides insights, of patterns of meaning (themes) that is evident from a dataset. Given this process, the researcher identified and comprehended the meanings and experiences of the participants. The researcher used an inductive approach in analysing the data captured from the participants. Compared to deductive where the themes and codes are derived from previous knowledge and then applied to the data set, an inductive approach has a more open disposition and the researcher creates the themes and codes directly from the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The advantage here is that data is not left out or ignored due to the possible limitations of having preconceptions of what will emerge from the dataset (Thomas, 2006). The data does not become constrained by a structured methodology (Thomas, 2006).

3.7.1 Thematic Analysis Process

Upon completion of the interviews, transcribing took place. As a result of budgetary constraints, the researcher transcribed most of the interviews himself. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. During this transcription process, the researcher checked for accuracy and consistency with the recordings which allowed him to familiarise himself with the data - which is useful in thwarting the possibility of misinterpretation or misreading participants' statements (Ezzy, 2002; Huberman & Miles, 2002; Spiggle, 1994). This subsection will describe how the researcher applied the six-phase approach to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

The first phase involves the researcher familiarising themselves with the data. There were five interviews that were transcribed externally by a transcriber, however the researcher still listened to the recordings and re-read the transcripts that were done externally from him. While reading the transcripts the researcher made notes of key points. Terry (2016)

highlighted that notetaking helps the researcher actively read the work and use their cognitive processes to makes sense of the data and what it means.

The next phase in the process involved creating initial codes. Codes provide descriptors for different elements in the dataset that pertain to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The researcher used NVivo to initially analyse the transcripts. The researcher initially coded every possible theme or idea as possible in order to ensure that they were all captured in the analysis in case they became relevant throughout the research process. As a result, 454 initial codes were developed. A table of the codes was exported into Word. From there they re-read the codes and categorised them based on similarity in descriptions or potential repetitions. This reduced the codes to 186. With each re-read of the codes, the researcher derived more meaning from their interpretation of the data set beyond face value.

Following this phase, the researcher then looked at developing themes. This involves examining the codes and looking for overlaps. It is an assiduous process of looking at the codes, identifying patterns in discourse and meaning, and then seeing if they fit in an overarching topic. As a result, the researcher re-examined the 186 codes multiple times and then categorised them thematically.

Phase four involved reviewing the potential themes. This is a process in which the researcher takes the themes developed in the third phase and re-examines them against the codes and the original dataset. Braun and Clarke (2012) describes this phase as quality checking. There are two steps in this phase that the researcher followed. First, he compared the themes to the coded extracts to gauge whether it is representative of the data. This ensured that the themes chosen were relevant and if they were not, then they were discarded. The next step involves the same process except the themes were evaluated against the entire data set. It involved re-reading the dataset captured from the interviews and ensuring the themes reflected what was represented in the dataset.

The penultimate step is to define and name the themes. The researcher created a description of the themes that he found. It included small pieces of information that defined the themes. It also showed subthemes within each theme. The researcher created a template of the story that would be prescribed to explore the research topic. In each theme there were extracts from the dataset. The researcher used NVivo to help identify quotes that were related to the theme. The structure was sent to the supervisor for feedback given the researcher is a novice. Once

the researcher got the feedback from his supervisors and had a final pass at the structure, he moved to the final phase.

The final phase involves creating a report. This entails constructing the full story with justification and reasoning that the researcher found in regard to participants-interviewer discussions about the research topic. Due to the researcher following the steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2012), they came up with two overarching themes and 10 sub themes. These themes reflect the perception, attitude and behaviour that the participants have towards the Rainbow Tick and affiliated companies. Chapter four goes into more detail about what this narrative is, and includes deeper description and dialogue about the themes. It also includes quotes from participants that provided justification and description that supported the theme.

3.8 Establishing Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness relates to how the researcher can convince a variety of audiences, including him or herself, that their work is something of substance and is worthy of consideration (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Assessing trustworthiness within research is critical because it adds credibility and demonstrates rigour (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). It is also appropriate given the constructivist epistemology, compared to using validity and reliability measures which would align to a more objectivist/positivist approach (Crotty, 1998). There are four components to trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The following section discusses these four components and how the researcher achieved them during the research process.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility and internal validity follow a similar logic. The difference lies in how 'truth' is observed. Internal validity involves the conclusion that there is one truth and any other possible factors or explanations have been removed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility, on the other hand, assumes there is not one truth. Still, there exist a variety of nuances in the construction of what is known as each person's reality, resulting in difficulties pinpointing exactly what that truth should be. To achieve credibility, these constructions of reality/truth should be appropriately identified and interpreted.

The researcher spent a considerable amount of time analysing, ruminating on, and interpreting the data captured from participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher repeated the process numerous times. He highlighted important factors and atypical

happenings. He then took note of them and added more details about these factors and atypical happenings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Some of these notations were also made in the researcher's reflexive journal. Doing so allowed the researcher to find the most salient points and remove or ignore any irrelevances. These actions provided scope and depth in understanding for the researcher. To attain credibility, the researcher reviewed the data multiple times (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Triangulation also adds to credibility in qualitative research. The researcher used the reflexive journal and the feedback from supervisors to help him interpret and report the findings from the data set. There was a continuous process that the researcher engaged in that involved gaining feedback and monitoring in the development of the interpretations. Due to this continuous process, triangulation was achieved. The process of triangulation contributes to credibility because there are a variety of sources that help to affirm the appropriateness of the interpretation of the data received from the interviews (Denzin, 1989). This follows the suggestion of Denzin (1978). He shared that one can use multiple sources, theories, methods, and investigators, to achieve triangulation.

Lastly, peer debriefing was done to achieve credibility. This entails using expert judges that can look at the coding that the researcher had done during data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The process opens the researcher to questioning and inquiry from an objective point of view which is aimed at keeping the researcher "honest" in terms of possible biases, misreading and misinterpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The research supervisors acted as expert judges. They examined the data and compared it to the themes extracted by the researcher to ensure congruency. They also looked at the thematic summaries and the transcripts from the interviews to gauge whether the interpretation was carried out properly. The initial agreement on theme interpretation was 90% which is in an acceptable range (Miles and Huberman, 1994) but after dialogue and feedback from the expert judges to the researcher there was 100% agreement with how the data was interpreted and represented.

3.8.2 Transferability

Generalisation involves taking information or any resultant conclusion from research and deciding to apply it to a general population. Given the beliefs embedded in this research, meaning is understood to have been constructed based on an individual's circumstances and encounters. Using generalisations in this case would not be appropriate. External validity measures how generalisable the findings of one's research are (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

Transferability is most suitable given the epistemology and theoretical perspective of the researcher. Transferability is similar to external validity. It focuses in on how one can apply what was described in one research context into different contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The important point to note in transferability is that its strength comes from the reader, who decides whether they can transfer the findings of the research to their own context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The responsibility here for the preliminary researcher is to ensure that there is enough information, thick descriptions, and contextual data that would allow others to determine transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To ensure this, the research thesis includes a detailed description of the participants provided in Section 3.5.1; detailed descriptions and quotes supporting the findings from the data collected is provided in Chapter four and detailed discussion about the findings that also pulls on relevant literature where needed is provided in Chapter five. The scope of information from these sections should provide sufficient information allowing another researcher to decide whether or not to transfer or utilise findings from this thesis into their research. Consequently, a high level of transferability is achieved. Outside judges are not necessary because one cannot envisage the next researcher's context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

3.8.3 Dependability

The beauty of research is that you can use similar methods and participants from one project and re-apply them to another research project and still potentially achieve similar findings. This is a measure of reliability. More formally, reliability looks at how well findings can be reproduced in different circumstances where similar methods and participants were applied (Ford, 1975). The assumption here is that there is one truth, which is more fitting for an objective/positivist approach. Given the constructivist epistemology of the researcher, a similar concept of dependability is considered, as this concept assumes there is no one 'truth'. Since there is no one truth and there are multiple constructions that exist in this research, then the same findings may not re-emerge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Expert judges were given access to the transcripts, interpretations, notes and reflexive journal of the researcher to assess the decision-making process behind the analysis. After the first iteration of thematic analysis, there was 90% agreement. After the second, there was 100% agreement. Once they were in full agreement and believed the work was logical, dependability was achieved (Guba and Lincoln, 1985)

3.8.4 Confirmability

The last component of trustworthiness is confirmability which is similar to objectivity. Objectivity in research focusses on the researcher and whether they held any biases, personal vested interests, or hidden agendas (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The two processes involved to mitigate this are triangulation and the monitoring of the reflexive journal. The reflexive journal tracked the researcher's thought process (including values, beliefs, and projections) and interpretations that the researcher would have had in their analysis of the data provided from the interview transcripts (Miles & Huberman, 1994) as well as how they felt before, during and after the interview process itself. Following the evaluation of the reflexive journal, transcripts, interview notes, and the findings by the judges, they confirmed that the findings were based on the data elicited and not based on the researcher's constructions (Flick, 2004). To achieve confirmability there should be concurrence between several researchers in regard to the interpretation of the findings. Since the expert judges (e.g. the three supervisors) and the researcher agree on the interpretation of the findings, confirmability is achieved.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

All participants received a formal email containing an information sheet outlining the objectives of the thesis and a consent form (which they were asked to sign if they were willing to participate). These documents highlighted the rights of the participants. Both documents also included the steps that the researcher took to ensure that privacy and anonymity was maintained. The major strategy to maintain anonymity and privacy was the researcher's use of pseudonyms as identifiers for the participants. The only data related to the participants that was used was their age, gender identity, and preferred pronouns. The participants were informed of this before the interview date in the documents (information sheet and consent form) and again at the start of the interview. Also included in these documents are the security procedures that the researcher followed to keep the data safe and private. In accordance with what was stated in these documents, the recordings and transcripts are kept on a password protected computers on the university server. Moreover, the participants were also reminded that the research will be publicly available and even though the thesis will be publicly available, anonymity and privacy will be maintained. This means that they would remain unidentifiable. Furthermore, the information sheet provided the participants with a list of contactable support services if they are triggered due to what was discussed in the interview.

At the start of the interview the researcher gave participants the opportunity to ask any questions they had related to the information sheet and the thesis overall. Even though they signed the consent form, participants were asked to give the researcher verbal consent to record the interview and informed they need not answer any question they wished not to.

The University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee granted ethical approval for this thesis on the eleventh of September 2020. The reference for the ethical approval of this study is HEC 2020/83. The main recommendation was to consult an influential takatāpui community leader. This would have helped the research to maintain cultural sensitivity. However, this individual was unavailable. As a result, consultation was limited to the Business school's Kaiārahi.

3.10 Conclusion

Chapter three provided a rationale for this chosen research topic. It showed the reasoning behind the research taking the form described. The researcher's constructionist epistemological beliefs and his use of hermeneutic techniques was discussed. From these beliefs, the researcher chose to take a qualitative approach which provided more in-depth explanations behind non-binary and transgender consumers' thoughts and actions. The specific method used was semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to examine the data presented in the transcripts. The researcher took the necessary steps to ensure that the interpretations of the findings were trustworthy. The chapter concluded by highlighting the ethical considerations related to the project. The next chapter presents the findings of the thematic analysis.

Chapter Four – Findings

4.1 Introduction

The following chapter discusses the findings from 15 in-depth interviews. These findings help to answer the research question posed in Section 3.1. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, code the transcripts and develop significant themes in keeping with the coding process proposed by Braun and Clarke (2012).

Public attitude towards Rainbow people has increasingly become more positive (Flores, 2019). It provides Rainbow communities with a sense of belonging that comes from being accepted by society's socio-cultural standards (Yuval-Davis, 2006) even though there are still entities and characters that socially alienate them (Roberts, 2019). Individuals have the freedom to categorise or interpret their sense of self in any way they desire (Roberts, 2000). According to Turner et al. (1987), there are different levels in which one can identify or categorise themselves. Based on their work, on the individual level, self-categorisations are the markers that make an individual feel unique and influences their thoughts, motivations and behaviours (Turner et al., 1987). Gender is a critical part of one's identity (Bussey, 2011). Having to hide one's identity can have profound negative welfare implications (Subhrajit, 2014). An individual having the ability to control their narrative and identify in any way they desire contributes to personal welfare (Mann et al., 2019).

The Rainbow Tick is a third-party diversity certification that companies can acquire to represent their commitment to building inclusive workspaces and supporting Rainbow communities. It should act as a signal to consumers to identify which organisations are allies to Rainbow communities and have Rainbow friendly working environments. However, the integrity of this accreditation strategy as an authentic representation of a firm commitment to inclusivity is being called into question. Many news or other information-based media have shown examples of Rainbow Tick companies partaking in activities that do not add to the wellbeing of Rainbow communities (see Appendix B).

At times, consumers may be resistive, doubtful, or suspicious of marketing activities that are aimed at reaching a specific target market (Darke & Robin, 2007; Kirmani & Campbell, 2004; Pollay, 1986; Roux, 2008). These are metacognitions that would have come about from previous experiences with a company (Darke & Robin, 2007). Friestad and Wright (1994) describe metacognitions as the beliefs that consumers hold towards marketing attempts to

influence their buying decisions. These metacognitions allow consumers to stay alert or on guard in evaluating firm activities as they attempt to appeal to them. In this case, the metacognitions are the beliefs and impressions that participants have towards the Rainbow Tick. Participants scrutinised the Rainbow Tick based on their experiences dealing with or witnessing the actions of the Rainbow Tick certification body and Rainbow affiliated companies. These actions include efforts to promote inclusivity in workplaces and ensure that the appropriate inclusivity standards and practices are implemented and maintained.

This section will illustrate the major themes that erupted from the analysis of the interview transcripts, including the conclusions, impressions, and behaviour that the participants have toward the Rainbow Tick. The two overarching themes discussed are authenticity and inadequacy. Within these themes, there are subthemes that point to participants' evaluation and behaviour towards the Rainbow Tick. The subthemes in authenticity include woke washing and allyship. The subthemes in inadequacy is rigidity, awareness, non-representative, feedback, and trust.

4.2 Overarching Theme: Authenticity

The first overarching theme that emerged from the interviews is authenticity. Authenticity has been conceptualised in different ways by various scholars (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Reisinger and Steiner (2006) believe that the many definitions are inconsistent and lack consensus. Authenticity is a subjective interpretation of how truthful companies' intentions are (Napoli, Dickinson, Beverland and Farrelly, 2014). It is linked to morality and how that is defined by an individual (Beverland et al., 2008). It helps the brand because consumers will focus or choose a brand that they believe is "genuine in their intent—be it evidenced by real commitments" (Beverland et al., 2008, p. 12). Consumers will use different signals and cues to evaluate a brand's actions based on their knowledge of the subject (Grazian, 2003). In this case, the subject is Rainbow inclusion in the workplace. In context, authenticity is the participants' evaluation of the genuineness of affiliated companies to label themselves as a safe, diverse and inclusive workplace.

Several participants alluded to the theme of authenticity. They questioned the authenticity of the Rainbow Tick as a representation of a firm with a working environment that is open and inclusive towards Rainbow people. For example, James would not view a company negatively if they decided to invest in getting the Rainbow Tick accreditation. Alternatively, he does question the authenticity of their plight to gain inclusion due to his cynicism towards

the Rainbow Tick. He found that the Rainbow Tick is in already liberal companies and not less liberal industries. He thinks the Rainbow Tick accreditation body has not been involved in companies or industries known for projecting cisnormative heteronormative cultures. That makes him wonder about the efficacy of the Rainbow Tick as a change-maker and indicator of inclusivity, showing that he is sceptical about the real meaning and significance of the Rainbow Tick.

> *"Like I said, I would not. I would not. Even though I had a negative experience with Rainbow Tick, I would not feel negatively about a company for having it because, I mean, I guess their hearts in the right place and stuff. But at the same time, I cannot help but wonder if it is just an easy way to look good, you know. Because it is basically like, you get this guy to come in, you pay him however much he charges (which I imagine is quite a lot). He talks to your staff a bit. And I feel like the Rainbow Tick just goes into already very liberal companies, you know. So I'm kind of like, I would expect like, say a media company to have a Rainbow Tick, I would expect like stuff like that. But I do not really see them going into like, steel mills or something like that and getting the Rainbow Tick, you know, where people might actually have problems that were." (James, 37, He/Him)*

James' negative opinion may be shaped by his negative experience working for an affiliated company that left him feeling uncomfortable. When James shared his experience with the certification company, they responded but not to the extent that James was completely satisfied with.

> *"But because I have actually been in staff meetings around the Rainbow Tick, because I used to work at <<company name>>, which is a <<type of company>>. And I do not take that Rainbow Tick one bit seriously after working in a place that got it…, which is where I used to work as <<occupation>>. And while I was there, it was just like, the herald during the Rainbow Tick meetings, the <<company name>> was publishing like, constant, like real bad, clickbait kind of stuff …about trans people. And they would make post it on Facebook and not really moderate the comments and stuff. And they were not stories about anything, they were just like, shock value stories. I said this to the Rainbow tech guy, I was like, well, maybe you could talk to <<heads of the company>> …, and he was just like, Oh, we cannot affect the … decisions. We're just about HR, and if you feel comfortable in your identity at work, and I was like, well, those [pieces] do not really make me feel very comfortable at work. But he was just like, completely uninterested, you know. I think in the end, because of my nagging they did do some training with the [employees] around gender identity and crap like that. But yeah, it kind of just leaves a pretty bad taste in my mouth after that. So. Yeah."(James, 37, He/Him)*

As a consequence of this opinion and the experience working in an affiliated company, the Rainbow Tick does not affect his purchasing behaviour. He thinks the Rainbow Tick is a tool used by companies to portray a false image to get economic gain and prosocial recognition. Hence, to him, it is meaningless. Since it is meaningless, it will not make him more or less likely to buy from an affiliated company.

> *"It would not affect me at all?*
>
> *[interviewer] Why is that?*
>
> *James: Just because I've had negative experiences with the Rainbow Tick at my own workplace? So I do not really, I kind of think it is a bit of a scam…. It would not put me off but it would not make me more likely to buy anything there or use their services…No, I would not, I would not factor that into my decision at all because, I do not, I think the Rainbow tech is basically meaningless. And having experienced it in my own workplace." (James, 37, He/Him)*

Another participant with a similar train of thought to James that alluded to authenticity is Grayson. He notes that a company having the Rainbow Tick does not make them Queer-friendly[8] or Rainbow friendly. Grayson believes that it makes them knowledgeable about what Queer friendliness is. He describes a situation where you can have knowledge of something but not be the embodiment of it. Grayson goes further to say that you can actually try to get the Rainbow Tick by implementing protocols and procedures but not even care about Rainbow people. This intention relates to how genuine the consumers believe that the organisation's motivations are. If consumers perceive their intentions to be negative, it negatively affects their attitude towards the brand (Schallehn et al., 2014). In context, Grayson does not believe that companies acquiring the Rainbow Tick means they genuinely care about Rainbow people. Hence, he does not think that it makes a company Rainbow friendly.

> *Rainbow Tick does not, does not, as far as I'm aware, does not make your company Queer friendly. It makes a company trained to know what Queer friendly is. Like trained in inclusivity. Like you could be an, you could be not an ally of the Rainbow community, but think that the Rainbow Tick is good for your company and therefore like follow their protocols and procedures to get your Rainbow Tick but that would not make you actually care about Queer people." (Grayson, 26, He/Him)*

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[8] Participants use Rainbow and queer interchangeably as an overarching term.

Kai also shared their experience working in an affiliated company. They had an interaction with another employee that left them feeling uneasy. Kai had enough confidence to speak up for themselves because they had dealt with that kind of interaction in the past. But in calling the exchange "crap" and "gross" you can see their annoyance and discomfort. What should have been the case was that their superior, who was supposed to train them, should have been involved in some form of Rainbow competency training. That should have allowed him to know what interactions would be appropriate. There have been different studies that have found that Rainbow competency training improved an individual's overall knowledge, attitudes and behaviour in terms of dealing with Rainbow related issues [for example (Jabson et al., 2016; Porter & Krinsky, 2014; Rivers & Swank, 2017; Seay et al., 2019)]. But that finding is context-specific, and few studies have evaluated the efficacy of Rainbow competency training (Seay et al., 2019). That is not the case in this example. Kai's superior did not act in accordance with the training they received. The value that Kai should have gained from working in this company was a sense of belonging and the freedom to express their own identity, which affects their overall wellbeing. Instead, it left them with negative feelings.

> *"And he turns on the dust cover, and it is got a photo of a male author and he goes to me, a friend of mine told me to read this book, because this author this man is really sexy and really attractive. And he like, pushes the book to me and says do you think he is sexy, do you think do you think he's attractive? And like, this guy, this other word, Like he is cis gender heterosexual and I'm like what are you doing? Like, we're here to like, learn how to check books. And he was like, this man is really sexy. I do not know I might turn gay for this man. He was trying to like it was it was it felt like he was wanting me to out myself or guage what I am. And I have dealt with crap like that before in the workplace, and so I just shut them down. And just said you know this is not really appropriate discussion. You know, you are supposed to be training us on how to check books into the library catalog system not that sort of thing. And it was just to me, it was just like, a really clumsy way of trying to entertain my sexuality. But it was really gross so yea." (Kai, 41, They/Them)*

These quotes show that participants have found that the Rainbow Tick is lacking. The research identified several subthemes related to authenticity, one being woke washing and the other being allyship. The next two sections will expand on these themes and show illustrative quotes from participants that allowed the research to arrive at these themes.

4.2.1 Motivation or Woke washing

Woke washing is when brands that project pro-social messages do not match their brand purpose, values, and corporate practices. (Sobande, 2019; Vredenburg et al., 2018). It is the congruence between messaging and brand activity that allows consumers to form opinions about a company's effort to aid in the social issue (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Given the responses of consumers, companies can gain brand equity which benefits business in the long run (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Many participants found that companies were getting the Rainbow Tick as a measure to appeal to Rainbow people **without actually implementing discernible and practical inclusivity practices in the workplace**. Danny, for example, views the Rainbow Tick as a performative measure. He believes that companies are doing that as a form of social appeal rather than fostering actual change in their workplace.

> *"Yeah, it is very like as a corporation, we have done this this performative thing and we want it to be acceptable to people who might not agree with gay people anyway, so they still buy coke. They are trying not to be too challenging with it….I find a lot of those ads like that, that like smile, be yourself and then got like a drag queen dancing around in knickers. And Im like this is not, this is not being myself."*
> *(Danny, 27, He/Him)*

Hunter had the same interpretation. They believe that the Rainbow Tick is performative and does not represent an authentic commitment. Hunter is very annoyed by the implementation of the Rainbow Tick and limits it to a public relations stunt. They think that affiliated companies are showing a "reality" to the world that does not exist. Based on their research, Hunter found that the criteria for obtaining the tick were too limited. The requirements that the Rainbow Tick sets motivates the affiliated companies to act in a specific manner. If the criteria is minimalistic, then there is the possibility that the company's efforts can come across sluggish, minimalistic and performative. Öberseder et al. (2013) found that if social development activities are minimalistic, it opens them up to in-depth scrutiny, which can harm a companies' image, reputation, and credibility.

> *"PR bullshit*
>
> *[Interviewer] Okay, so*
>
> *And apparently they also have to regularly donate to or have some kind of pride thing regularly or something.*

[Interviewer] Do you know details about that, so they have to have some kind of pride related event?

I read an article. Its performative bullshit. It really is, um, Rainbow Tick organisations are also required to ask staff to mark occasions of relevance like pride festivals, and publicly sponsor or support community events, organisations like having a banner and stand at a festival. According to an RNZ article from May 2019."(Hunter, 32, They/Them)

Robin shares the same sentiment that companies mainly use the Rainbow Tick to market to Rainbow people. It does not mean that they have actually put in the necessary steps to improve the organisation's Rainbow well-being.

"I see the Rainbow Tick as more of a marketing tool than a, than improving the outcomes of the organisation or improving the wellbeing of the organisation." (Robin, 46, They/Them)

Comparatively, Louise initially had a positive perspective of the Rainbow Tick that made her more likely to buy from affiliated companies. This was before she ended up working for an affiliated company that changed her mind and left her with a bad impression of the Rainbow Tick. She found that the Rainbow Tick did not make the company supportive of Rainbow communities. Thus the Rainbow Tick did not make her more or less likely to buy from the affiliated company. In her opinion, the companies only wanted to show people that they had the Rainbow Tick rather than actually putting in place consistent practices that aid in the welfare of Rainbow people in the workplace. This opinion stems from observations she made while working for an affiliated company.

"Now it does not.

[interviewer] Now it does not.

Um, initially, I preferred to buy from companies that had the Rainbow Tick and I was in support of companies that had Rainbow Tick. I was initially when we, when I worked for <<COMPANY NAME>>, and we got the Rainbow Tick, I was very positive about, um, about Rainbow Tick and the decisions to get it. After about year, half, during the third year of having it was when I, a couple of us questioned had some questions about having the Rainbow Tick and the Rainbow Tick's ability to be meaningful.

[interviewer] Okay. So, is that from a worker standpoint or from a consumer standpoint?

Um...from a consumer standpoint, and from probably from both, because working within it and seeing a company that had it, and

advertise itself within the Rainbow community, but then really was not supportive of it anyway, just wanted that to be able to say that they had it." (Louise, 57, She/Her)

Kamareira is suspicious of affiliated companies due to the negative experiences he had with the Rainbow Tick. He believes the Rainbow Tick scheme is about meeting a pre-set list of criteria that do not equate to Rainbow inclusivity in companies. Based on his evaluation, affiliated companies are solely trying to make money from Rainbow communities rather than contribute to the welfare of Rainbow people that engage with them or work for them.

> *"I'm actually less inclined to buy from them because having had quite negative experiences with large corporations that have the Rainbow Tick I know that is often just a tick boxing exercise and it is not genuine. So I'll question the motivation for having it because they're probably tried to capitalise on the pink economy." (Kamareira, 27, He/Him)*

Similarly, Tea is concerned about whether the company is actually engaging in actions that better the lives of Rainbow employees. For them, it is about action over principle. That action includes being transparent about the company being affiliated and what measures they have taken to foster inclusion in the workplace and support the wider community.

> *"Not much if at all. That does mean that sometimes they'll have cute Rainbow paraphernalia. So, you know, maybe I will buy that if it appeals to me, but otherwise not much at all.*
>
> *[interviewer] Not much at all. Why is that?*
>
> *Because a lot of companies just have not bothered or I do not know that they even have it in the first place. I do know I avoid companies I know are homophobic for sure, as in homophobia in a very general sense. But if I have the Rainbow Tick, I usually do not know." (Tea, 32, They/Them)*

Tea also wants to see the Rainbow Tick holding affiliated companies accountable if they engage in or support activities that could negatively affect the Rainbow people they are servicing. If Tea had to choose between a company that is affiliated and one that was not, they would choose the one that is affiliated but with the caveat that their actions reflect inclusive practices (doing whatever it takes to operate given the guidelines of the Rainbow Tick and more). These desired actions include continuous support for Rainbow communities in or outside the organisation that is not required by the certification body. Ultimately, Tea has yet to see hard evidence that affiliated companies are taking meaningful action to support Rainbow communities beyond 'box-ticking' (i.e., doing the bare minimum)'.

"[Interviewer] Well when you do has there been a situation where there's a company that you did not know, but you'd eventually found out that they were?

Um, I can think of a situation they were, well, they are kind of a company but they also are not. Um <<company name>> has the Rainbow Tick, yet they've also had a lot of homophobic practices. So, for me that was a judgment of; and I did and I went to <<company name>>… which is why in particular I knew about it. They did do some things right I can see how they got the Rainbow Tick, but also they did have events which made me question whether or not they should actually be held accountable, held accountable will have the Rainbow Tick taken away. So, yeah, it for me, it is like I think it could be used as like an accountability tool, but I have not seen it used that way.

[Interviewer] You have not seen it used that way? Okay.

Yeah.

[Interviewer] Would you prefer to engage with, buy from or use the services of a company that has the Rainbow Tick versus one that does not?

Um, I mean, yes. But again, with the caveat of, do they actually practice what they preach? Yeah.

[interviewer] So, you want to you want to see action?

I want to see proof that they've actually done more than a tick box exercise." (Tea, 32, They/Them)

Just like Tea (and many others) Hunter is concerned about action over principle. They provide examples that they have seen that causes them to question the authenticity of the Rainbow Tick. From their experience, they have noticed affiliated companies acting against the interest of Rainbow people. It can come across as illegitimate because the actions the consumer is observing are divergent from a prosocial message that they are trying to portray. It is prudent to note these examples because this illustrates what information participants are privy to about the market activities of affiliated companies that are deviant from the perceived standards those companies should be following.

"And so if, yeah, and I guess, looking at it from the outside, it is hard to be able to quantify exactly what it is that needs to change. Um, but and I know that it is easy to look at it and say, yeah, this is not working, something needs to change without actually pointing to this particular thing needs to change. But if it is giving us results, like banks, which only have two gender options, yeah. And hospital staff, which cant do pronouns. Supermarkets which support transphobic, homophobic

> *foodbanks. I just, I mean, they're not just for banks, they're often religious organisations that are sort of bigoted against a particular organisations, that this Rainbow check is supposed to support. Plus people within the Rainbow community, saying that they work at organisations that are Rainbow Tick affiliated or whatever, and still gets harassed and bullied and do not feel safe. There's something not right, something broken. So it is hard to point out exactly what needs to change." (Hunter, 32, They/Them)*

For Orange, it is about what brands are signalling. They would not let the Rainbow Tick greatly affect their decision-making. It would affect it negatively. In their opinion, the Rainbow Tick shows that the company is willing to align with a brand rather than being Rainbow friendly. This again brings up the authenticity of the companies' motivation to get and use the Rainbow Tick. Orange does not perceive that the affiliated companies are genuine in their commitment to Rainbow communities. Consumers are perceptive and want to see companies being genuine in their intentions and will choose a brand they deem authentic (Beverland et al., 2008). Hence, this is a problem and that is why the Rainbow Tick would affect his decision but not in a positive way.

> *"Well, I think it would affect my decision, but not in a positive way.*
>
> *[Interviewer] Oh, so you'd more, would you skew more to work with the company, say there are two banks, one is Rainbow affiliated and one is not, you would choose to go with the one that is not?*
>
> *Probably, yeah. I mean, yeah.*
>
> *[Interviewer] You mean what? What were you going to say?*
>
> *No, I think, like, I probably would not, like go too hard like let that guide my decision too hard out. But um, I yeah, for me, that signals more that a company is willing to align itself with a brand, than it signals that it treats Rainbow or Queer employees or customers or clients well." (Orange, 28, He/Him or They/Them)*

Others have concluded that the Rainbow Tick does not represent actual commitment and is only being used as a **marketing tool** to appeal to employees, consumers, and society at large. Tyler, for example, shared how he felt about the Rainbow Tick. He acknowledges that the company's intent for getting the tick is good. However, he also laments that it does not translate into actions that improve Rainbow people's experiences in these organisations. He seemed to be disappointed by that fact when he states that the Rainbow Tick, regrettably, is not representative of firm inclusion.

> *"Oh. Okay, well, it is marketing. So, again, the Rainbow Tick marketed as really well and the companies will buy the service or buying into it, and thinking that it is a really wonderful thing that they should be proudly displaying.*
>
> *[interviewer] Okay.*
>
> *Yeah, so it is just it is all just very, very, very good marketing. Very, very good marketing. Yeah. Which regrettably, does not actually translate into really, really, really good action and engagement"* (Tyler, 57, He/Him)

He revealed that the Rainbow Tick did not mean anything, which contradicts what the Rainbow Tick should be. It is just a marketing tool. He further says that it is a meaningless marketing device- calling into question the efficacy of it as a signal for consumers of a firm's inclusive policies and practices.

> *"Well, um, I, the Rainbow Tick does not actually really mean anything. So, um. So, it does not define that a company is a better company than any other company. So, it is just a meaningless marketing device."* (Tyler, 57, He/Him)

Given this perspective, the Rainbow Tick does not affect Tyler's buying decision in any way. Tyler has wholly dismissed the Rainbow Tick scheme and its ability to help Rainbow people. Even if he had to choose between one company that was affiliated and one that was not, there is no effect. He is completely indifferent and does not use the Rainbow Tick as a choice criterion.

> *"Um, it does not affect my buying decisions in any way whatsoever.*
>
> *[interviewer] In no way whatsoever?*
>
> *My personal buying decisions it does not affect.*
>
> *[interviewer]Okay, it does not affect you whatsoever. [interviewee mmm's in response] So, would you prefer to engage with, buy from or use the services of a company that has a Rainbow Tick versus one that does not?*
>
> *Um, Well, um, I, the Rainbow Tick does not actually really mean anything. So, um. So, it does not define that a company is a better company than any other company. So, it is just a meaningless marketing device.*
>
> *[interviewer] Okay. So, you was, would that be a yes or no, then?*
>
> *Yes. So, it um.*
>
> *[interviewer] You would rather not?*

It does not matter.

It just does not matter. Does not matter, yeah." (Tyler, 57, He/Him)

Morgan describes it as a "cynical marketing thing"; in a reflection of their cynicism towards the Rainbow Tick and its ability to help Rainbow people. Morgan does not see the tick as a representation of anything that the firm is doing for Rainbow people, even though companies had to take specific actions to become affiliated in the first place. Morgan believes that companies are only doing it to gain economic benefit by specifically marketing to Rainbow people and getting them to purchase their products.

> *"Just seems fake. That you know, it is it is like, it is such a cynical marketing thing. It is just, you know. Hey, if we get this Rainbow Tick, you know we can put in the advertising and get all the lovely pink dollar. But dont actually back it up with anything that's Yeah." (Morgan, 51, They/Them)*

Astrid pointed out that they were not aware that so many companies had the Rainbow Tick. In the interview, they were shown a list of companies with the Rainbow Tick. Astrid believes that if the companies were at least more open about their acquisition of the tick, maybe there could be a social value that Rainbow consumers gain.

> *"If you are a relatively upfront about having it? I do not, because I did not know about quite a lot of these companies had this tick, it could not, it could not really impact my opinion of them. And I do not think a lot of these companies are particularly loud about having this tick. So how could it affect people?" (Astrid, 25, They/Them)*

> *"And I do not think a lot of these companies are particularly loud about having this tick. So how could it affect people? And so I think the companies that do have these Rainbow Ticks and do have a commitment to maintaining that should be really quite upfront about that and not maybe not have it hidden at the footer of a website or something like that."(Astrid, 25, They/Them)*

Furthermore, Astrid believes that firms need to be more upfront about the strategies they have put in place for Rainbow people. They think that it will create buy-in and support if customers can see what they are doing and evaluate those activities. This reinforces the issue of transparency and how transparency affects how firm activities are interpreted. Astrid believes that the firm can be doing well at being inclusive, but without openness and transparency about what they are doing with customers, they will not garner support. Transparency is essential to ensure that individuals have access to information to make their

evaluations (for more on transparency see section 4.3.5.2). In its absence, individuals must make conclusions based on conjecture influenced by what they have been exposed to.

> *"Because you could like I think I said this before, you know, you could have a really amazing inclusion practice and your and your staff could feel really affirmed and happy. But if your customers do not know that you have a Rainbow Tick, how are they going to know that supporting you is a good thing? Or that they should feel good about this." (Astrid, 25, They/Them)*

Given these perspectives of the Rainbow Tick, Astrid shares that they have ambiguous feelings towards the Rainbow Tick and cannot pinpoint if it affects their purchasing decisions. They are quite conflicted about the existence of the Rainbow Tick. This is because Astrid believes that the Rainbow Tick is not efficacious. They think that supportive workplace policies in a company do not necessarily mean the company is good. They believe that people consider other factors in deciding whether a company is an ally or Rainbow friendly. Their circumspection comes from their own research concerning the Rainbow Tick and found instances that do not correspond with something positive. They shared an example of a time they discovered a crisis between an affiliated company and the broader community that left them with a bad impression of the Rainbow Tick and the company. Astrid believes that one affiliated company acted against the interests of a minority group for corporate gain. They have alluded those actions by the company in the context to the Rainbow Tick and its perceived inauthenticity since in a similar way it caters to minorities (gender and sexual identities). Consequently, Astrid has surmised that having good inclusive policies is insufficient.

> *"Um, I do not know if it does, honestly. I looked up the companies that do have the Rainbow Tick to because I did not know who most of them. Like I had an idea but not anything concrete. But yeah, I'm not sure. Like, I'm generally liked quite conflicted about the existence of the tick in the first place. So*
>
> *[interviewer] Can you give me even more detail about that. Can you talk about that a bit more.*
>
> *I have like been, I followed sort of some of the new stories around Rainbow Tick over the last couple of years and it is in, it seems like it is sometimes not. It is codified into these companies practices to have these like inclusive practices, but it is not necessarily being done well. And, and then it also seems like one factor in a lot of factors that people and I take into account when deciding where to go and what to buy. And like an example I was thinking of, when I looked was <<company*

> *name>> who have a Rainbow Tick but they are embroiled in the ...*
> *protest and not giving people back ... and stuff like that. Yeah, it is an*
> *aspect. But just because some company might have a good inclusion*
> *policy does not mean that they're good. Or worth giving money to."*
> *(Astrid, 25, They/Them)*

Some participants have, in addition, relayed their perspectives of affiliated companies' involvement in **annual pride celebrations**. Pride is a big celebration that happens every year. Many companies show up to pride events and sponsor them during Pride season. Many affiliated companies get involved in pride celebrations by sponsoring community groups, selling Rainbow related or branded merchandise and using symbols like the Rainbow flag in their marketing communications. Participants found in their experience that many of the Rainbow Tick companies' efforts were very concentrated towards pride celebrations versus year-long efforts of community support. They view those actions as companies trying to position themselves as Rainbow-friendly and allies when they have not done enough to be interpreted that way. James shares his opinion about affiliated companies that he has seen being vocal during the pride parade and not being consistent when Pride is not taking place. James, for example, came to that same conclusion and is annoyed by companies doing that. He has negative impressions of companies that he observed to be guilty of that.

> *"I do not know, I guess just in like company posts on facebook and stuff*
> *around that time. They'll be like, " As proud Rainbow Tick affiliations,*
> *we are happy to sponsor the, you know, the pride parade or have our*
> *company match in it or whatever, you know." That's kind of when I*
> *think I hear the most about Rainbow Tick is sort of over the pride*
> *period of summer. So probably hearing about it more as January comes*
> *around, and all the events start happening.*
>
> *[interviewer] And how does that make you feel about the brand?*
>
> *Just makes me feel like really annoyed because I'm like, What are you*
> *actually doing? You just get to get the Rainbow Tick and then you get*
> *to march in the pride parade with your company brand and stuff like*
> *that? Yeah, I do not know. I do not have particularly good feelings*
> *about it." (James, 37, He/Him)*

Similarly, Tea concluded that the affiliated companies were only vocal during Pride season. They noticed that there were companies that would just sponsor certain events to appeal to Rainbow communities. Tea feels used by these companies because it seems as though they only care about gaining economic benefit rather than contributing to Rainbow causes for social good.

> *Um, like I said, I'm thinking of <<list of company names>>. I feel like I know more, but I cannot think of them. Oh the police is Rainbow Tick affiliated, I've interacted with them. Um, but like I said, I usually do not know. Yeah, um, because the thing is only the people that are particularly interested in seeing if they have a Rainbow Tick, pay attention. They do not exactly advertise it until pride as well, which then we get into pink washing. Oh <<company name>>, I guess is a good example...Um, <<company name>>. You only know that the Rainbow Tick affiliated when you see them at pride sponsoring.*
>
> *[interviewer] And how does that feel, how does that make you feel about them?*
>
> *It feels like it is just a very, all they're doing is they're taking advantage of a situation to make money. Pretty much. Pride is a massive event. They want to be able to make money, so they sponsor it." (Tea, 28, They/Them)*

The perception that the affiliated companies are only vocal and visible during pride celebrations has given the impression that they are just being performative or capitalising on the pink dollar market. The pink dollar market has to do with the Rainbow communities' purchasing power as a viable market segment (Choong, 2008). The Rainbow Tick accreditation requires companies to engage in some form of Rainbow related outreach program or event. Consequently, it contributes to firms being allies because it shows that they both care about Queer issues and projects and are willing to make a deliberate contribution towards that. However, participants have found a lack of continuous support from affiliated companies in their own experiences. This support can come in the form of money or asset-based contributions to community organisations that support Rainbow communities, hosting activities to support Rainbow communities themselves, sponsoring community events financially, or providing physical assistance. An entity or individual does not have to be Rainbow-identifying to offer support services, but they must be aware of and sensitive to the needs of Rainbow communities (Rutherford et al., 2012). The Rainbow Tick diversity trainings should have provided that. As such, support from affiliated companies is essential. The presence of the tick should mean that companies care about the socio-cultural problems faced by Rainbow people and are willing to support them in a way that allows them to be open and included.

Instead of supporting Rainbow communities throughout the year and contributing to Rainbow related causes, participants found that some affiliated companies only did so during pride season. These events made participants reflect on the involvement of these companies and,

as a result, many people do not have trust in these companies' intentions. During pride season, they either sponsor an event to be viewed as supportive or sell Rainbow merchandise to gain more revenue. Kates and Belk (2001) studied pride festivals and found that Rainbow people are more discerning in their interpretation of pride events because it became a highly commercialised event. It comes across as performative in the eyes of the participants because it seems disingenuous. These results provide further support for the theme of woke washing, where companies' practices are presumed to be flawed because they are showing they are portraying an inclusive image but in actuality, this is not the case based on the perspectives of some of the participants.

In the same breath, there was a participant who mentioned **the normalisation of Rainbow communities** in societies. Activists have been working for a long time to normalise Queer identities and expression (Browne & Bakshi, 2013). It has become a growing area of interest for researchers, shifting the focus they used to have on researching the stigmatisation or victimisation of Rainbow people (Chan, 2018). Tea notes that getting the Rainbow Tick in the first place adds to the significant shift in society

> *"It is essentially being used as a branding tool rather than an accountability tool." (Tea, 32, They/Them)*

> *"But then again, we loop all the way back to the normalisation of things and, and our society, we cannot avoid that if we want to normalise the Rainbow community, your do need to market it. It is typical. It is a tough one.*

> *[interviewer] It is a tough.*

> *Yeah. It is kind of like, I have my issues, but I also do not entirely resent them for it.*

> *[interviewer] Yeah.*

> *Because we do. At the end of the day, we do want Rainbow visibility. And it does. It does. "(Tea, 32, They/Them)*

Tea notes that the Rainbow Tick is just a marketing tool. However, they also acknowledge that it provides visibility for Rainbow communities and contributes to normalising them in today's socio-cultural context. Consequently, it makes them a bit more lenient in the way they interpret or justify why firms are getting the Rainbow Tick. The legislative changes for Rainbow people have added to Rainbow identities' being normalised (McNulty et al., 2010). Normality is related to one's identity and expression being generally socially acceptable

(Richardson, 2004). Literature shows us that being accepted can contribute to an individual's social welfare (DeWall & Baumeister, 2006; Twenge & Campbell, 2003).

Tea provides an example of someone who has overlooked a company's shortfall in being inclusive for the benefit of Rainbow identities being more visible and placed in the mainstream. The visibility of Rainbow communities in the mainstream contributes to the normalisation of these identities. Consequently, visibility of Rainbow communities can create positive outcomes for Rainbow people (Snapp et al., 2015), but that depends on the ideals of those in the mainstream (Um, 2016).

> *"But then again, we loop all the way back to the normalisation of things and, and our society, we cannot avoid that if we want to normalise the Rainbow community, your do need to market it. It is typical. It is a tough one.*
>
> *[interviewer] It is a tough.*
>
> *Yeah. It is kind of like, I have my issues, but I also do not entirely resent them for it.*
>
> *[interviewer] Yeah.*
>
> *Because we do. At the end of the day, we do want Rainbow visibility. And it does. It does. "(Tea, 32, They/Them)*

In a similar sense, another person found positivity in companies' use of the Rainbow Tick and Rainbow-related marketing in terms of helping Rainbow communities. Grayson tolerated companies' use of the Rainbow Tick because, for him, at the end of the day, they helped Rainbow people somehow.

> *"So I feel like if you are only doing it for marketing for clout. Yeah, that's a good word for it. I'd still be like you did it for clout but you helped Queer people so you know I'll take it. It is better than nothing."(Grayson, 26, He/Him)*

He could recall companies using Rainbow people in their advertising to seem friendly but believes that the Rainbow Tick does not necessarily make a company Rainbow friendly. He was happy when he saw Rainbow people and Rainbow related marketing being used. He pointed out that there would be a random person that was Queer with the Rainbow flag that would be in the midst of the marketing communication. At the same time, he felt sympathy for those involved in marketing communications used by the company. He was happy with that but also thought it was disingenuous.

"Rainbow Tick does not, does not, as far as I'm aware, does not make your company Queer friendly. It makes a company trained to know what is Queer friendly.

[interviewer] Okay talk about that a bit more.

Like trained in inclusivity. Like you could be an, you could be not an ally of the Rainbow community, but think that the Rainbow Tick is good for your company and therefore like follow their protocols and procedures to get your Rainbow Tick but that would not make you actually care about Queer people.

[interviewer] What do you need to do as a company to show that you care about Rainbow people ?

That I really do not know.

[interviewer] Okay, that's fine.

Yes, I do like it when companies. But then again its kind of rough on the people who are in the company. I like it when companies like show that they have Queer staff. But that's in some ways also very awkward when you see that like, I do not know. I feel like there was some bank that advertised on my Facebook feed at some point they sort of like just have like some images of their staff and every now and again, it was the odd one holding a Rainbow flag or something else and I was like it is cute because you know that they are there. But it is also very awkward because you also have to single out someone who is Queer and be like, "Look, we we have Queer" (Grayson, 26, He/Him)

At the end, from a consumer's standpoint, Grayson's perspectives of the Rainbow Tick have not affected his buying decisions. It is because he is not aware of companies being Rainbow Tick affiliated when he goes shopping. Even when prompted whether his conclusion would change if the company were open and transparent about having the tick, he remarked that he would acknowledge its efforts. Still, it would not affect his purchasing behaviour. The Rainbow Tick did not affect his purchasing decisions.

"Not at all.

[interviewer] Not at all. Why is that?

Not at all

[interviewer] Not at all?

Well, I feel like half the time I do not know if they have the Rainbow Tick or not before I go shopping anyway.

[interviewer] Right. And if they had the Rainbow Tick, how would that affect your buying decision?

> *If they had the Rainbow Tick on full display when I walked into the store?*
>
> *[interviewer] Yep*
>
> *You know what, if they had it on full display I would probably give them like a little more props, because I'd be like, well done on displaying and something that means you are supposed to be inclusive. That's nice. But it probably would not affect my buying decisions at all."* *(Grayson, 26, He/Him)*

Further, he reported that if his choices were restricted and he had to choose between one that was affiliated and one that was not, he would instead use other criteria, including accessibility, ease of use, and reviews.

> *"If that was the only thing to weight them up on. Then yeah I would go with the one that had a Rainbow Tick.*
>
> *[interviewer] When you say the only thing to weigh them up on, what does that mean?*
>
> *I'd probably use like other criteria first, like accessibility or ease of use, or general good or bad reviews about the service or the company. And like, I feel that some banks probably have the Rainbow Tick, and I have no idea if mine does or not. But once you are with a bank, to shift banks like man, I'd need a lot more than a Rainbow Tick to shift banks.*
>
> *[interviewer] So on the level of importance in terms of looking at certain things in a company, it is kind of…*
>
> *Yeah*
>
> *[interviewer] What does that mean verbalise?*
>
> *Oh sorry that's not very verbal.*
>
> *[interviewer] No*
>
> *Verbal shrug*
>
> *[interviewer] Verbal shrug is what he did, Verbal shrug*
>
> *Its unimportant on my list of criteria."* *(Grayson, 26, He/Him)*

The main criteria that would influence Grayson (among the others previously stated) include who runs the business. He would instead engage with a business that is Queer-owned or ethnic minority-owned. He would hold the company in higher regard if that were the case over the Rainbow Tick. He does not think the Rainbow Tick is Rainbow friendly enough. He concluded that one can believe that the Rainbow Tick is good, follow the procedures and get

the tick while still not caring about Rainbow communities. These steps to gain affiliation does not necessarily help Rainbow people.

> *"Well, like that, like that, just like, Queer friendly place without having to like, go through a big rigmarole with the tick, but probably because that'd be like a small business of like, 10 or less staff, rather than, you know a corporate. For all I know there could be big corporates in New Zealand run by Queer people, but they do not advertise it. That would mean more to me than the Rainbow Tick.*
>
> *[interviewer] Really?*
>
> *Yeah, If I knew that the CEO is like, big, fantastic, Queer person, who is like, positive about that all that. That would probably mean a bit more to me.*
>
> *[interviewer] Right! Why is it? Why is that the case?*
>
> *Because I'd like to buy from a company whose owners and the people that profit from it are Queer friendly.*
>
> *[interviewer] Okay, and your perspective is that Rainbow Tick is a company that being Rainbow Tick is not quer friendly enough?*
>
> *Rainbow Tick does not, does not, as far as I'm aware, does not make your company Queer friendly. It makes a company trained to know what is Queer friendly.*
>
> *[interviewer] Okay talk about that a bit more.*
>
> *Like trained in inclusivity. Like you could be an, you could be not an ally of the Rainbow community, but think that the Rainbow Tick is good for your company and therefore like follow their protocols and procedures to get your Rainbow Tick but that would not make you actually care about Queer people."* (Grayson, 26, He/Him)

Why is Grayson not affected by the Rainbow Tick, and why does he choose other criteria? He believes that the Rainbow Tick is just another instance of tokenism. Grayson does not think that there is actual change or adaption taking place in an organisation. It can be construed based on Grayson's comments that he views tokenism as companies doing something good with employees involved, but only because there are materialistic incentives rather than genuine interest in fostering an inclusive environment.

> *"I do not know.*
>
> *[interviewer] I do not know.*
>
> *But I think it probably feels more like a like token*
>
> *[interviewer]Talk about that a bit more.*

Like, whenever your work makes you do something, makes you sit through a seminar about health and safety, as an example, everyone sits through it. The office buys snack food, because they know, no one will be, people will be even less impressed if there is not some food there. While they have to sit through something and so they do not pay a lot of attention. And I feel like the Rainbow Tick seminar is treated in the same way. Like they've been forced to go to something about inclusivity. If you are a Queer possibly feels awkward, because you are like.

[interviewer] Everyone in the office.

Yeah, yeah. Either. Either you might feel singled out, if you know that you are like the only Queer person in the office and everyone knows it. And then you are like, cool this is just kind of directed at how they behave to me. Yeah, or you just feel like I know this I do not need this. Yeah. Yeah. Or you are a cis guy and your like why am I being trained ion inclusivity. I hope they provide food. " (Grayson, 26, He/Him)

Additional participants found that the **affiliated companies have to be accountable to Rainbow communities** and ensure that they engage in supportive actions. If they are committed to helping Rainbow people, they should ensure that they actually do that. Participants highlighted the importance of affiliated companies being accountable to their stakeholders. In the end, that should build trust in the company and the tick, encouraging repeat purchase behaviours. These participants believe that accountability is an essential trait of a Rainbow-friendly or ally entity. Orange recommends that companies should seek training that is answerable to Rainbow communities. Furthermore, they should try to get certification from an entity that provides continuous inspection, and in that way, they remain accountable.

"Seek training that's accountable to the communities that they represent, that that the organisations represent and ensure that whatever certification they receive is subject to ongoing evaluation."
(Orange, 28, He/Him or They/Them)

Once a company is accredited, it can use the Rainbow Tick symbol[9] in its marketing and branding communications. Using the tick is a form of Rainbow related branding that can appeal to Rainbow communities. When companies make an effort to appear supportive, it should attract Rainbow consumers' attention and influence their decision-making process (Tuten, 2005). It should get Rainbow consumers engaging with the Rainbow friendly companies and cause them to make final purchases (Tuten, 2005). Consumers want to see

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[9] See Appendix C

brands actively participating in socio-political issues to effect change. That is a growing pressure that companies face as consumers close attention to firms activities implemented to support that socio-political issue (Vredenburg et al., 2018). Furthermore, it benefits affiliated companies because it should differentiate them from other entities in the market and make them more competitive (Keller, 1993).

From the perspective of many of these consumers, especially concerning pride season, Rainbow affiliated companies are not doing enough to support Rainbow people inside and outside of the company actively. They seem to be vocal during that period in comparison to the rest of the year, which has come across disingenuous. As a result, participants believe that the companies are presenting a false reality.

In summary, the level of authenticity is deemed low, especially when the company does not have a history of being actively involved in addressing those issues (Vredenburg et al., 2020). They believe they should be actively evaluating their stakeholders' needs (including employees, managers, board members, and general consumers) and providing feasible solutions that result in better outcomes. These outcomes include a safer and inclusive workplace that allows Rainbow people to fully express their identity without judgment or backlash. Again, we know that suppressing one's identity can negatively affect mental and emotional health (Subhrajit, 2014). This lack of continuous commitment has left many participants with a negative impression of the Rainbow Tick training and certification scheme. Alternatively, some have accepted the Rainbow Tick as is because it creates visibility for Rainbow communities, and to some extent, it actually helps Rainbow people (but to a small degree). Overall, there is a net negative impression of the Rainbow Tick scheme and a summation of inauthenticity towards affiliated companies.

4.2.2 Allyship

Rainbow Tick certification represents a level of allyship from affiliated companies towards Rainbow communities because they are concerned about Rainbow related issues and have a desire to rectify that in their business environments (Rainbow Tick, 2020). Allies are those individuals in a dominant or advantaged group that recognises the privilege they have and desire to advocate for or improve the quality of life of the non-dominant group (Ostrove & Brown, 2018). Ashburn-Nardo (2018) describes the allies' motivations as egalitarian ideals. They are willing to confront their own biases and prejudices and hold others accountable for their discriminatory behaviour and attitudes to provide a source of support for the non-

dominant group (Ashburn-Nardo, 2018). The non-dominant group here being Rainbow communities. Participants have found that the efforts made by affiliated companies thus far do not purely align to these ally attributes.

Danny is an example of one of these participants. Danny believes that a company using the Rainbow Tick is a performative action. Performative means affiliated companies are only using it to give the impression that they are inclusive in the absence of relevant, inclusive practices. Even though this is the case, he does not find that that is a bad thing. He proposes that the Rainbow Tick is a good signal for telling you that the company is not bad instead of a signal that shows companies that actively tackle Rainbow-related issues in the workplace. Therefore, for him, the Rainbow Tick does not represent a firm actively engaging in practices that improve the welfare of Rainbow people in workplaces. So the Rainbow Tick is not being translated to this consumer as a certification that awards companies that are engaged in activities representative of an ally. These ally traits include being vocal about Rainbow related issues, participating in pride related events, and continuously supporting Rainbow groups and community organisations.

> *"I think it is good at helping, like I was saying, my friends like to, they will shop more for not buy things that are bad, rather than buy things that are good. So it is quite, it seems to be quite good at telling you this company is not bad rather than they're necessarily positively proactive. So I think it is quite good at that."(Danny, 27, He/Him)*

One of the crucial actions that allies are involved in is **community support.** Many community groups provide programs, facilities, safe spaces, events and resources that help Rainbow communities. There are several benefits that a Rainbow individual can gain from these community organisations and outreach programs (Baker et al., 1992; Baker & Intagliata, 1982). It should create social value for Rainbow people because these community organisations and outreach programs serve to aid them in their everyday lives.

The following quotes show examples of what participants thought regarding the lack of support they noticed from affiliated companies.

> *"They have staff have to do one day a year or something community time. So they helped out and ran a stall at an event that we had, which is really good. And they gave some funds that they raised at their stall to help cover the cost the event. And they were really good from that angle, but they did not seem to be a lot, they wanted to try and get some big funding to do it from head office to try to fund the whole event but it got turned down. It is like, come on, this is the only thing you've done*

locally. You used us in your big launch and yet now, when we come back to you, there's no no reciprocal relationship at all" (Robin, 46, They/Them)

"Um, I think that there's a few companies on there that I struggled to, like, consider Queer friendly, but for reasons I guess that are not, so things like <<company name>>. Okay, I'm like, you are the biggest polluter on the planet. You are a massive, massive company that hires slave wage overseas to do you know, like, really, you are going to respect my pronouns but like you are burning my planet down at the same time. So I yeah, I think it is a it is almost like a contrast of brands to have like, <<company name>>, especially at the moment they've got that thing where all the cans say like, bro, mate, like, that is quite a gendered thing to have a bro can or whatever. And then they're like, Oh, yeah, we have got a Rainbow Tick. Which is like good if people like <<company name>> respect their workers especially Queer ones. I'm not opposed to that. Yeah. Like, I feel like <<company name>> could be doing a little bit more for just the community in general. But I think that depends on the company." (Danny, 27, He/Him)

"[interviewer] Is there anything else that they can do? Not just employees, but how deal with the public as well?

Yeah. I think a lot of it is just around that visual stuff

[interviewer] Visual stuff.

Yeah. And, you know, sponsorships, those kind of things, someone that, there's that. what's the the rugby team? Yeah, there is a pride rugby team.

[interviewer] Oh, I know the team

Yeah. It is like yes. Yeah, a company that sponsor them, even though I do not care about rugby, I'd actually like look on that company really favourably. Because Yeah, this is cool. Yeah. doing those kind of little small scale stuff in the community and actually supporting community groups." (Morgan, 51, They/Them)

"Yeah, I think like that should be part of the Rainbow Tick because they should have to do some engagement outside of their workplace. If a brand was truly like engaging with the community as part of their Rainbow Tick certification, like not just the Rainbow Tick themselves, maybe if they surveyed some people and asked how they felt, or reached out to some other organisations as well to work with that would probably make me feel better than if they just paid some money to get the Rainbow Tick in." (James, 37, He/Him)

"In terms of showing it, I think. I feel like a lot of companies, especially the sort of like big companies, all these very big companies like they donate money. And they always publicise what their donations are to.

We donated Cancer Society If they donated to a Queer group. I would be super stoked, and I'd feel good about buying stuff." (Grayson, 26, He/Him)

This subtheme is a crucial point of inference for affiliated companies. Participants are expecting more involvement and engagement from affiliated companies to Rainbow communities. It is a fair deduction on their part as the observer due to the significance and the meaning of the Rainbow Tick. If the tick represents allyship and Rainbow friendliness, community involvement and support is essential for affiliated companies. They want to see affiliated companies are actually going into the community and supporting Rainbow people in any way they can. Community and social support are vital sources of empowerment and help for Rainbow communities (Pilling et al., 2017). Contributing to Rainbow related causes and outreach has been inferred to be crucial representations of firms' care and concern for the wellbeing of Rainbow communities. It goes beyond purely good and functional workplace policies.

The finding from the interviews related to this subtheme shows that participants do not see any social value from the Rainbow Tick for Rainbow people. Social value has to do with "wider non-financial impacts of programmes, organisations and interventions, including the wellbeing of individuals and communities, social capital and the environment" (Mulgan, 2010, p. 1). It is concerned with the effects that have been realised by a specific party that can be attributed to a specific organisation (Mulgan, 2010). Participants were asked whether they thought there was a social value or benefit to the Rainbow Tick. This question helped participants' share, from their perspective, if the Rainbow Tick created value for Rainbow people because affiliated firms should be more inclusive, creating a more comfortable working environment. Many participants believed that there was no social benefit attached to the Rainbow Tick. This means that they cannot see any observable benefits that the Rainbow Tick provides to Rainbow people in or outside affiliated companies. Here are some quotes from a few of the participants that found that the Rainbow Tick had no social value attached to it when asked if it did.

"Probably not"(Kamareira, 27, He/Him)

"No." (Orange, 28, He/Him or They/Them)

Hunter even noted that they would be surprised if Rainbow affiliated companies were doing positive things for Rainbow communities. They expect that the Rainbow Tick does not help

Rainbow people. They believe there is no positive value for them to gain from engaging with companies that are affiliated.

> *"[interviewer] Right. And, and then if you see that, if you find out say they're not living by or doing, you know, very positive things for Rainbow communities. What was your response versus if they were doing more positive things for Rainbow communities?*
>
> *Well, if they're not, then I would not be at all surprised at this point. I mean, like, it is kind of ironic, but yeah. Not at all surprising. Whereas if they were that can be a pleasant surprise." (Hunter, 32, They/Them)*

What does this mean for the meaning that the consumers attached to the Rainbow Tick? It can be deduced that the Rainbow Tick does not provide the benefit that it says it does for Rainbow communities. If it is supposed to represent that a company is supportive of Rainbow communities and has implemented strategies to do so, then some value should be realised. If it is not doing that in these consumers' eyes, then there is a gap or shortfall in the implementation of the tick. There is a problem since many do not see social value in the Rainbow Tick. Something has to shift for this perspective to change in the minds of these consumers.

On the other hand, some participants believed that there is potential for the rainbow tick to actually be meaningful even though the value it currently creates for Rainbow consumers is limited. They have concluded that so far, it is not helping Rainbow people in workplaces efficaciously. It is not helping Rainbow people in the way they believe that it should. The Rainbow Tick certification body should monitor affiliated companies and ensure that their practices continue to promote Rainbow inclusivity beyond the initial acquisition of the tick.

Tyler for example shared that he realises that many companies are not aware of how problematic the Rainbow Tick is. He finds that that is the view held by many people in the transgender community. At the same time, he believes that the Rainbow Tick scheme does have the potential to help Rainbow people. In his opinion, it is not doing that yet, especially for the transgender community.

> *"No, no, no. And again, a lot of companies, my understanding is a lot of companies are unaware of how problematic Rainbow Tick is to, viewed by the, by the, by a lot of people in the trans community…They think that it is something that will, it does have the potential to help a company a little bit." (Tyler, 57, He/Him)*

Devin shares a similar sentiment that the Rainbow Tick is not serving its intended purpose currently. She also believes it has the potential to provide benefits for Rainbow people. This benefit is Rainbow people feeling comfortable and supported in the workplace, creating positive mental and emotional health outcomes. The other benefit would have come from their engagement and involvement in Rainbow communities. This could be in the form of financial contributions, asset-based contributions, or supplying human resources to assist in Rainbow related events and spaces.

> *"think it could be, but I do not think there is. It can be but,*
>
> *[interviewer] you do not think what, sorry?*
>
> *I think there could be a social benefit." (Devin, 31, She/Her)*

Robin is under the impression that there is a small amount of social value that Rainbow people gain from the companies implementing the Rainbow Tick. They found that the effects of the Rainbow Tick in organisations are minute. They acknowledge that benefits come from the policies being put in place but do not see any help beyond that. It can be interpreted that they think that there need to be more strategies put in place before Rainbow people can gain social value. Apart from the policies that get implemented and the discussions that have begun about diversity due to the entrance of the Rainbow Tick in the marketplace, there is no social benefit.

> *"[interviewer] Any form of value for you or for other people in Rainbow communities?*
>
> *I think a small amount…I think it provides benefit across policies and possibly gets people talking. Yes, like it get conversations happening. But apart from that, No."(Robin, 46, They/Them)*

Further into the interview, they are again prompted and revealed that they do not believe that any social value can be achieved from affiliated companies.

> *"[interviewer] So is there would you say that there is any social value attached to companies getting the Rainbow Tick right now as we speak?*
>
> *No" (Robin, 46, They/Them)*

The overall impression from the participants is that the Rainbow Tick is not serving the purpose that it should to the fullest extent. Participants shared that they found that there is a lack of continuous support from affiliated companies. That has left them with a bad impression of the certification scheme. As a result, the Rainbow Tick is perceived not to be

adding value based on participants' discourse. It is from this continuous community support that social value is created which positively adds to the narrative that a company, entity or individual is an ally for Rainbow communities (unless they are a member of the Rainbow population. To maintain legitimacy in the eyes of consumers, companies should maintain their commitment to inclusivity beyond the requirements (Vince, 2018) set out by the Rainbow Tick. Unfortunately, participants do not see affiliated companies acting in the capacity of an ally.

4.2.3 Concluding Overarching Theme

Firms attach themselves to social causes or movements to create positive outcomes for themselves (Berglind & Nakata, 2005). It helps create a good reputation for the firm (Webb & Mohr, 1998) and contributes to its bottom line. Consumers, in the end, are appreciative of firms being involved in social causes or movements that establish positive outcomes for a marginalised group (Berglind & Nakata, 2005). However, there is an issue of authenticity and legitimacy here due to these consumers' conclusion that the Rainbow Tick is an ineffective measure and representation of inclusivity. Consumers want to be able to see authenticity coming from brands and companies (Caruana et al., 2008). A brand will be perceived as authentic if its operations and offering match what is communicated by marketers (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). The participants have not observed actions that represent authenticity.

The Rainbow Tick markets itself as a mechanism of measuring, promoting inclusivity and supporting Rainbow communities. These participants do not see that. As a result, for many of them, the tick has low influence. If a brand is to be perceived as authentic, then there is a higher likelihood that one would choose that brand over another brand and spread positive word of mouth (Morhart et al., 2015). They think that firms are using the Rainbow Tick to appear to be Rainbow friendly and allies without actually putting in strategic efforts to contribute to the welfare of those Rainbow people working for them and Rainbow communities overall. They want to see companies being proactive and continuously supporting Rainbow people as an ally should.

These conclusions about the inauthenticity and lack of ally-related actions have diluted the influence of the Rainbow Tick. Consequently, the Rainbow Tick gives the impression that it is an inauthentic representation of Rainbow inclusion. Overall, participants do not seem to show much support for it. Firms have to go further than just trying to appear friendly as a

means of being socio-politically relevant – instead, practical and discernible steps are needed (Nölke, 2017).

4.3 Overarching Theme: Inadequacy

Inadequacy, in this case, is the Rainbow Tick certification scheme's ability to achieve its intended purpose. It should be providing training and expertise that can help drive companies towards legitimate, inclusive practices that would be relevant for Rainbow people specifically. Also, affiliated companies are connected to outcomes that show inadequacy in their practices. Unfortunately, the participants have surmised that different factors contribute to this inadequacy. The following sub sections highlight these contributing factors that have caused participants to infer that the Rainbow Tick's offering is inadequate. These different factors are the sub-themes developed from the data analysis. These subthemes include rigidity, awareness, non-representativeness, feedback and trust.

4.3.1 Rigidity (Evaluation and Maintenance Strategies)

There were a few participants that questioned the Rainbow Tick certification's evaluation and standards maintenance processes. They found that their processes were inadequate and need improvement if it is really going to help Rainbow people. They believed that it needed to be more rigid.

For example, Devin and Astrid were asked whether the Rainbow Tick was serving its stipulated purpose and concluded that they were to an extent. Devin believes that the significant problem with the Rainbow Tick is that it is not strict or stringent enough. She posits that the Rainbow Tick needs to be more discerning when deciding to award a company with the certification. Devin believes that if the requirements were more rigid, then her conclusion about the Rainbow Tick would be more positive. These requirements are not just in terms of attaining the tick but also how the standards of the Rainbow Tick are maintained and how the certification body holds these affiliated companies responsible. There seems to be a desire for the Rainbow Tick to implement better evaluation, procurement and maintenance strategies. She even provided an example in which the certification body held a company responsible for their actions that would have been harmful to transgender people. Ultimately, she wants to see more examples of the Rainbow Tick doing that and keeping affiliated companies accountable for their actions.

> *"[interviewer] And do you believe it is serving the purpose it says it is?*

I think it is doing it, but to a much smaller extent than it thinks it is. Like, if it was serving the purposes of really well, it would be a ten, but I'd give it maybe a three.

[interviewer] Okay. Why is that?

Sorry?

[interviewer] Why is that? Why is that? Because you said it is small. It was smaller extent? What did you…could you explain it a bit more?

Yeah. I think that if the requirements to have a Rainbow tech were more stringent that required more diversity, I think, Incorporated Te Tiriti, then it would be a better organisation too. But in terms of like holding corporations and companies accountable for not being discriminatory, it needs to be tougher, in terms of what it considers, who it considers worthy of the Rainbow Tick. Yeah, I mean, I think I do not know if this is necessarily responding to that question. But if I wanted to give an example of them doing their job very well. Last year, they were anti-trans extremists who wanted to hold a conference at<<company name>>. And Rainbow Tick told <<company name>> that if they allow that conference to go ahead, they would reconsider the Rainbow Tick. And then <<company name>> pulled the plug on the conference. And that that's more of the sort of pattern that I would like to see Rainbow Tick to be fulfilling their purpose in providing a social good." (Devin, 31, She/Her)

Astrid believes that a company could meet all the criteria for the Rainbow Tick but still not successfully help Rainbow people in the organisation. They are not sure that the Rainbow Tick is serving its purpose given what they know. Conversely, they do believe that it is helping in some cases.

"[interviewer] Okay, so do you think that that's that it is currently serving its purpose, that it is, do you believe that it serving its intended purpose?

I do not know.

[interviewer] You do not know, okay.

I think in some cases, it probably is. But I do not know, I do not, I do not think overall, it is possible to be doing that. It might be unrelated but um, my brain is just keep saying, you know, it does not actually matter how inclusive a company is, if you are getting paid minimum wage or something like that. Because I think, you know, supporting, and being a supportive and welcoming place to work for means paying your staff a living wage in my opinion. That's not even, you know, just not really related, but kind of. There are other metrics by which you

> *could be meeting all of the criteria for the Rainbow Tick and still be failing your diverse staff." (Astrid, 25, They/Them)*

Participants have deduced that the Rainbow Tick certification process is deficient. They believe that there is a lack of depth in evaluating the workplace culture within an organisation. There seems to be a lack of discernible activities from the participants' perspective that makes them believe that the companies are not authentically and proactively fostering inclusion and creating an inclusive workplace. Also one has surmised that one can meet the criteria without actually being Rainbow friendly. That hints to the lack of perceived rigidity of the evaluation process to investigate the workplace environment. That lack of rigidity points to the inadequacy of the evaluation and assessment protocols.

These assessments affect the meaning and image that the Rainbow Tick is trying to hold in the minds of Rainbow people. It is supposed to signal that the company is inclusive, but it is being inferred that it does not have deep enough or stringent evaluations and requirements for firms. Consequently, the Rainbow Tick does not hold significant meaning to the participants because the assessment is too limited. This is crucial to note because the legitimacy of any third-party certification is dependent on the decision of the wider populous to accept the standards set by the organisation (Vince, 2018). Therefore, serious deliberation is needed regarding the assessment and evaluation process so that the participants (and the community at large) perceive the Rainbow Tick positively and improve its legitimacy.

4.3.2 Awareness

Others had no awareness at all regarding which companies had been Rainbow Tick affiliated. Tea is mostly unaware that companies are affiliated when they go shopping. The question here is whether they did not notice the communication medium being used or whether it was communicated at all.

> *"Because a lot of companies just have not bothered or I do not know that they even have it in the first place. I do know I avoid companies I know are homophobic for sure, as in homophobia in a very general sense. But if I have the Rainbow Tick, I usually do not know." (Tea, 32, They/Them)*

There were instances where the interviewer had to help participants recall their purchasing experience with an affiliated company by showing them a list of affiliated companies on the Rainbow Tick website. For example, Devin had to look on google to help her recall who was affiliated.

"[interviewer] Okay, so this is this is towards the Rainbow Ticks. But what about the companies that have it? How do you feel?

So, I'm just gonna quickly Google which companies do have that."
(Devin, 31, She/Her)

These examples show that there is possibly an awareness problem for the Rainbow Tick. The rationale behind this lack of awareness is ambiguous.

4.3.3 Non-representative

This subtheme is related to the indicative nature of the Rainbow Tick offering to the lived experiences of Rainbow people and their needs. Some participants found that the Rainbow Tick was out of date. Participants found some issues with the training and evaluation provided by the Rainbow Tick. The Rainbow Tick should be a **source of guidance** for companies trying to make a difference in Rainbow people's lives in the marketplace. Devin highlights that the Rainbow Tick is not a good enough reference for companies to use for their accountability to Rainbow communities. In her experience, she has worked with an organisation that wanted to earn the trust of the Rainbow community. These organisations would have looked at the Rainbow Tick as a possible authority figure to identify Rainbow-related issues and strategies to combat them effectively in the workplace. She thinks that what the Rainbow Tick has done so far is not good enough. It can be presumed that Devin does not believe that the evaluation and the training that the Rainbow Tick is providing is sufficient. She concluded that it is not an appropriate reference point for companies that want to build a more inclusive environment.

> *"And when we do we work with organisations like the <<organisation name>>, or like pride, um, and they they're talking about what they need to do in order to in order to earn the trust of the Rainbow community. And the measure they going by is what Rainbow Tick is saying. I just do not think that Rainbow Tick, when they're in that position of being the, the accountability process for organisations, like the <<organisation name>>, they just not doing that good enough."*
> *(Devin, 31, She/Her)*

Although, Devin acknowledges that the Rainbow Tick is not iniquitous. She thinks that it is just out of date in terms of the quality of its service offering. She believes that the Rainbow Tick must update its training, policies, and guidelines to remain relevant so that Rainbow communities can have faith in it as a legitimate marker of inclusion.

> *"I think they just they're not politically bad, they're just 20 years behind. I also know that they are currently working to update their*

> *policies and guidelines or what they require of companies to have a Rainbow Tick. Yeah, also updating dating, the training that they provide. What's important, what I think is overdue for them. I think that's really important that they do that. And that they could be they could be an organisation which people have more faith than in, if they did that well." (Devin, 31, She/Her)*

Devin further highlights the need for the Rainbow Tick to **seek extra external advice about transgender people**. She has found that they have been specifically ignorant regarding transgender-related issues and identities. Therefore, she finds that the Rainbow Tick is inadequate at serving the whole Rainbow population. She believes that it is a consequence of inter-generational differences, and the Rainbow Tick organisation should be extending a line of communication with the younger generation of Rainbow people. This needed communication also links to the theme of feedback (discussed more in section 4.3.4). Devin believes there needs to be more communication between the accreditation body and Rainbow communities for their content to remain relevant.

> *"I think that the training they offer needs to be better um, in, in a lot of ways.*
>
> *[interviewer] Like what?*
>
> *I think that it is, that it reflects a massive amounts of ignorance within their company about trans people, and they need to seek some external advice on what it should say, for example. Um, and I think that some of that is probably just inter-generational differences, but they're, they're out of touch with younger people."(Devin, 31, She/Her)*

Kai also found that the Rainbow Tick was **out of touch, especially in terms of trans related issues**, similar to Devin's point. Kai finds that the training lacks scope and rigour concerning transgender and gender non-conforming identities and experiences. Based on their experience working in an affiliated company, they discovered that the managers had little understanding of the experiences of Rainbow people. That experience made them frustrated and question if there is true allyship that can be attained from participating in the training provided by the Rainbow Tick.

> *"I mean from my experience they were just quite uninformed on anything relating to transgender people, and I think they think the Rainbow Tick is more for like lesbian, gay, bisexual but trans people, gender non conforming people. There's like a, they do not know they do not know we exist, they do not know how to relate to us, they do not know like how to manage or advocate for people in this group. Right? So how can you be an ally, when you do not even know how to talk to*

these people, you do not even know the issues that their encountering. And quite often, for me, talking to managers really just have a really superficial understanding of LGBT people. It was like talking, it was like, we're talking two different languages, like we exist in two different worlds…you end up hitting your head against a brick wall." (Kai, 41, They/Them)

To take it a step further, they found the Rainbow Tick to be divisive. They believe that the Rainbow Tick scheme only protects "more easily understood"/culturally popular identities in the Rainbow population. These identities are well known and understood by the general population. There are different factors that intersect which transgender and non-binary people deal with. These factors for example include pronouns, names changes and hormone therapy which adds to the complexity of their experiences. As a result, compared to cisgender norms, transgender and non-binary experiences in terms norms and expectations are more dynamic and complex.

"And it is also divisive because it creates a divide between those who are trans and those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other people in the in the, whats happened by our communities. Because, as well, you know, under this Rainbow Tick, we accept some of you but not all of you. So, that's an issue as well, and, you know, with the disparity, I'm sure there are some gay lesbian bisexual people who think the Rainbow Tick is fantastic, and great and wonderful; it accommodate their identities, but for those that it does not, it is not a good fit at all." (Kai, 41, They/Them)

"I mean from my experience they were just quite uninformed on anything relating to transgender people." (Kai, 41, They/Them)

Tyler came to a similar conclusion as Kai. He found that the Rainbow Tick is **disconnected from the transgender narrative**. He believes that it has created problematic engagement for transgender people.

"From a consumer standpoint, I do not think, if you are not part of the trans community, most people would not know that. Would not know that the company said very, very problematic engagement with the trans community." (Tyler, 57, He/Him)

There were also issues with how Rainbow Tick trainings were implemented in different organisations. Kai does not just find the training out of touch with transgender and non-conforming people; they found that the implementation of training in an organisation was not consistent. In the organisation they worked in, they learned that participation in the training

program was voluntary and that not all departments had to participate. The problem highlighted by Kai was the issue of consistency. This meant that not everyone in the organisation was adequately trained, and the standard set in supplied trainings was not maintained throughout the entire organisation.

> *"Basically, because of my own experience working in an organisation that has the Rainbow Tick. My understanding was that these organisations are inclusive organisations where the staff have been given training or awareness training of LGBT people, and how to relate to them and treat them as human beings. Unfortunately, the training and the Rainbow Tick initiative and how it is implemented is voluntary... Some departments may be very compliant and may emphasise that their staff had to take modules, the online learning modules on LGBT awareness. However other departments would do nothing, not even acknowledge that there is a Rainbow Tick. So it really, like the way that it is implemented is really up to the department and that was my experience.... I just do not feel that the Rainbow Tick is implemented consistently across an organisation. I reckon they can put that input LGBT members as an area of risk. I contacted the Rainbow Tick advisory group at Massey to say you know whats going on? What is the story here? Here, like, what kind of training are people receiving and based on my experience is not quite the label at Massey for an LGBT person." (Kai, 41, They/Them)*

Orange shared their experience working in an organisation that was Rainbow Tick affiliated. They found that the diversity training supplied by the Rainbow Tick was insufficient. He holds the opinion that the diversity trainings need to go beyond the session itself. Meaning, the training session needs another component that allows them to muse on Rainbow diversity concepts a bit more before using learnt content.

> *"I think things like diversity trainings can be a tick box exercise that sometimes do not go further than that training session itself." (Orange, 28, He/Him or They/Them)*

Orange has gone further to highlight another element that the participants pointed to in this sub-theme. It is the fact that they believe training modules and the assessments need to be **firm or industry-specific-** there is no one size fits all solution. The training modules seem to be standard across different industries. Hence, there is a perceived lack of a customised approach during the training, assessment, and evaluation.

> *"So they're face to face trainings that they run are quite generic and do not are not service specific. So I think having sharing information that a particular service or organisation or company might need, for*

example, what you might tell to people working at <<company name>>, in terms of supporting Rainbow people might be really really different to for example, health care, because the needs and importance of knowledge in those areas are quite different."(Orange, 28, He/Him or They/Them)

It would be good to use this type of approach because what is needed for a goods based firm might be different from a service-oriented firm. Their workplace cultures and the way they function are different. Incorporating specific pieces of information pertinent to that industry would help make the training more relevant. Industry-specific training can be beneficial because it provides employees with relevant skills that create positive returns (Smits, 2007). In the end, create a higher probability that it can create change or greater awareness because it is context-specific. It may mean additional research is needed. In the end, it allows that company to supply better service for their Rainbow employees because their strategies are built based on specific contextual awareness. This will affect consumers because the employees will know how to approach and appropriately interact with Rainbow people.

In conclusion, the participants found that the Rainbow Tick's training has not been adequately developed and implemented in different organisations. Concerning the training content, participants found that the training modules were out of date and did not represent the lived experiences of transgender people. As a result, they surmise that the training's content is inadequate in terms of its quality, relevance, and accuracy. Concerning the implementation of the training modules, it was mentioned that the training was voluntary, which meant that there would be instances of inconsistency in organisations because departments are not mandated to participate. Inconsistency takes place when "one element/instrument/domain recognises the goal while the other does not" (Donina et al., 2017, p. 868). That could negatively affect the experiences of Rainbow people in the organisation because there are spaces in the organisation that may be ill-informed, increasing the probability of mistreatment. This mistreatment could be towards Rainbow employees and possible Rainbow consumers who interact with that specific company. Also, a participant made an interesting point, which could also be a recommendation for the affiliation body going forward (if that is not the case). The participant stipulated that the Rainbow Tick training should be industry-specific.

4.3.4 Feedback

Feedback is information that has returned to a learner or entity about it concerning their actions or attitudes (Sales, 1993). It is a critical element of any system in different contexts

(Kowitz & Smith, 1985). Feedback allows an entity to compare and contrast actual performance against a desired standard (Johnson & Johnson, 1993). In this sub-theme, the focus is on the Rainbow certification body and affiliated companies and the nature of their response or lack thereof to feedback.

Participants, from their experience with the Rainbow Tick, found that they were non-responsive to feedback. Alex's statements agree with the notion that the Rainbow Tick needs to take on feedback. They recommend that the Rainbow Tick organisation should respond appropriately to feedback where necessary. In the end, it should be for the betterment of Rainbow communities.

> *"But yeah, I think, again, coming back to that transparency and accountability, if Rainbow tech was to be more transparent about what it is that they did as a top down institution, that would probably be good. And if they were, as an institution more accountable to people who had concerns or questions or Yeah, just or even criticisms, as an institution that is about improving marginalised people's experiences and access to products or workplaces, like you would want to be accountable to those communities." (Alex, 34, They/Them)*

Astrid also states something similar. They believe that if the Rainbow Tick's premise is inclusivity and acceptance, they must be accountable to Rainbow people. They have to ensure that whatever they do positively adds to Rainbow peoples' experiences. Here we should acknowledge the point made that there are people that have put their trust and faith in the Rainbow Tick. Consequently, they must ensure that their service offering protects Rainbow people and promotes Rainbow well-being in various industries.

> *"And I think that if you are going to have if you are going to give people this certification that they can fly around and be really proud of, then you've got a duty of care to the people who believe you." (Astrid, 25, They/Them)*

Robin provided an example from their experience with an affiliated company in which they were non-responsive to feedback. It was in the context of an affiliated companies' launch party. The company had invited a few members from Rainbow communities. The problem is they did not know the company was acquiring the tick in the first place. Moreover, they did not hear from the company again regarding what practices or activities to maintain the certification's standards or seek out performance feedback. For Robin, it appears that the affiliated companies are partaking in a box-ticking exercise because they seem only to be doing just enough to get the Rainbow Tick to seem Rainbow friendly and nothing else. They

have not taken any additional proactive steps to support their Rainbow workers or Rainbow communities in general.

> *"And they invited all of these Rainbow community people. We knew nothing about it before that. We knew nothing about it afterwards. They just, it was like dropping a pile of Rainbow people to our launch, look at how great we are and look at everything we're doing. And do not involve us beforehand and do not involve us afterwards. And yeah, and it just seemed to be a tick box exercise."* (Robin, 46, They/Them)

Tyler had the opportunity to see the training module developed by the Rainbow Tick. He found that it was offensive and provided the Rainbow Tick with feedback about it. The Rainbow Tick did not seem to be responsive to his query, which left him disappointed. He was initially exposed to word of mouth that told him that the Rainbow Tick was bad. According to Tyler, many people are either apprehensive towards it or completely disregard it. Tyler got the opportunity to see the training modules and found that it was objectionable.

Consequently, his experience matched what he would have heard from other people resulting in a negative impression of the Rainbow Tick. That opinion persisted due to the lack of an appropriate response from the Rainbow Tick given his feedback about the training modules. He also noted the change in leadership that has occurred. The previous leadership that started when the Rainbow Tick was established is no longer present. They have established a new group of directors that should manage the certification body. But still, he has observed that the training modules have not been adapted.

> *"I had heard that Rainbow Tick was, um, problematic. People were incredibly cynical or, or quite anti-it. It was only once I saw their actual education module and how offensive it was, and then said that this is offensive and the response I got, that I realised that they, nothing had changed over the years and they truly were as bad as people said they were.. Having said that, I do understand there is new management in place. However, we still have not got, um, different training modules."*
> (Tyler, 57, He/Him)

Louise also shared feedback with the Rainbow Tick about issues in a company and found that they were non-responsive. She passed on some feedback to the previous leadership based on issues she was having working at an affiliated company. In the end, she found that they were non-committal and not pushing for much accountability when she discovered that the organisation she was working for was not operating according to the Rainbow Tick's standards. This comment from Louise also brings up the issue of accountability and the lack

thereof from the Rainbow Tick (more discussed in section 4.3.5.3). The certification body did not hold the company Louise worked in accountable for their actions. The lack of responsiveness to feedback from numerous first-hand narratives about a delinquent affiliate left her questioning the efficacy of the Rainbow Tick.

> *"We voiced our concerns that we kind of did not think that <<company name>> were taking the Rainbow Tick seriously. And we actually pushed <<Rainbow Tick leadership>> in a telly conference. We were in a meeting and … And we pushed (them) on, what would it take for us to lose the Rainbow Tick? And basically, he said, oh well of what you'd have to fail to meet 80% of the accreditation process, and well, a couple of us thought we already sort of there, under that. And (they were) very non-committal on yeah, sort of putting, be willing to put his name to putting force behind <<company name>> to either up their game, or you gonna lose your accreditation. He did not really push to, sort of, go, well, you too, are raising concerns maybe I need to put some pressure on <<company name>> to go: okay. Do you want the accreditation? Are you willing to sort of walk the talk? (they) was very non-committal on that."* (Louise, 57, She/Her)

Alex also had first-hand experience with Rainbow Tick's previous leadership. They found that they were not very receptive to the feedback they had. They were involved in a focus group coordinated by the previous leadership to understand the company's social environment. Alex found that the questions were mainly focused on cisnormative experiences, and the feedback about transgender experiences were dismissed. That left a negative impression of the Rainbow Tick in their mind.

> *"I also have personal experience, and like second hand experience (them) not being terribly open to feedback or criticism… I've, I was actually in a focus group with the Rainbow Tick. … Before they credited <<<company name>> to try to understand what … experiences were like ….And I found that a lot of the questions were very cis normative, very much focused on the experiences of like same sex couples walking around and feeling safe holding hands on campus kind of experiences. And the number of people in the focus group were transgender, and so voice that there was a lot of concerns around those kind of experiences and how they did not get brought up in the focus group. And I think everybody felt a little bit dismissed, there was a lot of, Okay, well blow past that, and just kind of focus on the questions that are on the sheet. And so I found that really interesting. Obviously, that's, you know, one person's experience, but it definitely left a bit of a taste in my mouth."* (Alex, 34, They/Them)

The finding so far places the Rainbow Tick in a negative light in terms of the functionality of the leadership team. Alternatively, some still have hope and optimism that the Rainbow

Tick's efficacy and image can change for the better. There has been a shift in leadership, which has given a few participants hope. Ranft et al. (2006) note that, more recently, top-level management represents the company's possible nature and is responsible for its accomplishments, whether positive or negative. Some participants believe that the new leadership will be more receptive to Rainbow communities' feedback and manage the scheme better than their predecessors. The participants hope that the inclusive strategies will be better executed and monitored by affiliated companies.

For example, when James was looking at the website and the programme's management team, he shared that he felt a lot better about the Rainbow Tick after observing the change in leadership. He discounted the tick many years ago, and now that he has seen the change in leadership with people he respects, he can look at the Rainbow Tick more positively.

> *"Well, I actually see now that the staff lineup have completely changed. And two woman that I like and respect are on it. So now, I feel like it is going to be a lot better... Yeah. But, I actually like looking at the team lineup now, I'm starting to feel more hopeful and positive about the Rainbow Tick.*
>
> *[interviewer] That's good. So do you believe that the Rainbow Ticket serving its intended purpose currently,*
>
> *I do not think it was a few years ago, but I would probably have to look into it a bit more because I kind of just discounted it for your four years ago and did not really think of it ever since but, yeah, like I said, I think I could feel a bit more positive about it now that the board has changed, I just feel like that << previous leadership>> was not good. But yeah."*
> *(James, 37, He/Him)*

James's positivity comes from the fact that he recognises some of the leadership team members and has a positive perspective of them. As a consequence, his thoughts have shifted. This shows the importance of the reputation or image of leaders in an organisation. James has put more faith in the Rainbow Tick due to the favourable opinion he has of the leadership team. Perceived reputation has a positive effect on trust – meaning if an individual has a positive perspective on something in their mind, they will be more likely to trust it (Casalo et al., 2007) .

Tea believes that there needs to be a **mode of communication that the Rainbow Tick maintains with Rainbow people**. This chain of communication would be with the Rainbow employees in the organisation and those in the broader Rainbow community. Rainbow communities form part of the Rainbow Tick's customer base because they are the intended

beneficiaries of the evaluation and training that the affiliated companies get. It is vital to keep a dialogue going between the Rainbow Tick and Rainbow communities so that the Rainbow Tick can offer relevant content in their service offering.

> *"I think the key thing for me really is going to be try to keep a connection or a link or line open with the Rainbow people actually there. And the Rainbow communities that are also their customers."* (Tea, 32, They/Them)

They also recommend that companies should not be defensive if reprimanded. It can be inferred that they believe that the affiliated company should be more receptive to criticism and feedback.

> *"Also, hold yourselves accountable when you are called out on bad behaviour. Do not get defensive."* (Tea, 32, They/Them)

Moreover, some participants found that the Rainbow Tick has too much of a **commercial or corporate focus**. They have concluded that the Rainbow Tick is disconnected from the people it is supposed to be protecting for the sake of appealing to its direct clients (i.e the affiliated companies). For example, Danny thought the Rainbow Tick was too corporate. Danny attributes this disconnection to the acquisition process of the Rainbow Tick. He finds that companies attaining the Rainbow Tick accreditation and using the logo in their marketing have lost the personal touch and community-centric feel. The fact that there is some economic and financial exchange between the Rainbow Tick and its clients came across as though it is about economic benefit rather than concern for diversity and inclusion.

> *"Feels like corporate and palatable to be like an actual diverse movement, you know what I mean? Like, which makes it because it is a logo for corporations and stuff. I always saw it like a quite a corporate thing, which I see is quite different to the idea of like diverse communities you know, I see that in quite. Yeah and I think though, that might be influenced by like Rainbow marketing in general, just generally being quite corporate and impersonal I think is the other thing."* (Danny, 27, He/Him)

These participants are expecting the Rainbow Tick to be responsible and react to feedback appropriately. It is a layer of accountability that participants think that the Rainbow Tick should emulate. The accountability here is being answerable to Rainbow communities and subject themselves to constructive scrutiny that allows them to adapt their diversity training and evaluation systems in accordance with the actual need of Rainbow communities. It could be a situation where the certification body consults with credible community leaders that can speak in representation of the different Rainbow communities. Companies need to listen to

and respond to feedback because it reduces the likelihood of incurring the cost of service recovery due to negative company image (Beckers et al., 2018). The participants found that the Rainbow Tick was non-responsive to their feedback about issues and occurrences happening in the organisation that they worked in. That left them with a negative impression of and feelings (including sadness and disappointment) towards the Rainbow Tick. The major problem discussed here is the inefficiency and non-responsiveness of the previous leadership. Collins and Miller (1994) posit that the behaviour that company leaders show to others will be deemed positive if it is fitting to customary practices.

Consequently, the meaning of the Rainbow Tick is affected negatively due to the previous leadership's antipathetic reputation. Furthermore, the lack of responsiveness to feedback contributes to the perceived inadequacy of the Rainbow Tick because the quality and integrity of their offering is not adapting according to pertinent feedback. In the end, it seems less representative of the actual reality. Alternatively, some are still hopeful that the change in leadership will bring more positive results.

4.3.5 Trust

There are several ways to describe risk depending on the context. McKnight and Chervany (2000) define trust as "one is willing to depend on, or intends to depend on, the other person in a given task or situation with a feeling of relative security, even though negative consequences are possible" (pg. 831). That feeling of security means that the individual trusting in the other entity can have complete confidence and a sense of safety (Rempel et al., 1985). Trust becomes important when an individual is exposed to risk and ambiguity (Mishra, 1996). This subtheme under inadequacy has to do with the participants' trust in the Rainbow Tick certification and the affiliated companies. The theme will explore the ideas of cynicism, accountability, and transparency that have affected the way participants view the Rainbow Tick and the resulting trust they have in the scheme as a signal of inclusivity.

4.3.5.1 General cynicism

Another major attitude towards the Rainbow Tick and its affiliates evident from the sample of transgender and non-binary consumers is cynicism or uncertainty. In this context, what is being described here is consumer cynicism. Consumer cynicism is a protective psychological strategy employed by a consumer towards any appeal strategies from different brands or companies (Chylinski & Chu, 2010). "As a psychological tool, this kind of cynicism is used to resist marketing techniques and is linked to suspicion toward corporate virtuous

discourses" (Odou & de Pechpeyrou, 2011, p. 1800). This cynicism makes them scrutinise the activities of a firm in terms of what value proposition they are trying to market (Cherrier & Murray, 2004). Some participants were reacting with a sense of cynicism when they shared their opinions of the Rainbow Tick.

Robin felt a sense of cynicism when asked whether they would consider the Rainbow Tick when deciding to engage with a Rainbow affiliated company versus another. They were in that frame of mind because they believe that the Rainbow Tick's meaning and significance has shifted. Robin shared that they think that the Rainbow Tick used to be an organisation that pushed for social change. However, they concluded that its meaning has shifted, and now it is just a good symbol or marker for companies to have when they are marketing themselves.

> *"Because I'm deeply cynical. I think Rainbow Tick's lost its way.*
>
> *[Interviewer] it is lost its way.*
>
> *Yes. I think it is moved from being a an organisation that really pushes for social change to being or pushes organisations to change to being more of a let's make this look good for your marketing campaign."* *(Robin 46, They/Them)*

Kai is also a cynic in their assessment of the Rainbow Tick. This cynicism would have come from the negative experiences they would have had working for an affiliated company. As a result, it would be understandable for them to act in this manner because they have first-hand experience working in a company in which they were mistreated.

> *"[interviewer] So, in general, what do you know about the Rainbow Tick and the purpose it is supposed to serve for the community?*
>
> *I did go onto the Rainbow Tick website, when I started at <<company name>>, because it was quite vague as to what it actually was. And to many its about, you know, they, they had lots of standard like inclusivity, and it is important to value all your staff, so you can get more productivity out of them and to mitigate the cost of like, personal grievances and things like that. To me, it is really more about protecting, mitigating risks in the organisation and it is not really about seeing LGBT people as human beings. Like I said before I'm just very skeptical about an organisation that claims to be about social change. When as I said, you know, when I've worked for <<Company name>> when it was <<company name>> back in the day, it was very hostile. They wouldnt promote anyone that was openly LGBT. Suddenly they had this epiphany where it is now, now because of the Rainbow Tick what has happened? Why did that happen? Has it been that bigger shift*

*in attitude or are they just trying to target the pink dollar or something.
Im just very cynical about it and that is just based on my own
experience."(Kai, 41, They/Them)*

It is a similar narrative for Tyler. He has had experience engaging with the Rainbow Tick

organisation themselves and did not approve of their behaviour. He found that they, again,

were out of touch with the transgender community. When he and others reached out to them

to create change, the Rainbow Tick organisation wanted them to educate and train them

without any form of remuneration. In Tyler's opinion, it came across as though they were

taking advantage of Rainbow people. They should be paid for any assistance they rendered to

the Rainbow Tick. That has left him feeling cynical. The Rainbow Tick does not affect his

buying decision due to this cynicism towards the Rainbow Tick's operations.

> *"[Interviewer] And if, say, a company that you are looking at, and they
> have the Rainbow Tick, I know you say it does not affect your buying
> decision, but how does it make you feel? What are your feelings
> towards the brand itself?*
>
> *The brand itself? Very cynical.*
>
> *[Interviewer] Cynical? Can you talk a bit more about that?*
>
> *Yes. Rainbow Tick has repeatedly refused to engage with the trans
> community over the years and years as we have pointed out
> problematic content in their teaching packages. When we have
> engaged, they have expected the trans community to provide it, to um,
> to educate them and provide the training modules without
> reimbursement of any kind whatsoever. So, they benefit from it
> financially without reimbursing the people concerned."(Tyler, 57,
> He/Him)*

Alex appreciates the Rainbow Tick's intent, but they do not believe that it has been

implemented correctly. The intent here is that the Rainbow Tick indicates that a workplace is

an ally or Rainbow friendly. In this case, it is between different companies that may or may

not have the Rainbow Tick. Alex does not believe that the Rainbow Tick has been able to do

that just yet. They do not have much faith in the Rainbow Tick. They think that the Rainbow

Tick is not a reliable source representing that a company supports Rainbow communities.

> *"I like the idea of it. I think if it was if executed properly, it would be
> really nice. If there was faith in it as an institution, it would be really
> nice for those of us in the Queer community, or people that want to
> support safe working environments, just like you'd want to support an
> environment, maybe that has a unionised Task Force. It is like I care
> about labour rights, or Queer community safety. Like, it would be nice*

to have something that was kind of a shortcut to know that those things were true. But I do not know that the Rainbow Tick, is that metric or that reliable." (Alex, 34, They/Them)

Alex has little regard for the Rainbow Tick as a factor when considering different brands. This is because they do not have faith in the Rainbow Tick's ability to help Rainbow people. They do not think it represents that firms are Rainbow friendly. They would prefer factual information about how the company has engaged with Rainbow people or first-hand accounts of other people's experiences with the company.

> *Gosh, so if I was having two options in front of me and one, I did not know anything about them aside from the fact that one had a Rainbow Tick and one did not, I would probably go with the Rainbow Tick….But if I had a choice between a company that I knew something about, and I knew their relationship with Queer workers, or Queer clients, or customers or whatever language you use, I would definitely take that over the accreditation……Yeah, like, if I were to rank like preferences, having no information would be the bottom and then having an accreditation like Rainbow Tick would be next. And then the best or the most preferred option would be having actual information about how that company engages or, like firsthand accounts, like people saying, I worked there and it was a good experience or I've purchased products there and it was a good experience.*
>
> *[interviewer] Okay, okay. Okay. Um, so you'd say it is not that would you say it is unimportant or not such an important thing you look out for choosing a brand?*
>
> *Not terribly important." (Alex, 34, They/Them)*

Given Alex's experience and knowledge of the Rainbow Tick, it only marginally affects their purchasing decision. It only affects them marginally because they do not see the Rainbow Tick being used as an effective change-maker in an organisation. They do not seem to trust the Rainbow Tick scheme to be able to promote change.

> *" [interviewer] how does a company have the Rainbow Tick effect your buying decision?*
>
> *Marginally.*
>
> *[interviewer] What do you mean marginally?*
>
> *I want to have more faith in it than I do. I want it to mean something. And it does not mean as much as I want it to.*
>
> *[interviewer] what do you want it to mean?*

I want it to mean that I can have faith in a company. And that credential or not credential that accreditation is something really trustworthy and encompassing. But I do not think I do see it that way. There's not a whole lot of companies here in <place> that I've seen with the Rainbow Tick certification, but the <educational institutions> both have it. So, my experiences of it have kind of been through that lens of putting a university under the umbrella of Rainbow Tick, which is a little weird, because it is not actually supposed to be a business. And so yeah, it gets a little complicated." (Alex, 34, They/Them)

Morgan shares the same sentiment as Alex that the Rainbow Tick would not affect their decision making by that much. The following quote is what Morgan shared when asked how the Rainbow Tick affected their purchasing decision. They do not trust the Rainbow Tick scheme either. There are a few reasons why this is the case for them. The first being that they are a bit cynical towards the Rainbow Tick scheme. This is due to what they have observed in the marketplace thus far. For example, they noted that a certain company with a bad reputation in Rainbow communities had the tick, and they do not understand why. They do not believe that they have an inclusive and Rainbow friendly working environment. This affects their interpretation of the authenticity of the Rainbow Tick in their mind. The other is that there is no information available about exactly what firms have to do to get the Rainbow Tick from their experience. As a result, they have concluded that it does not mean anything. If there was information available about affiliation criteria, then they would put more trust in the Rainbow Tick.

"Sort of

[interviewer] Sort of how

Well like its better than nothing. So the you, I do not really trust the Rainbow Tick scheme that much.

[interviewer] Oh you do not trust it?

No

[interviewer] Why is that?

Someone told me the <<company name>> have the Rainbow Tick which like I really do not believe that they are in it in any way. But it is it suppose it comes down to that kind of cynical marketing for pride thing again that does it actually say anything about the company or is it just a nice label they can stick on their door and not actually have to do anything for it…. And there's like no information anywhere that you can get on what you actually have to do to get Rainbow Tick. That means it does not mean anything. If there's nothing that says yeah, if If

the website said something like "To be to get a Rainbow Tick, you have to meet these criteria." Then I trust it a lot more. Because I could say, well, I know at least that, you know, their trans staff are able to transition easily. There would be something that told me that they were doing something right. But just the, you know, do they just have to say, yeah, we do not hate the gays. What do they have to do yeah." (Morgan, 51, They/Them)

Even though Morgan does not trust it, they would still choose the affiliated company. However that would also depend on what they have seen the company do in the media and other information based outlets. They would prefer to see the companies in action doing what they should. The Rainbow Tick is not a sole deciding factor for them. The primary decision criterion for them is the organisation's track record. If the company had a positive or reasonable track record, then Morgan would have been okay with consuming their product or service. The track record seems to be holding more influence than the Rainbow Tick. It is not purely the Rainbow Tick that necessarily has the impact.

"I'd probably go with the Rainbow affiliated one, but it would kind of also depend like what I heard in the media and stuff like that. Whether I thought they were actually living up to

[interviewer] So it is not just branding symbol itself. Its also their track record.

Yeah. Because something like the <<company name>>, you know, not that I... wouldnt but you know. But if say there were selling something, I would be more inclined to think, "Hey you are the people who did change their name even though everyone told you it was offensive." That would be the thing that would come to mind first, rather than oh, you've got a Rainbow Tick yay.

[interviewer] Right. Okay. Okay. So, um, the track record holds quite a lot of sway?

Yeah,

[interviewer] Okay. So, is that would you say it is an important, unimportant or, like on a scale of one to five, how important is it for choosing a brand or company?

With five being really important? It is probably three to four somewhere around there. It has weight but not a lot." (Morgan, 51, They/Them)

Kamareira shared that he avoids affiliated Rainbow companies due to bad experiences he had with a large corporation that had the tick

> *"I'm actually less inclined to buy from them because having had quite negative experiences with large corporations that have the Rainbow Tick." (Kamareira, 27, He/Him)*

Kamareira really dislikes the Rainbow Tick scheme in general. He does not think that the Rainbow Tick represents a company being an ally and Rainbow friendly.

> *"I hate the Rainbow Tick very passionately. real work, but I think, apart from the fact that it is a commercial enterprise, and it is not actually encouraging genuine cultural change around security issues. It is tacky as fuck." (Kamareira, 27, He/Him)*

Since he dislikes the Rainbow Tick entirely, he will avoid it. This provides an example of avoidance behaviour due to negative past experiences that created a negative perception of a brand or company. You would expect this behaviour based on previous early studies that have looked at negative emotions leading to negative consumption results. [For example (Holbrook & Batra, 1987; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Russell et al., 1989)]. This contrasts with what we have seen thus far, where the participants' consumption decisions are not affected by the Rainbow Tick. However, more recent studies have found that negative and positive emotions are not mutually exclusive in consumption experiences. They can coexist and cause different resulting behaviours (more discussed in section 5.2.4.3).

Hunter experienced a lack of consumption options. Hunter has chosen to stay with a specific affiliated company even though the image that they have of the company is negative due to location limitations. They do not have a personal mode of transportation, and it is convenient for them to use this company due to its proximate location to where they live.

> *"Some of them I think I probably saw like a tick thing on a website at some point or in a window of one of their outlets or something. But not a lot of them like I shop at <<company name>> every week and I had no idea that <<company name>> was Rainbow Tick affiliated which I also find hilarious because they support the <<company name>> and the <<company name>> has a terrible record in terms of their transphobia and homophobia and everything so yeah, nice one.*
>
> *[Interviewer] Nice. Okay. Okay, has that? So will you just continue shopping something because you are indifferent, would you continue shopping at <<Company name>>.*
>
> *I did not really have much of an option of shopping anywhere else because I live right <<Location>>. I do not have a car. <<Company name>> is five minutes walk from my place. It is the only supermarket that is within acceptable distance from where I live. So right. I do not*

really have much options of shopping somewhere else." (Hunter, 32, They/Them)

Tyler also has choice restrictions - in terms of what options are available. Therefore, he is forced to consume or purchase from the company they have a negative impression of. He believes that companies that are affiliated still have more work to do to be genuinely Rainbow friendly.

> *"I do not have a choice at times that I do have to engage with them, but I'm very mindful that, um, that they, um, have a lot a long way to go…Yeah. They think that great because they've got the Rainbow Tick, but the reality is they've got a lot to learn." (Tyler, 57, He/Him)*

When asked what the affiliated companies could do to improve, Tyler found that it depends on the company. He considers that that is part of the problem with the Rainbow Tick. He believes that the Rainbow Tick gives companies standardised solutions when these solutions need to be custom and firm-specific. Tyler also notes that Rainbow inclusivity is ongoing work, and companies need to be working towards that continuously. He believes the Rainbow Tick does not provide continuous ongoing training that he believes the affiliated companies need. Tyler believes that there is more work to be done.

> *"Well it will depend on the individual service or company that had it, because companies are very, very diverse…So there's no black and White, easy answer to any of this, which I guess is part of the problem with Rainbow Tick is they try to make things black and White, really straightforward. So, it'd be down to individual companies, some, some companies would be excelling, far exceeding whatever the Rainbow Tick had done and it was just this them as a company with great HR, great employees and really, um, inclusivity and other companies scrape the bottom of the barrel.*
>
> *[Interviewer] Right. So, it all depends on the company, their products, where they're at?*
>
> *Absolutely, yeah.*
>
> *[Interviewer] Yeah. Okay.*
>
> *A lot of people do not seem to realise the Rainbow competency, it is ongoing work. It is not you just sit a little test, get your tick and that's it.*
>
> *[Interviewer] Yes.*
>
> *It is ongoing.*
>
> *[Interviewer] Yes. Yes. Agreed.*

Which is not provided by a Rainbow Tick." (Tyler, 57, He/Him)

On the other hand, Devin is not completely turned off by the prospect of the Rainbow Tick but would not let it be a guiding factor in her decision-making. She would not be more inclined to buy something from a company with the Rainbow Tick. She also believes that the Rainbow Tick is meaningless. Again it does not help Rainbow people in her eyes. She actually finds that the anti-discriminatory requirements of the Rainbow Tick are less stringent than the law requires (Human Rights Act and the Employment Relations Act). As a result, she thinks the Rainbow Tick is meaningless.

> *"Uh huh. It never has. I do not know of any companies with Rainbow Ticks that have products that I buy? Um, yeah. I mean, I would not, I would not go out of my way to buy something because it had it Rainbow Tick.*
>
> *[interviewer] Okay, so would you prefer to engage with, buy from or use the services of a company that has the Rainbow Tick versus one without?*
>
> *I mean, I guess they'd probably be a preference for some Rainbow Tick than without the Rainbow Tick, but it would not be a strong one. Um like…*
>
> *[interviewer] Why?*
>
> *Um, because of my understanding of their policy is that their anti-discrimination requirements that you have to have a Rainbow Tick is less stringent than the law already requires companies to be. So, it is kind of a meaningless thing. I also see it as part of like a very corporate, Queer culture which is quite disconnected from the people around me and the people I work with and the people we support." (Devin, 31, She/Her)*

The main thing here is that the Rainbow Tick thus far has not given participants a reason to trust the scheme completely. Helm (2004) describes cynicism as being a scale of trust to mistrust. The distrust is not only towards what the company says but also the company does. Kanter and Mirvis (1989) came to the same conclusion in their research of consumer cynicism. If that is the case, participants have not fully trusted the Rainbow Tick scheme for different reasons, including bad experiences and poor representation in not so liberal industries. This, in the end, affects the meaning that the Rainbow Tick has in the minds of these consumers. They end up questioning both the purpose of the Rainbow Tick and the intent of affiliated companies. This is important to note because this represents issues of trust from groups of individuals in the Rainbow communities that the tick is supposed to serve. Adjustments need to be made so that these participants can trust the Rainbow Tick and

affiliated companies. Implementing these adjustments would give these consumers more confidence and be more willing to engage with the Rainbow Tick and affiliated companies.

4.3.5.2 Transparency

There seems to be a lack of transparency coming from the Rainbow Tick organisation based on the participants' perspectives. Transparency is a vital point of functionality for the Rainbow Tick affiliation body. It helps make the Rainbow Tick scheme a reliable option to represent firms that have effectively implemented inclusive Rainbow practices in different workplaces. This is because an organisation's **transparency leads consumers to have more trust** in the organisation (Rawlins, 2008). Participants believe that the Rainbow Tick does not have sufficient communication regarding their standards and evaluations systems. The nature of a party's communication is linked to their level of transparency (Lamming et al., 2002). Thus far, it has been deemed to be lacking. It is also important to have transparency about that because it mitigates the risk of people believing that the company is engaging in manipulation or creating a façade that they are truly putting in the effort to foster inclusion.

This quote from Morgan shows that **transparency helps foster trust in a company because consumers are aware of the activities** inside the company. Transparency creates an in-depth relationship between a company and its clientele, resulting in consumers trusting the business (Lazarus & McManus, 2006). Below is Morgan's response when asked to what extent they believe that the Rainbow Tick is serving its purpose. They think the certification body has not been very transparent, and as a result, they do not trust the Rainbow Tick.

> *"Like, in an ideal world, if it was done right, then it would be. I can trust this company. I can, yeah, I know, if I go into that shop, I'll be treated. Well, I know if I buy that insurance, they'll have a form that I dont have to pick a gender. I do not know if it does at the moment, just because of that lack of transparency." (Morgan, 51, They/Them)*

Some participants mention the lack of transparency from the Rainbow Tick in terms of their **training and evaluation systems**. That was an additional problem they had with the Rainbow Tick. They found that there was not enough information publicly available about what the evaluation criteria are. The following participants' quotes were based on them being prompted regarding what the Rainbow Tick could do better or improve on to meet its proposed purpose. These quotes are from a consumer's perspective and how they feel about the training and evaluation that the Rainbow Tick provides.

"But I feel like you never really see like what they do. So as a Queer person, you are like, I know you are like around giving companies that tick; but like, even if you told me what the tick means, would you tell us more about like, the actual content they got shown or something? I do not know. Maybe that would be a, like content they want to hold so no one else does it instead. Because obviously that's sort of issue. More transparency." (Grayson, 26, He/Him)

"I think there should be more transparency about what the standards are, and how and what a company needs to do in order to keep them." (Astrid, 25, They/Them)

"Yeah, I think you could probably they could probably do, because, yeah, I do not know a lot about who's on the list or what the standards are for different things. And yeah, I think that being more clear around that kind of stuff is probably like a good start." (Danny, 27, He/Him)

"I think I have a lot more visibility about what it is they're actually testing and what their requirements are." (Morgan, 51, They/Them)

"So I would be interested to hear more from Rainbow Tick themselves about what they're doing, I think some transparency about what they actually do for workplaces and how they follow up with workplaces. And that sort of thing would make quite a bit difference to me. Like what the ongoing role is?" (James, 37, He/Him)

"There seems to be, I think publicly where Rainbow Tick falls down is it has no set of sort of simple standards that are communicable to the public.

[interviewer] Right.

So and so having the Rainbow Tick, yeah, becomes a, most like a private club.

[interviewer] Right.

So it really is. So as far as marketing,

[interviewer] Yeah.

to the outside consumer it does not feature. It is more sort of their own internal sort of, you get the idea that it is a private member's club rather than an accreditation to market business as accepting of LGBT and all diverse consumers." (Louise, 57, She/Her)

There is an emphasis on the evaluation and training systems used by the Rainbow Tick. Participants found that the evaluations were too shallow and the training ineffective. At the same time, they believe that there is not enough publicly available information about the certification scheme. A few participants have worked at affiliated companies that helped

them come to that conclusion, but the others are only typical consumers that have come to the same conclusion. There seem to be other possible sources that are influencing these participants to arrive at the same conclusion. If there was more transparency from the Rainbow Tick, that would create a central point of focus for people to evaluate the Rainbow Tick over alternate sources. Thus far, those sources are creating a negative image of the Rainbow Tick. Those other sources include word of mouth, media, personal experiences and news.

Furthermore, participants thought that the Rainbow Tick should be **publicly showing why specific companies have been affiliated**. Participants want to see **what changes or shifts the affiliated companies have made** to attain and maintain the Rainbow Tick. This could involve publicly showing the steps, activities or policy changes that the affiliated company did to attain and maintain their tick. Doing so allows consumers to get more information about the company and understand exactly what they did to attain the certification. More information allows consumers to have more buy-in into that company because they are privy to what process and changes they went through. For example, Robin wants to see what companies are doing on a day-to-day basis to maintain the standards of the Rainbow Tick.

> *"So how do how are they living the Rainbow? How are they actually doing it on a day to day basis, and I do not think public sees much of that." (Robin, 46, They/Them)*

Alex would like to have information about how the company has engaged with Rainbow communities. Since they do not have access to sufficient information about the Rainbow Tick, they have placed it on a low tier of influence.

> *"But if I had a choice between a company that I knew something about, and I knew their relationship with Queer workers, or Queer clients, or customers or whatever language you use, I would definitely take that over the accreditation.*
>
> *[interviewer] Okay, so you almost holding what they do versus the accreditation itself, having the accreditation?*
>
> *Yeah, like, if I were to rank like preferences, having no information would be the bottom and then having an accreditation like Rainbow Tick would be next. And then the best or the most preferred option would be having actual information about how that company engages or, like firsthand accounts, like people saying, I worked there and it was a good experience or I've purchased products there and it was a good experience." (Alex, 34, They/Them)*

Morgan again highlights the importance of transparency, especially when some companies have a terrible reputation in Rainbow communities. A few participants have found it hard to believe that specific organisations have been accredited. Suppose they had information about the steps they took to acquire the Rainbow Tick successfully. In that case, that may change their opinion of both the company and the validity of the Rainbow Tick as a measure of inclusivity.

> *"And maybe, Yeah, a little bit more about like, I do not know how you'd actually do this, because sort of commercial things. But like, why is the <<company name>> got a tick? Yeah, most people, I say the <<company name>> have a Rainbow Tick. Like, just laugh at that idea. Because its the furthest you could possibly imagine from an accepting, and maybe the company itself is fine. But when you see how rugby players behave, you do not…Okay, so a little bit more visibility of saying, hey, this company has done these cool things and this is why we have given them a tick. Not just they have got a tick." (Morgan, 51, They/Them)*

Astrid laments that even if an affiliated company has good Rainbow-supportive policies and is not sharing that with their Rainbow consumers, there is a problem. They believe without **transparency, consumers will not be able to surmise that the Rainbow Tick is a good thing or the company is Rainbow friendly or allies**.

> *"Because you could like I think I said this before, you know, you could have a really amazing inclusion practice and your and your staff could feel really affirmed and happy. But if your customers do not know that you have a Rainbow Tick, how are they going to know that supporting you is a good thing? Or that they should feel good about this. And so I think the companies that do have these Rainbow Ticks and do have a commitment to maintaining that should be really quite upfront about that and not maybe not have it hidden at the footer of a website or something like that." (Astrid, 25, They/Them)*

Astrid further shared that for them, they want to see companies in action. They want to see that firms are doing what they need to be classified as Rainbow friendly and allies.

> *"But I would like to see how that works in action. No there that's what I am trying to. I just want to see it put out and how it works day to day and how you actually feel, how people feel in that environment rather than what a piece of paper says is happening." (Astrid, 25, They/Them)*

Grayson mentioned that they believe that Rainbow affiliated companies should be showing what the **tick means to them**. Sharing this motivation could be in the form of messaging used in the company's marketing communications. They can use their media and

communication channels to connect with consumers and justify their intention for getting the Rainbow Tick. If firms are transparent about their intentions, it will positively affect purchase behaviours (Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011). Suppose these consumers could see the exact motivation that the affiliated company had for getting the Rainbow Tick. In that case, they could have a more positive disposition or opinion of the Rainbow Tick.

> *"Maybe the companies themselves should be doing that as well, to be fair, like, not only should I know that they have the tick, but I should know what the tick means. But the Rainbow Tick organisation should probably also be responsible for me, like, knowing what the tick is." (Grayson, 26, He/Him)*

For Grayson, if companies were more open about their affiliation, it would make the company more appealing to him.

> *"You know what, if they had it on full display I would probably give them like a little more props, because I'd be like, well done on displaying and something that means you are supposed to be inclusive. That's nice." (Grayson, 26, He/Him)*

Some participants could recall seeing the Rainbow Tick in certain companies' communications, but it was limited. Hunter only saw it on the website of one organisation. They did not notice any other mediums that highlighted it. It was not until this interview that they knew that a company they regularly used was Rainbow Tick affiliated.

> *"Some of them I think I probably saw like a tick thing on a website at some point or in a window of one of their outlets or something. But not a lot of them like I shop at <<company name>> every week and I had no idea that <<company name>> was Rainbow Tick affiliated." (Hunter, 32)*

James found that his company's methods for communicating their affiliation were limited given his experience working at an affiliated company.

> *"Um, I believe they had a ceremony or something potentially. They probably did a press release but I do not really remember. I know they got the Rainbow Tick on my birthday, which was really, which actually really pissed me off. How do you get the Rainbow Tick on my birthday? But yeah, I do not know how they advertise. I think, yeah. Because I know <<company name>> has it and stuff like that. And I studied there, but I think they got it afterwards. Yeah, I do not know. I feel like I mostly notice it being brought up by companies around pride season." (James, 7, He/Him)*

Robin was asked to recall a company's communication that they were Rainbow Tick affiliated. They only recalled one outlet, which possibly represents a lack of communication coming from that affiliated company.

> *"It seemed to be something that was on the website. And that seemed to be it." (Robin, 46, They/Them)*

There is undoubtedly an issue in terms of the visibility of the Rainbow Tick. There is a lack of transparency currently based on the discourse of the participants. Participants desire more transparency if they are to determine that a company is Rainbow friendly or an ally. These consumers want to have information that shows them that the Rainbow Tick certification body is legitimate and affiliated companies are being genuine in their commitment to supporting Rainbow communities. Firms must be transparent because it creates value for consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). The Rainbow Tick is an objective visual representation of inclusive firms. However, they want to see firms being open about what they are doing. They would like to be able to identify, with information from different sources, actual inclusive practices and strategies implemented by affiliated companies. Participants want to see why certain companies are affiliated. It shows their motivation for acquiring the certification. There have been examples of companies that have had a bad reputation within Rainbow communities that are affiliated. The participants want to see what the Rainbow Tick means to the companies. Being able to see the motivation behind the firm's acquisition of the Rainbow Tick would give them a higher probability of trusting the company and the Rainbow Tick scheme. Moreover, participants have stated that the methods used by affiliated companies to show that they are certified publicly are extremely limited. All these discussions around transparency are linked to the trust participants have in the Rainbow Tick. Trust can be garnered from stakeholders when there is transparency (Elia, 2009). As a result, it is an important point of focus for the Rainbow Tick.

4.3.5.3 Accountability.

The following sub-theme found from the interview transcripts is the issue of accountability. Schlenker et al. (1994) describe accountability as "being answerable to audiences for performing up to certain prescribed standards, thereby fulfilling obligations, duties, expectations, and other charges" (pg 634). It compares an individual, entity, or event to some standards or occurrences. Schlenker and Weigold (1989) describe these standards and occurrences as prescriptions. More specifically, prescriptions involve what the entity should

have done, the goals they should be aspiring to and what results are deemed acceptable (Schlenker & Weigold, 1989).

Productive governance and oversight comes from holding management or high-level decision-makers accountable by monitoring their achievements against a certain standard (Guidice et al., 2013). In this case, the Rainbow Tick holds the affiliated companies **accountable for their actions beyond the initial acquisition** of the Rainbow Tick (initial acquisition meaning the evaluation they went through before being successful). Participants have concluded that the Rainbow Tick certification body has not done that based on what they have experienced or observed thus far. Firms are not being held **responsible for any breaches** in their commitment to Rainbow people.

For Tea, the motivation they have heard for the Rainbow Tick is that it is supposed to be a mechanism that keeps affiliated companies accountable. As a result, that is the perception that they have of the Rainbow Tick in their mind. However, they believe that that the Rainbow Tick certification body is not holding companies accountable for their actions.

> *"And also the Rainbow Ticket itself, as in the people that run it, if it is meant to be an accountability tool, actually use it as an accountability tool. Yeah, because that's the argument I've heard a lot for the Rainbow Tick."* (Tea, 32, They/Them)

Even earlier in the interview, they mentioned that they think the Rainbow Tick can still be used as an accountability tool. They just have not been able to see evidence of that.

> *"So, yeah, it for me, it is like I think it could be used as like an accountability tool, but I have not seen it used that way."* (Tea, 32, They/Them)

Devin also shared that she thinks it does not hold companies to a high standard. The high standards are the prescriptions that Schlenker and Weigold (1989) were talking about. To elaborate, the standards would be that affiliated companies are properly implementing inclusive and Rainbow supportive practices.

> *"Yeah. Like I do not think it holds them to very high, I do not think it has very good accountability. Like it does not hold companies to a very high standard."* (Devin, 31, She/Her)

Robin goes further to provide an example where the Rainbow Tick faltered in its responsibility for holding an affiliated company accountable. They mentioned a scandal with an affiliated organisation. That affiliated entity allowed a trans-exclusionary feminist group

(TERFS) to hold a conference on their premises. They noted that the Rainbow Tick did not firmly hold this organisation accountable and were not happy.

> *"But I think I'd like to see them actually stand up for their values. The likes of the <<organisation name>> situation, I did not see Rainbow Tick strong saying, "Hell no, you do not get to behave like that. You do this and, you know your gone." That's your Rainbow Tick gone and making a big song and dance about it. They seem to become too corporate you know. Kind of too but kissy to the people who have got their tick. Like, actually no, strengthen your auditing processes, make it harder. Make them actually; interview the little guy, you know, at the bottom of the organisation. What does the janitor know about what's going on in the top offices other than how dirty is the floor. Yeah. How does, how does all of us impact on your entire organisation." (Robin, 46, They/Them)*

Even further, many remarked that the Rainbow Tick should be **something that can be revoked**. They have not been able to observe that occurring. Still, they have seen examples of companies that have been involved in some instances that caused harm or potential harm for Rainbow people aligned with their organisation. It should be a case that when a company operates against the welfare interest of Rainbow people in their company or other stakeholders, and are not willing to rectify their actions, then their tick should be revoked. According to participants, if the Rainbow Tick is to stick to its proposed values, this should be done openly. In analysing the transcript, the researcher noticed something interesting about participants' evaluations of the Rainbow Tick being revoked. From Tyler's experience and knowledge, the Rainbow Tick cannot be revoked, which he surmises is a problem. He believes it is not holding organisations accountable in threatening to take away the tick so that they understand the seriousness of the significance of the tick:

> *"Part of the problem, too, is that any company that buys, this is something that you buy, you buy a little sticker that says, "you a Rainbow Tick certified", however, should you fail in meeting whatever they deem to be the accreditation, there is no ability whatsoever to revoke it, which is how accreditation actually works.*
>
> *[Interviewer] Okay. So, it is…*
>
> *If something's got a heart tick, and it is a product that does not meet the Heart Foundation standards and it is revoked. There is no, it is just a brand.*
>
> *[Interviewer] Right. So, from your knowledge, the Rainbow Tick it cannot be revoked.*

It is what sorry?

[Interviewer] So, from here, and based on your knowledge and your experiences, the Rainbow Tick cannot be revoked?

It cannot be revoked, no. No. Right." (Tyler, 57, He/Him)

On the other hand, based on the experience of Orange, the Rainbow Tick can be rescinded.

"I think having the tick be able to be rescinded upon a company not meeting a certain criteria would be a positive step." (Orange, 28, He/Him or They/Them)

Tyler and Orange have experienced working with the Rainbow Tick organisation directly. Based on their feedback, they have conflicting ideas of the management of the Rainbow Tick. Some participants have done is inferred that the tick cannot be rescinded based on the severe nature of breaches that did not cause the tick to be revoked from particular companies. They believe that it should have been based on their assessment of different situations. Tea's remarks are highlighted as an example of this.

Louise worked in an affiliated company when they failed their inclusivity audit. She noticed that the tick was not taken away from them.

"It became very evident when we failed one of the audits that Rainbow Tick themselves were not going to really do anything about that. So Rainbow Tick was stuck between that given a company the Rainbow Tick, but they did not want to save a save they did not want to lose face by taking it away from that company. So in their company was a big one like <<companies names>> ... But yeah, so they, even if they fail to meet the auditing, because they are such a big company Rainbow Tick do not really want to remove them from having the Rainbow Tick. Because they get money from them for giving them the Rainbow Tick, they do not want to step on the, what's the analogy? The goose that lays the golden egg?" (Louise, 57, She/Her)

Kamareira also mentions that there should be accountability in terms of the **funds from fees paid for the tick by affiliated companies and where it goes**. He posits that Rainbow people should see how this money is being distributed. This could lead to more trust. If they had been more transparent and accountable to the public about how the funds were distributed, it could garner more trust from Rainbow communities. Rainbow people will be able to extrapolate if the Rainbow Tick is about making money or a commitment to promoting inclusivity in the marketplace. This conclusion in turn, could even lead to Rainbow communities keeping the certification body accountable for their spending. That could be

added motivation for the affiliation body to ensure that they do the right things (based on consumer standards).

> *"But I just I still think you know, even though Rainbow Tick is supposed to be a god thing, they are still a commercial enterprise and they are making money off it. And where's that money going? Who is it benefiting?" (Kamareira, 27, He/Him)*

It can be concluded based on the points of the participant that the Rainbow Tick needs to be more accountable and make that very clear to consumers. Many of the participants found that the Rainbow Tick was not holding affiliated companies responsible beyond their initial acquisition of the tick. A few mentioned the same example where an affiliated organisation engaged in activities that were in breach of the standards that they kept. Those actions observed by the participants made them think that the Rainbow Tick is not holding companies accountable. More visible responses are expected from these participants which lets them know that the Rainbow Tick is keeping their affiliates in check. Consumers expect firms to behave appropriately and want to see their actions to maintain that (Creyer, 1997). One primary accountability strategy mentioned was that there should be the option that the tick can be rescinded for severe breaches of the inclusivity standards. Some participants say that it can, and others say that it cannot.

The other point mentioned in this section is accountability to the community and showing where the funds are going. The Rainbow Tick is a product of Kāhui Tū Kaha – a not-for-profit organisation. It was mentioned that if the Rainbow Tick is in service of Rainbow people, they should see how the funds paid by companies to get the Rainbow Tick are allocated. That would allow them to have more trust in the Rainbow Tick because consumers can then see how the certification body functions and have confidence in knowing that they are using money to push for appropriate evaluation and training schemes verses making a profit.

Accountability is linked to trust. An entity being accountable to another is a builder of trust in the party in which they are accountable (Greiling, 2014). Accountability creates public trust (Finn, 1993). Based on the previously stated accountability, if the Rainbow Tick is a mechanism that consumers can trust to show Rainbow friendliness, accountability is essential for building that. Thus far, it seems to be lacking.

4.3.5.4 Concluding Trust

In conclusion, one can see that there is a lack of trust from many of the participants. This would have been due to:

- Their experience working in an affiliated company

- Engagement with an affiliated company

- Second-hand accounts of negative experiences with an affiliated company or the Rainbow Tick

- The information they have been exposed to about the Rainbow Tick and the companies they have certified

- Representation in the media of occurrences related to the Rainbow Tick.

There seems to be cynicism towards the Rainbow Tick in terms of its ability to help Rainbow people, which has caused many consumers not to trust it. As a result, for many, the Rainbow Tick has either little influence on purchasing behaviour or no influence at all. Moreover, the participants surmised that transparency was lacking, which means that they could not fully trust a certification body if they were not aware of their actions. The same sentiment goes for affiliated companies and what they are doing to maintain the standards of the Rainbow Tick and the significance of the tick to them. The other element that affected these consumers' trust in the Rainbow Tick was accountability. They want to see the affiliation body holds their affiliates accountable for their actions. That may be happening. However, if it is, then the actions are not discernible by the participants. That is a problem. Additionally, accountability is demanded from the certification body to the Rainbow community regarding how funds are distributed.

The Rainbow Tick is a third-party certification set up to address Rainbow issues in workplaces. Trust in the third-party certification builds legitimacy and improves the relationship they have with other actors (Vince, 2018). The community needs to trust the third-party certifier if it is to be a functional point of reference on Rainbow related topics (Vince, 2018). In the end, if the consumers cannot trust the Rainbow Tick then it becomes an inadequate signal or representation that a firm is inclusive. Instead, Consumers will use other sources to gauge whether the working environment is inclusive, diluting the efficacy of the Rainbow Tick branding signal.

4.3.6 Concluding the Overarching Theme

There is an issue here in terms of the adequacy of the Rainbow Tick. The training and evaluation processes are presumed to be inadequate and flawed. The evaluation process lacks rigidity, and the training modules have classified as out of date and out of touch (especially with transgender and non-binary related issues). There seems to be low awareness concerning which companies are affiliated. That points to the inadequacy of the Rainbow Tick and affiliated companies' communication with the general public about affiliation statuses and motivations. Additionally, it was surmised that the Rainbow Tick was non-representative of the experiences of all Rainbow people. There was also discussion about feedback and the lack of responsiveness coming from the Rainbow Tick. That left many participants with a negative impression of the Rainbow Tick and circumspect about the adequacy of the Rainbow Tick's offering. The last thing contributing to inadequacy discussed in this section is trust. Public trust in the Rainbow Tick is low based on general cynicism, lack of transparency from the Rainbow Tick and its affiliates, and no discernible accountability practices from the Rainbow Tick.

Chapter Five – Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher will reflect on the themes uncovered in Chapter four to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter 2. Following that discussion, the chapter will highlight key theoretical and managerial implications arising from this study. Finally, this chapter will highlight limitations and future research followed by concluding remarks.

5.2 Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

As shown in the literature review, there are gaps in our knowledge regarding transgender and non-binary consumers' perceptions and behaviour towards the Rainbow Tick. This research seeks to offer new knowledge in the areas of Rainbow branding and signalling to Rainbow communities. This research provides a different emphasis by focusing on a group of consumers that have received comparatively less scholarly attention. There have been studies that focus on a wide variety of Rainbow identities, including transgender people – although almost none exist in marketing. However, there is a limited body of literature that examines non-binary and transgender people specifically. This consumer research study specifically explores the perspectives of transgender and non-binary consumers towards Rainbow third party diversity certification in a New Zealand socio-cultural setting. That is the major gap in literature that this research addresses. For this reason, the following research questions will be answered:

3. How do non-binary and transgender consumers perceive the Rainbow Tick?

4. How does the Rainbow Tick affect transgender and non-binary consumers' purchasing behaviour?

5.2.1 Research Question One

The first research question is focused on understanding non-binary and transgender consumers' perception of the Rainbow Tick. It presents how the participants have evaluated the Rainbow Tick as a brand based on their perspectives and experiences. RQ2 looks at consumers' perceptions of organisations who have been Rainbow Tick certified. There are different themes discovered from the findings that will help to answer this research question.

5.2.2 Key Findings of Research Question One

The overarching theme that answers the first research question is inadequacy. Within this thesis context, inadequacy has to do with an entity or party not meeting the expectations developed by another party that is an active observer or utiliser. This definition was developed based on the researcher's interpretation of the findings on reflection on inadequacy in literature. Lindqvist et al. (2017), for example, in their research on student teachers, described inadequacy as teachers "not being able to live up to the expectations of the student teachers' own professional standards (pg.27)." Also, Kmak (2020) in their discussion of legal characteristics of migrants describe inadequacy in international law as insufficiency in the law's ability to protect these minority groups' human rights. Consequently, the Rainbow Tick is not meeting the expectations of the people it should be protecting.

As a third-party certification, the Rainbow Tick should be independent and objective in its functionality in the market (Tanner, 2000). Independence and objectivity should add legitimacy to the third-party certification because the certification body has no connection to the company and does not stand to gain from possible affiliations (Fagan, 2003). Therefore the third-party certifier should attain reliability and credibility (Golan et al., 2001). This research shows consumers who disagree with this conclusion regarding the use and implementation of the Rainbow Tick. It lacks in a few areas for these consumers to deem it adequate. If it were effective, then that would add higher levels of credibility and reliability. Consumers' evaluation of the Rainbow Tick brand is poor due to its perceived inadequacies. This section will further break down inadequacy and discuss the implications of the different elements that contribute toward it to answer the research question.

5.2.2.1 Lack of Rigidity

The major problem identified in this study is the participants' perception of the rigidity of the evaluation and monitoring process provided by the Rainbow Tick organisation. Research by Meuwissen et al. (2003) states that third-party certifications are crucial in mitigating instances of information asymmetry because they should signal to the consumer that the certified company has met a specific standard. Third-party certification bodies have the authority to develop their criteria for evaluating a company which then sets a standard that the affiliates need to follow (Anders et al., 2007). The participants here believe that criteria developed by the Rainbow Tick for the affiliated company evaluations lack depth. This perceived lack of rigidity contributes to their negative impression of the Rainbow Tick brand. They posit that the Rainbow Tick should scrutinise and analyse more dimensions of the

working atmosphere and compare it to very stringent criteria. A more stringent criteria and evaluation process would provide more confidence that the standards are appropriate for gauging inclusivity in firms. As a consequence, these consumers would be more likely to accept the Rainbow Tick as a proper certifier for Rainbow inclusivity in the market.

A contributing factor to the legitimacy and continued existence of third-party certification is public trust and acceptance of it as a signal of some form of standard (Vince, 2018). Given that the participants think that the evaluation is not rigid enough, the Rainbow Tick has reduced overall public legitimacy. It represents an inadequacy that is related to its ability to both certify people in a satisfactory way dependent on public evaluations and its ability to signal the presence of a certain reality. These findings lend support to Vince (2018) study which found that third-party certification loses its credibility and legitimacy without community acceptance.

5.2.2.2 Non-representative
The other sub-theme contributing to inadequacy and answering research question one is non-representation. It describes a state in which an entity does not exemplify a specific standard or outcome. In this case, non-representation is in terms of the training modules and how they exhibit discourse around gender identity – specifically transgender and non-binary issues. The main point of discussion in this sub-theme surrounds the quality of the training modules and how they are implemented in different organisations.

Some participants believed that the Rainbow Tick is not a good enough reference for companies interested in Rainbow inclusion in the workplace. They surmise that the training modules are inaccurate and misrepresentative of transgender and non-binary identities. Misinformation can cause unfavourable consequences for those who have used it to guide their perceptions and behaviour (Kampf & Daskal, 2014; Southwell & Thorson, 2015). The participants shared their frustrations around these modules, many of whom had previously provided feedback to the Rainbow Tick organisation and noticed little to no action from the certification body.

Homonormativity is a concept "in which particular forms of `assimilated' homosexuality have themselves become normative and incorporated within the logic of heteronormativity" (Brown, 2009, p. 1496). In the end, it rewards those that are able to assimilate with society's expectations regarding one's aesthetic, thoughts, and behaviour (Puar, 2011). It perpetuates and rewards the more easily understood identities within Rainbow communities. Most times

in literature, the assumption is that cis gay and lesbian people are the more easily understood and accepted identities, because they can better assimilate (Brown, 2012). However, this research shows that some participants do not feel that the Rainbow Tick is particularly reflective of current transgender issues and misrepresents their experiences. Moreover, they found that it is problematic for transgender people and creates a divide between cisgender people and transgender people. One participant's first experience with the Rainbow Tick evaluation process found some of the questions intended to gauge companies' working environments to be cisnormative. This could be why some participants believe that the Rainbow Tick only helps particular identities and not others because the training might have more homonormativity induced content. However, the researcher does pause in saying this given the recommendation from Brown (2012) that as social science researchers, we must look beyond ordinary assumptions of homonormativity in which purely gays and lesbians are acceptable. They postulate that one should take a lesson from geographers and look at the time-space dynamics (Brown, 2012). This considers the location of individuals and how the nature of their environments' social dynamics could shape any occurrence of possible sexual practices and cultures (Weiss, 2011) - in this case, homonormativity.

The major problem that arises as a result, given this possible homonormativity, is that these participants then share their experiences with those in their social circles. Those in their social circles are potential consumers. Word of mouth has powerful influence on consumer decision-making (Glynn Mangold et al., 1999) and the resulting attitudes, impressions and satisfaction (de Matos & Rossi, 2008) of any consumer. Many researchers have found that consumers trust word of mouth more than formal business communications (Babić Rosario et al., 2016; Trusov et al., 2009). Thus, word of mouth communication has strong potential to negatively affect their impression of the Rainbow Tick.

One participant also attributed the inaccuracy and misrepresentation of transgender and non-binary identities to intergenerational differences. This is an area of future research for not just consumer studies but also in the area of psychology, sociology, and geography. What we know about gender identities has changed over time, and there is more to be discovered (Dobscha, 2019). Given the constructivist epistemology of the researcher, he agrees with this notion and further argues that it should be complemented by an understanding of multi-level identity experiences. Multi-level experiences involve different identity markers that individuals must navigate. Identity markers could include age, race, nationality, sexuality etc.

The other side of the coin in regard to training is its implementation in affiliated companies. It is critical to have training that is planned and executed properly because it can positively affect the performance outcome of the team (Salas et al., 2007). Organisation training provides employees with skills and information that can be leveraged within their role to improve performance or behaviour (Arthur et al., 2003). One of the problems with the implementation was the fact that the trainings were voluntary. When each department can decide whether to participate in the training sessions, inconsistencies can emerge in the way that the lessons learnt are implemented in the working environment. This implementation of training past the initial training session is referred to here as training transfer.

In looking at transfer theory, transfer of training involves utilising new material learnt from a training module in the training environment to the actual working environment (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). It is a significant problem that researchers have identified affecting the efficacy and implementation of training modules in organisations (Saks & Belcourt, 2006). The supportive nature of the transfer environment (in this case the working environment) influences the trainees' ability to implement learning into practice properly (Kontoghiorghes, 2004). Therefore, the possible inconsistencies in the nature of the working environment (given inconsistent implementation of the training modules) increases the probability training transfer will be hindered or negatively affected.

Inconsistent training transfer affects the adequacy of the Rainbow Tick because there is no uniformity or singularity across all sections of the company. This can create mixed experiences for Rainbow people in those organisations because some personnel in the organisation receive training and others do not. However, the researcher does not believe that the training modules are the sole source for learning and or attaining Rainbow competency. Training does not necessarily wholly equate to every individual exposed to it changing and maintaining positive behaviour, perceptions and attitudes towards Rainbow people. Nevertheless, it is an excellent intervention to help bring awareness and education surrounding Rainbow people (LaViolette, 2013; Leyva et al., 2014). This finding agrees with Tannenbaum and Yukl (1992) who stated that "trainee learning appears to be a necessary but not sufficient prerequisite for behaviour change" (p. 425). There are other sources that they may have used to learn more about Rainbow people.

5.2.2.3 Feedback

In consumer research, feedback is related to consumers providing businesses with their opinions and experiences regarding their interface with the company product or service. Feedback is vital for any organisation or entity that provides a good or service to consumers (Hirschman, 1970). It represents an integral source of information for companies (Madzík et al., 2015). It provides necessary information regarding the experiences of those given or exposed to specific stimuli (Kulhavy et al., 1990). Given this feedback, a company should adopt their services accordingly so that their target group can be satiated by the product or service they are providing. Madzík et al. (2015) research concluded that consumer feedback is critical in its ability to help companies improve the quality of their offering. This research agrees with this conclusion. Feedback is a necessary component for adopting the material provided by the Rainbow Tick and how the leadership of the affiliated organisation maintains the standards. If a company does not take heed of important pieces of feedback from consumers, it can lead to adverse outcomes for the business. Beckers et al. (2018) argue that consumer engagement which results in feedback creates positive value for firms. The opposite effect occurs because the use of the information from customer engagement decreases the likelihood of negative responses from shareholders (Beckers et al., 2018). This research supports this finding. The participants found that the Rainbow Tick was non-responsive to their feedback as either a worker of an affiliated company or the everyday consumer. Consequently, they were unimpressed by the Rainbow Tick and question its functional ability because the certification body is perceived not to be taking on the ideas of the people they should be serving.

Customer engagement that elicits feedback and commentary about a business promotes trust and loyalty from consumers, ultimately leading to a connection to the business (Brodie et al., 2013). In context, though the Rainbow Tick's main customers are the companies (since that is the point of economic exchange), the Rainbow individuals that it should be protecting are direct consumers of the signal – whether it affects their behaviour or not. In the end, the Rainbow Tick needs to note responses from the affiliated companies and Rainbow consumers if they want to gain commitment from Rainbow people and create positive associations about the Rainbow Tick brand in the mind of consumers.

Previously we mentioned the link between community acceptance and third-party certification legitimacy. Community acceptance is vital for the functionality of the Rainbow Tick in terms of its credibility and legitimacy (Vince, 2018). Thus, if feedback can build

more trust and engagement from these consumers, there is a higher probability they will accept the tick. As a result, it adds more credibility and legitimacy to the Rainbow Tick. When the tick is perceived to be credible and legitimate, inadequacy does not become a descriptor of the Rainbow Tick.

The feedback that these participants have given to the Rainbow Tick is due to the gaps they have observed in its implementation. As a result, it seems as though the Rainbow Tick is not changing or adapting based on people's feedback. It then lends to the idea of inadequacy because the Rainbow Tick is surmised not to represent the interests of Rainbow people needing to find places that are Rainbow friendly to engage with. The Rainbow Tick certification body is training people about Rainbow identities, but there are two problems concerning feedback. The first point is the content of the training modules. Many participants believe that the training is non-representative, and paints an inaccurate picture of transgender and non-binary identities. The accountability systems are deemed unfit given the experiences of the participants with the leadership of the Rainbow Tick. Therefore, it becomes a situation where the Rainbow Tick is not adequately representing the interest of these participants and the wider community. From a consumer standpoint, it becomes a substantial problem because some of these participants, though they are employees of affiliated companies, are also active participants in the market where the Rainbow Tick is used. Again, confirming the negative impression that these consumers have towards the Rainbow Tick brand.

5.2.2.4 Ineffective Leadership

Consumers further focused on the efficacy of the leadership of the Rainbow Tick. They felt that previous leadership was not responsive to their needs. In addition, they shared a belief that the leadership did not hold people accountable in the way they expected. This conclusion came from their observations of lived examples where companies did not follow expected inclusivity guidelines and instead engaged in action that was detrimental to Rainbow people. These observations further negatively affected participants' assessments of the Rainbow Tick brand. That is, the representation and image of the organisation's leaders in public spaces affect the value that is attributed to the firm (Ko et al., 2008). This research further supports previous findings that consumers' trust in an organisation is affected by the reputation (Hall et al., 2004) and behaviour (Stravinskiene et al., 2020) of the firm's leadership. Conversely, there is optimism that things could change because leadership changes. However, few participants alluded to the activities of the new leadership.

5.2.2.5 Trust

On average, this research found little trust in the Rainbow Tick. This research uses the definition of trust that was used by Bozic (2017). They reference Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt and Camerers' (1998) definition of trust as "a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another (Rousseau et al., 1998, p. 395)." It reflects a state in which the individual has confidence in something based on historically positive experiences that developed positive associations. There are instances where some individuals had no trust in the Rainbow Tick at all as a signal and educator about Rainbow inclusivity. The following section identifies three subthemes that are related to trust, and help to explore the answer to the research question.

5.2.2.5.1 Cynicism

Participants are cynical regarding the Rainbow Tick's ability to actually help Rainbow people in the workplace. Some participants had a positive perspective of the Rainbow Tick but after being exposed to it fully (either at work or being a consumer of an affiliated company), they changed their stance. Many participants do not believe that the Rainbow Tick is a reliable source for consumers to identify companies engaging in an acceptable standard of inclusivity practices. As a result, the preference from some participants is to use other sources of information to gauge whether a company is Rainbow friendly or not (section 5.2.3). Chylinski and Chu (2010) tell us that consumers notice gaps between their impressions of a businesses' marketing communications and actual performance. The cynicism arises from participants comparing the actual versus the perceived motives of businesses (Forehand & Grier, 2003), where gaps can create cynicism toward any future efforts of the company (Darke & Robin, 2007). This research supports these ideas because the participants are not exposed to every action of the Rainbow Tick but, however, remain cynical because of discrepancies between the observed actions of some companies and participant perspectives on good inclusivity practices. The researcher believes that there is a significant image and reputation problem for the Rainbow Tick. This image is associated with a deficiency in terms of the Rainbow Tick's functionality and efficacy.

5.2.2.5.2 Transparency

The findings illustrate that transparency is a significant issue for Rainbow communities. Transparency improves market quality, and it allows consumers to access various alternatives at less of a transaction cost (Hultman & Axelsson, 2007). Transaction cost here is the cost of searching and evaluating among different choices (Hultman & Axelsson, 2007).

Transparency is an important contributor in terms of what it does for a company in the marketplace and the value it can create for consumers (Eggert & Helm, 2003). It allows employees, customers, and other stakeholders to see what the company is doing and make informed decisions about the company based on clear evidence. Unfortunately, there seems to be transparency lacking in a few places.

Participants desire greater transparency from the Rainbow Tick affiliation organisation. They want information that shows the actions companies have taken to gain certification and the rationale for finally receiving the Rainbow Tick. Parris et al. (2016) found that the elements presented based on transparency help to foster trust in stakeholders. This research agrees with that notion. Other researchers have also found that transparency improves consumer trust, which leads to more positive attitude and behaviour towards the company (Kang & Hustvedt, 2014; Kim & Kim, 2016). If Rainbow Tick organisations were more transparent, participants would have more faith and trust in the Rainbow Ticks' ability to represent inclusivity and influence companies to make changes in their organisations.

A significant problem there is limited publicly available sources that illustrates the exact guidelines and expectations set by the Rainbow Tick for affiliated companies. If a source was available that provided those details, consumers could more readily scrutinise the Rainbow Tick standards. This finding contrasts with Deaton (2004) conclusion that third-party certification should reduce information asymmetry. For example, Kosher certification requirements are available through international and national group boards like Kosher Check that provide resources highlighting certification requirements[10] for proper kosher practices. Consumers are able to evaluate these standards and trust that a company having the Kosher Check has achieved a discernible standard. Information asymmetry is reduced because consumers can identify the practices that these companies must have implemented. The same cannot be said for the Rainbow Tick in its ability to reduce information asymmetry.

Information or lack thereof affects the individual's value of a product (Afzal et al., 2009). If there is information asymmetry, then that influences consumers' attitudes (Blackwell et al., 2001), which could then lead them to devalue the product (Afzal et al., 2009)– in this case, the Rainbow Tick. The problem, given this research, is that the publicly available information portrays the Rainbow Tick negatively. Participants then have to evaluate the companies based on their experience, which has been predominantly negative. This shows that there is a brand

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[10] http://www.koshercheck.org/applications/certification-process

image issue for the Rainbow Tick. Because their reputation is primarily negative, participants place minimal value on the Rainbow Tick. This supports Afzal et al. (2009) conclusion that the brand, product or service becomes devalued from the consumers' perspective if there is information asymmetry.

The Rainbow Tick is a certification mark that companies can acquire and use in their marketing communications. This certification mark is a symbol that can then be replicated in different communication outlets. Consumers then interpret these symbols and place meaning on them (Parkinson, 1975). Thus, the third-party certification can be used as a marketing tool. There is more protocol to it because the certified has to be the embodiment of a specific standard (Meuwissen et al., 2003). However, it will get used by the certified to market themselves in a particular way to the public. The sign or symbol that comes from the certifier should allow consumers to build associations about the brand (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987; Jiang et al., 2008). As a result, it can be a marketing tool that communicates information. This study confirms the findings of Oakenfull and Greenlee (2005) that firms can use icons and symbols to portray messages and information to consumers. One can apply institutional semiotics in this case. Institutional semiotics focuses on meaning producing signs and how they are interpreted (Mick, 1986). The Rainbow Tick is a semiotic tool that companies can use in their marketing to advertise their Rainbow friendliness. There is meaning that consumers will attach to the Rainbow Tick signal. Unfortunately, in this case, that signal is weak and interpreted as something that is inauthentic.

The researcher questions the limitations of what the Rainbow Tick can share because the acquisition process is private and internal (even though it influences external parties). It comes at the cost of leaving consumers to make evaluations based on real activities they have seen, which has been strongly negative. Additionally, the company's image will be negatively impacted if their exposed actions were previously inaccurate or offensive. However, there should be a way to create a middle ground so that consumers know that the company is actually trying to be a better steward. Firms have to be strategic about what they disclose about their practices (Kang & Hustvedt, 2014).

There is a significant problem with third-party certification for the Rainbow Tick. Many papers have stated that third-party certification should provide more transparency concerning business practices (Almeida et al., 2010; Indhumathil et al., 2017; Stahl & Strausz, 2017). The problem here is that the information regarding what the Rainbow Tick shares has been

limited to date. The level of transparency is low based on participants' statements. That affects its ability to operate within its purpose as a signal or steward of business inclusivity practices. It becomes a bit of a quagmire because of the reputation of the Rainbow Tick brand thus far, and the patterns these participants have observed lead them to believe that they cannot fully trust or have faith in it. More information provides consumers with the ability to better make informed conclusions about a company. This agrees with Cambier and Poncin (2020) research that posits that the information that companies expose to consumers allows them to make deductions about the authenticity and honesty of the company. That trust then allows them to deduce that the Rainbow Tick is accomplishing their job sufficiently (adequately). Moreover, it will enable them to believe companies are acting authentically because they have made discernible practical changes in their companies where necessary.

5.2.2.5.3 Accountability
The major issue here is that participants do not believe that the Rainbow Tick has been acting as an accountability tool in the way that it should. According to participants, the Rainbow Tick organisation needs to hold affiliated companies responsible for their actions, specifically in instances where they act outside of expected inclusivity standards. Importantly, the threshold for inclusive practices that are acceptable to the public is subjective. It all depends on what consumers deem to be acceptable. It is on the onus of affiliated companies to focus on the Rainbow Tick standards and investigate the expectations of Rainbow consumers once they attain a certification mark that represents inclusivity. This research supports the notion put forward by Irani et al. (2002) that a lack of accountability has the potential to negatively influence consumers, which in turn informs their attitudes toward the company.

In part, many participants believe there is lack of accountability because the tick has never been revoked from any company. Indeed, the researcher found no publicly available source stating that the Tick can be revoked. However, affiliated companies are audited yearly as a condition for their affiliation, though participants were unaware of this. In the end, these participants want to see the Rainbow Tick keeping people accountable. This is where accountability and transparency connect (Yoo & Jeong, 2014).

The critical question here, is why is there perceived lack of accountability? What actions have the Rainbow Tick organisation taken that led participants to these conclusions? The researcher surmises that it can be attributed to transparency and what consumers have been able to observe. There is a link between accountability and transparency, but the nature of

that relationship is complex (Mabillard & Zumofen, 2017). Vince (2018) found that third-party certification accountability is "more complex and perhaps less transparent to the greater public" (p. 332). One of the greatest weaknesses of third-party certification is accountability (Howlett & Ramesh, 2016), which appears to be a significant problem here. There is a lack of transparency based on what participants can observe from newspaper articles, second-hand stories and first-hand accounts. Transparency and accountability have a directly proportional relationship but without other factors taken into consideration, it is hard to prove (Auld & Gulbrandsen, 2010). There are different opinions held about the nature of that relationship. This thesis follows the notion put forward by Gray (1992) that purposive accountability increases transparency from an organisation. If the Rainbow Tick was more transparent around their monitoring systems of affiliated companies, there may be more validity to the Rainbow Tick in the participants' eyes. Thus, the Rainbow Tick would become more significant and palpable as consumers could see the seriousness of the intentions of the affiliation body in ensuring that those affiliated companies are doing exactly what they are supposed to.

The inadequacy discussed here links back to the consumer perception of the Rainbow Tick. If the consumer perceives the Rainbow Tick to be inadequate, they will not view it as a strong inclusivity steward. In the end, it affects the ability of the Rainbow Tick branding to influence Rainbow people. If the perception of it is inadequate, then that negatively affects the significance of the Rainbow Tick in the minds of consumers. The different elements (including rigidity, non-representative, feedback, and trust) show that the Rainbow Tick brand is negatively positioned in the minds of these consumers. That results in the Rainbow Tick affecting consumer behaviour in a way that does not create positive value for affiliated companies (Sethna & Blythe, 2019).

5.2.3 Research Question Two

The second research question is focused on understanding how the Rainbow Tick affects transgender and non-binary consumers' purchasing decisions. This section will look at how the Rainbow Tick has affected the brand or image of affiliated companies according to those interviewed for this study. The section also describes resulting consumer behaviours for these participants, given their perceptions of the Rainbow Tick.

5.2.4 Key Implications of Findings for Research Question Two

The Rainbow Tick should signal to consumers that a company engages in inclusive workplace practices for Rainbow people. Based on signalling theory, signals allow consumers to create a separating equilibrium based on their needs to differentiate among different alternatives (Bergh et al., 2014). As a result, it should signal that the company has gone through the evaluation process and are committed to supporting Rainbow communities. Consumers are willing to look for information about a brand when deciding among alternatives (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007). It is from evaluating different sources that they can make a decision or conclusion (Brand-Gruwel & Stadtler, 2011). People or parties use various sources they consider trustworthy as mediums of gaining information about a specific subject (Hertzum et al., 2002). Based on the majority of the opinions shared by participants, it can be concluded that overall the perception of the Rainbow Tick brand is negative. Since the Rainbow Tick is attached to these companies, this negative perception affects consumers' perception and behaviours toward the affiliated company. This section will first examine these participants' analysis of firms using the Rainbow Tick brand and their resulting conclusions about brands that use it from their view as a consumer. After that, it will highlight different purchasing behaviours due to deductions made about companies using the Rainbow Tick in their communications.

5.2.4.1 Affiliated Companies, Authenticity and Brand Image

A major finding of the thesis contributing to this research question is the authenticity of affiliated firms' intentions for acquiring the tick in the first place and actions completed to attain and maintain the inclusivity standards. There was general scrutiny from participants towards companies using the Rainbow Tick certification scheme to represent Rainbow friendliness and allyship. Authenticity has become a vital brand attribute that consumers are demanding from market participants (Bruhn, Schoenmüller, Schäfer and Heinrich, 2012). The findings of this study support this conclusion. The participants have acknowledged that the Rainbow Tick is a mechanism currently being used in the workplace. Unfortunately, they have not observed many companies that provide them with the surety that these companies are genuinely concerned about Rainbow people. This perceived inauthenticity by the participants is strongly influenced by their experiences and observations (Morhart et al., 2015).

Vredenburg et al. (2020) describe this phenomenon as inauthentic brand activism. More specifically, it is an instance in which a brand takes on socio-political issues but does not

show significant business practices that align with the socio-political issue (Vredenburg et al., 2020). That socio-political issue includes the inclusion of Rainbow people in workplaces and companies moving towards a more Rainbow friendly orientation. For many years that has not been the focus of many companies, and unfortunately, that has alienated many individuals in Rainbow communities, leaving them vulnerable in the market place (McKeage et al., 2018).

Many of these participants had bad experiences working in environments that were not inclusive or progressive. As consumers, participants observed that affiliated companies have not put in place products, services and discernible messages that are aimed at servicing Rainbow people. Alternatively, they have been exposed to media stories and word of mouth stories about instances where affiliated companies were linked to actions that created adverse outcomes and experiences for Rainbow consumers. Consumers will use the information they have discovered to inform their purchasing behaviour (Jun & Park, 2016). As a result, the participants in this study have concluded that firms are acquiring the tick without actually putting in place continuous practices that foster inclusion in the workplace and society in general.

A possible rationale for this inconsistency from affiliated firms is that one can have knowledge about something but not be the embodiment of it. That is, it was believed that the Rainbow Tick gives affiliated companies knowledge regarding inclusivity standards and practices but does not directly translate into action that reflects those inclusivity standards and practices. As a result, the Rainbow Tick certification is not a strong enough signal for consumers to believe that the affiliated company is Rainbow friendly. Rather, companies obtaining the Rainbow Tick are interpreted as an inaccurate attempt to portray themselves as Rainbow friendly or allies.

Woke washing is the level of authenticity that a brand is perceived to have when they express prosocial messages (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Woke washing occurs when companies or brands use marketing communications to align themselves with a prominent social or political issue without actually putting in actions to address the issue (Sobande, 2019). For the participants, authenticity is mainly about seeing noticeable efforts (Fritz et al., 2017) from these affiliated companies that contribute to Rainbow people's welfare. Participants want more transparency from affiliated companies, for example, by passing an evaluation that scrutinised some aspects of the business. However, this study indicates that companies are perceived as not having done enough, which is related to the inadequacy discussed in section

5.2.2. There seems to be a desire from the participants to see how companies engage in more inclusive practices both inside and outside of the organisation. Moreover, affiliated companies need to consider what constitutes an acceptable amount of effort for consumers to conclude that it is Rainbow friendly.

Consumers believe that the Rainbow Tick is a tool for woke washing which affects the legitimacy of the Rainbow Tick. If it is to appeal to and support Rainbow communities, then it is important for Rainbow communities to support it. However, the participants in this study do not show much support for the Rainbow Tick. That creates a problem because it affects the image of those who are affiliated, even if some companies are being authentic but are not as visible as others. Once the image becomes one that is inauthentic then that does not cultivate a bond or commitment from consumers. Fritz et al. (2017) found empirical evidence that the level of authenticity perceived about a company will build emotional bonds. These bonds are between the customer and the party deemed to be authentic. The nature of that bond then affects their behaviour – stronger relationships link to more favourable behaviour (Batra et al., 2012). It is important to adjust and monitor the image in a way that leaves consumers with a positive impression.

Gudelunas (2011) reminds us that Rainbow consumers are privy to what companies are doing to appeal to them and pay attention to why they are reaching out in the first place. It affects the image of the company (Gudelunas, 2011). Taking note of how they interpret the tick is essential for improving the continued implementation of the Rainbow Tick in the marketplace.

5.2.4.1.1 Importance of Community Support in Building A Friendly Image
Given the participants' perspective as consumers, an essential component of affiliated companies being Rainbow friendly or allies is active support of Rainbow communities. Affiliated companies can use the Rainbow Tick to represent a specific type of image. Still, there is a desire for them to support Rainbow communities if they are to be viewed as authentic. If they currently are, then it is not translating to these consumers. If they are not then there seems to be a desire for more support for Rainbow communities by affiliated companies. Community support and outreach are vital contributors to improving Rainbow people's wellbeing (Klein, 2017). Community events and outreach catered towards Rainbow communities are crucial sources for support that Rainbow people can access. These events, groups, or social spaces are organised by Queer or Rainbow community groups. They are

managed by knowledgeable people that are aware of Rainbow or Queer related socio-political and cultural issues. Many scholars have concluded that Rainbow people have poor mental and emotional health (Matsuno & Budge, 2017; Mereish & Poteat, 2015; Meyer, 2003). As shown in the introduction, the Rainbow population's psychological distress rates are double that of Non-Rainbow people. This is due to social marginalisation and victimisation because their identity and expression deviate from the social norm (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2014). These community support and outreach programs give Rainbow people help and a sense of connectedness with other Rainbow or Queer people. Having a sense of connectedness with Rainbow communities improves Rainbow people's well-being (Roberts & Christens, 2020). Barr et al. (2016) concluded that a sense of connectedness and belonging in the transgender community resulted in solidified identities and wellbeing. This conclusion by Barr et al. (2016) shows that community support is a healthy outlet for maintaining wellbeing for these target groups.

These participants expect that if a firm has the Rainbow Tick, they need to be more involved with Rainbow communities. Allies are actively involved in supporting, engaging with, and learning from, Rainbow communities (Fingerhut, 2011). The premise of the Rainbow Tick represents allyship because it should be the case that affiliated companies are actively doing whatever it takes to support Rainbow people in the workplace by implementing safe and inclusive practices. The participants note that these practices should also be applied to consumers through community initiatives. The participants think affiliated companies are not engaging in sufficient community support to conclude that it has characteristics of an ally or is Rainbow friendly. Hence continuing the narrative that the Rainbow Tick is an inauthentic representation of inclusivity in firms. These participants, as consumers, want to see real and observable action. Otherwise, they will not be satisfied.

5.2.4.1.2 Limited Derived Value

Thus far, one can see the negative brand image that affiliated companies have based on their appraisal of the Rainbow Tick and analysis of the practices. Brand image is concerned with how consumers perceive or view a company's product or service (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Hence, there is no social value, and as a result, the majority of comments made about the tick have been negative. The image of the brand is purely perception-based (Engel et al., 1993). Authenticity is also perception-based but more in terms of the genuineness of one's motivation and adds to a person's perception of a brand (Napoli et al., 2014). Since participants see no social value in the Rainbow Tick, it can be construed that its possible

authenticity is eroded. This is problematic if the Rainbow Tick is supposed to create value for workers in the market and consumers looking for Rainbow friendly places. Consequently, the participants, as consumers, will perceive the affiliated companies' practices as disingenuous and surmise that the tick is an inauthentic representation of inclusivity. These findings confirm (Moulard, Raggio and Folse, 2016) and (Morhart, Malär, Guèvremont, Girardin and Grohmann, 2015) illustrations that brand authenticity is linked to brand perception. Additionally, the findings illustrate and support Vredenburg et al. (2020) notion of inauthenticity and the result of messaging that is incongruent to firms actual practices. Consumers will use that perceived incongruity to conclude their intentions and practices are disingenuous (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

5.2.4.2 A Positive Perspective of the Rainbow Tick

Authenticity also has some positive aspects in the use and acquisition of the Rainbow Tick. Some believe that the Rainbow Tick can help Rainbow people, but it lacks in its ability to do so as it stands currently. In particular, given the participants' discourse, the Rainbow Tick certification implementation in companies has not been able to help transgender and non-binary people to the same extent as cisgender gay, lesbian and bisexual people. Thus, the experiences of these consumers allude to an inauthentic representation of workplace realities for transgender and non-binary people.

Additionally, on the positive side, participants mentioned the possible normalisation of Rainbow identities given the visibility that the Rainbow Tick provides the Rainbow population in the market. They have had to accept the opportunity cost of having this tick in the marketplace when they believe it is inauthentic. Opportunity cost is the cost of a choice measured in terms of the next best alternative given up or sacrificed (Frank & Bernanke, 2007). For example, if you do not go to work so that you can have leisure, your opportunity cost is the lost wages (assuming you have no saved annual leave). The opportunity cost in this case is unwilling acceptance of the Rainbow Tick so that it can help to normalise Rainbow people in the market through visibility. With that unwillingness, comes disappointment and frustration with companies not being authentic and taking advantage of Rainbow people. This proposed visibility further increases awareness surrounding Rainbow communities in the wider population. From this knowledge, people can respond accordingly to Rainbow communities (Doty et al., 2010). Depending on their moral philosophy, it could contribute to more acceptance and recognition for Rainbow people, which is positive. So, it is an acceptance of the Rainbow Tick but one that is limited in willingness. The question is, was

this part of its original purpose? One could assume that apart from protecting Rainbow communities' welfare in workplaces, the implementation of the Rainbow Tick should bring narratives about Rainbow people to the mainstream. However, there is no conclusive and robust evidence that supports that notion.

What is occurring in the background that might be giving rise to these initial opinions of firms using the Rainbow Tick as a signal of inclusion? The participants have high expectations from firms and will scrutinise companies heavily for utilising a mechanism that is supposed to represent diversity and inclusion. It is just general scepticism that consumers have towards brands and their attempt to market to them. Nevertheless, it is a certification scheme that can affect their workplace and marketplace experience because it dictates to companies "proper" inclusivity practices. There is a long history of discriminatory and marginalised narratives of transgender and non-binary people in the workforce (Lloren & Parini, 2017). The Counting Ourselves survey[11] shows that non-binary and transgender people are still experiencing instances of stigmatisation and marginalisation even in a socio-cultural environment that is more inclusive (Veale et al., 2019). The findings here show examples of that reality. The consumers, in this case, have second-hand information or were involved in first-hand experiences where Rainbow people experienced negative actions towards them given their identity.

Additionally, the Rainbow population is emerging more in the mainstream and being identified as a viable segment in the market to target (Sender, 2018). As a result, the consumers will scrutinise brands to protect themselves and not allow companies to use them for economic gain (Darke & Robin, 2007). The researcher had initial issues acquiring participants because many people believed that he had ulterior motives. He received very strong messages in opposition to his thesis because these groups of individuals have been used by marketers and researchers before.

As a consequence of all these opinions in terms of possible woke washing and inaccurate allyship practices that link to authenticity, it can be proposed that what the participants are observing is what Tayar (2017) posits to be firms conforming to an institutional archetype of inclusion. Suhomlinova (2006) believes that the degree to which a firm fits with its environment is essential in ensuring that it remains a competitive force in the marketplace. In

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[11] This is a large study done that captures the experiences of the transgender and non-binary people in New Zealand with a focus on health and wellbeing.

applying institutional theory, there are isomorphic pressures placed on companies to be more inclusive. The macro social environment is pushing for more diversity and inclusion in the workplace as social acceptance and tolerance increases (Roberts, 2019). It shows that there are isomorphic pressures that companies are exposed to (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). Isomorphism is an instance in which the organisation matches the norm with its macro-environment through different avenues (Kennedy & Buchanan-Oliver, 2011). Firms conforming to the archetype of inclusion should create favour in the eyes of general consumers because they appear to care about pending socio-political issues. Isomorphism allows a party to achieve legitimacy (Scott, 1994). But this conformity may be "superficial;" and not actually represent firm inclusivity (Tayar, 2017). That is the problem being noticed here from the participants.

5.2.4.3 Resulting Effect on Consumption Behaviour

5.2.4.3.1 Neutrality

For some participants, the Rainbow Tick does not affect their purchasing decision at all. They were prompted to decide between two alternatives, one that was affiliated and one that was not. The participants maintained a neutral position or state of indifference. The Rainbow Tick did not make them more or less likely to choose between two alternatives. Thus, showing that the Rainbow Tick branding signal had no strong influence. The main reason these participants felt this way was due to their assessment of affiliated firm's activities. They believed that companies are using the Rainbow Tick without being Rainbow friendly or allies. Consumers evaluate the genuineness of a firm's intent differently (Grazian, 2003). Consumers search for authenticity in different forms from companies and will develop commitment and loyalty characteristics that make them engage with the company (Fritz et al., 2017; Morhart et al., 2015). Even further, as a marketing tool, it is not an important criterion that many of these consumers use when making purchasing decisions. There were a few participants that called the Rainbow Tick meaningless resulting in little to no influence on their decision making and purchasing behaviour. Overall calling into question the efficacy of the Rainbow Tick as a marketing tool.

The other reason mentioned was that they were not aware that a company was Rainbow Tick affiliated when they went shopping. Brand awareness affects consumer decision making (Keller, 1993). In agreement with Keller (1993), one can see that there was no awareness. Therefore, the Rainbow Tick brand did not affect their purchasing decision. Nevertheless, they had enough of an impression of it that made them indifferent towards the Rainbow Tick.

Consumers will use trustworthy sources of information to make decisions and evaluate a company's claims (Darnall et al., 2018). Unfortunately, there are sources of information that these participants were exposed to that has left them with that neutral impression of the Rainbow Tick.

One could surmise that there is low awareness and recall from some participants about the Rainbow Tick branding in marketing communications. They all had an opinion about the Rainbow Tick and certified companies, but some participants had a problem when it came down to naming specific companies. Awareness from consumers about a brand is important for any business because it provides brand knowledge that should affect behaviour and metacognitive responses (Keller, 1993). It keeps the brand or company functional and competitive in the market (Chinomona & Dubihlela, 2014). The Rainbow Tick is used as a branding signal by companies to communicate a specific message to Rainbow people. However, in this case, some of these participants cannot recall any example of companies with the tick. This also points to the possible inadequacy of the Rainbow Tick. Something is lacking in the way that the affiliated companies are communicating with consumers. It points to a need for re-evaluation and adoption of the firms integrated marketing communications so that the message of inclusivity in the workplace is being exposed to consumers more efficiently (see section 5.4 for further discussion about managerial changes needed concerning awareness). As a consequence, the affiliated company becomes a part of the consumers' consideration criteria (Aaker, 1991).

The first issue that arose based on the openness of the affiliated companies is the nature of the actual expressiveness of the firm. Given the scope of this research, it is unclear whether the affiliated firms are open or not, but it is clear some of these consumers are not noticing it. If that truly is the case (where companies are not being open about their affiliation), what is their motivation? There could be different reasons. Vredenburg et al. (2020) explain that it could be because they do not want to alienate other groups of consumers that may not necessarily support or tolerate Rainbow people (Vredenburg et al., 2020). The researcher agrees with this conclusion by Vredenburg et al. (2020) and proposes that it might be an instance of low message penetration. This means the affiliated companies are using the branding symbol because they paid money for it, but it is not used on many formats or mediums of communication. People generally "scrutinise" and are sceptical about brands that overtly use methods to pursue consumers and get them to engage with that company (Dapko, 2012). The evidence in this thesis shows that participants are cautious towards the Rainbow

Tick certification scheme. It might be the case that companies are being considered in the way they market their affiliation.

The second issue related to the openness from affiliated companies expressing their affiliation is firm activity during the pride season. Many have found that they can only see certain affiliated companies during the pride season. Companies' involvement in pride can be perceived as good or bad. For example, on the more positive side, firm support during pride can assist community groups and advocacy organisations to participate in the celebrations (for example the parade) and obtain funding to help continue providing much-needed services to Rainbow communities. This is because many of these companies (even unaffiliated ones) provide monetary contributions or sponsorships to community groups. Additionally, firms' involvement in pride can bring Rainbow communities more into the mainstream, one normally dominated by heterosexual narratives embedded within cultural norms and expectations.

Even with these positive aspects, many of the participants are not happy with firms' participation in pride celebrations. The primary issue here for them is the fact that the support is not a year-long continuous support. It has been surmised that the support only comes during pride season. This can be perceived as woke washing because the firms gain social credit and economic gain from participating in events such as pride that supports and celebrates Rainbow communities. To achieve the Rainbow Tick, firms should have contributed to Rainbow communities in the wider environment in some way. However, participants want these firms to help beyond the initial acquisition of the Rainbow Tick. Participants want to see affiliated companies being very vocal about their support and engagement with Rainbow communities. For many, they have not been able to see evidence of support beyond pride celebrations. These observations further contribute to what has been perceived by participants as affiliated companies doing the minimum to be viewed as supportive of Rainbow people. As a result, participants believe that the Rainbow Tick does not represent Rainbow friendliness or allyship. In the end, it does not communicate authenticity to the average perceptive Rainbow consumer who is aware of corporate practices that affect Rainbow communities.

A firm's involvement in pride is a strategy that propels its corporate social responsibility practices. It is particularly relevant because affiliated companies need to have some involvement with Rainbow communities beyond their employees. This is a significant

expectation from participants. Alsaid (2016) showed that consistent corporate social responsibility involvement positively impacts firm value. If they did exactly what these participants are requesting, according to Alsaid (2016), the firm's value will increase. Conversely, it needs to be genuine. That level of genuineness depends on the consumers own criteria (Bruhn et al., 2012; Fritz et al., 2017). It is the firm's responsibility to investigate consumers' expectations for them to engage in activities that will be perceived as genuine.

5.2.4.3.2 Avoidance

There was also an instance in which a participant would avoid the Rainbow Tick and be less likely to purchase from an affiliated company. Avoidance behaviours occur when individuals are trying to circumvent stimuli to eliminate any risk they might be exposed to (Corr, 2013). In the context of marketing, consumers will abandon or refrain from purchasing from a specific brand (Penz & Hogg, 2011). The findings confirm this notion by Penz and Hogg (2011). This could be due to bad or negative past experiences, secondary sources of information, or just perceived negative possibilities (Elliot & Thrash, 2002). In this case, avoidance would come from transgender and non-binary people avoiding the Rainbow Tick because they do not think it will help them. They may perceive that the company is not truly an ally and has not taken sufficient action to be deemed Rainbow friendly.

5.2.4.3.3 Willingness but with Limited Influence

For some participants, the Rainbow Tick does not affect their purchasing decision to any great extent. They acknowledge that the Rainbow Tick exists and would choose that company over one that was not but overall it does not substantially impact their purchasing behaviour. It was mentioned that other sources and signals would be used before the Rainbow Tick to signal quality and a specific standard. They would choose the Rainbow Tick, but at the same time, they want to see what actions the affiliated companies have done to attain the tick. It is not a voluntary choice to use it as a major point of influence in decision making. It is crucial for them that whatever these companies express represents exactly what is occurring in that organisation. Napoli et al. (2014) enlightened us in his research and remarked that consumers would demand and search for offerings from companies they deem authentic. This thesis' findings show that this is the case. Consumers are looking at different signals to evaluate the genuineness of the firm's intention. They desire a certain level of authenticity from companies. The problem is that they do not see the Rainbow Tick as a good enough source of information to represent the authenticity that they are looking for. These consumers still want

to engage with Rainbow friendly places so finding reliable signals representing companies with that characteristic is important.

5.2.4.3.4 Involuntary Consumption Decisions

This subsequently leads to involuntary consumption, which is when the consumer only uses the affiliated companies because they are limited in options and accessibility. Involuntary consumption is a major problem because it progresses the bad image already observed here. The participants already had a negative perception of the Rainbow Tick. They wanted to look for other alternatives given that perspective; unfortunately, they were limited in choices and accessibility. This invokes discontent with the experience, and the Rainbow Tick even further. This discontent can cause consumer behaviour that supports the Rainbow Tick to decrease in the future when more options are available.

Overall, the consumer behaviour above does not reflect a brand that has committed consumers. The Rainbow Tick is mostly focused on measuring, educating, and rewarding companies regarding inclusivity practices. The Rainbow Tick symbol is branding that the company uses to appeal to Rainbow people and represent a specific message. In the end, it does extend to everyday consumers because it should signal allyship and Rainbow friendliness that influences Rainbow consumers and everyday allies to engage with that company. Participants spoke about the Rainbow Tick but it had little to no influence on their purchasing decision. Therefore, there is an issue with the Rainbow Tick's ability to influence consumer behaviours – in this case, the transgender and non-binary consumer.

5.2.5 Importance of Findings

Participants shared their experience navigating life while having a gender identity that differs from the gender binary as a socio-cultural norm. They shared the many struggles they had in staying secure in their identity while faced with opposition. These include their experiences engaging with a Rainbow affiliated company and/or working for a company that is affiliated. This is why a scheme like the Rainbow Tick is so essential. A tool that can evaluate inclusive practices and signal safety to Rainbow people would enable Rainbow people to work in environments or engage with companies that will treat them fairly. This is the value that the Rainbow Tick should be creating for Rainbow consumers. McKeage et al. (2018) has classified the groups studied here as vulnerable and studies have shown that they have disproportionately marginalised compared to other identities in Rainbow communities (Lewis

et al., 2017). The Rainbow Tick has been entrusted with this responsibility when the experiences of Rainbow people are manifested in this way.

Entrusting is a key term here; the Rainbow Tick represents something critical for Rainbow people as a whole as they gain meaningful employment. The Rainbow Tick should provide guidance for companies and a protection factor for Rainbow people. This is because it not only guides them to "friendly" companies but also further educates people in those companies about Rainbow identities. These participants have had many mixed experiences identifying in the way they do in society. Therefore having the Rainbow Tick should promote places that are safe spaces for Rainbow people. That should be the case, but participants believe that it is not. It is essential to have safe spaces for Rainbow people to express their identity freely because it positively contributes to their welfare (Jarpe-Ratner, 2020).

5.3 Theoretical Implications

Section 5.2 discusses the findings and their relation to the research questions but also explores the theoretical contributions from this thesis. Listed below therefore is a summary of the studies that this thesis confirms, or supports based on what was outlined in section 5.2 which have now also been found for transgender and non-binary consumers for the first time, along with being found for third-party diversity certifications for the first time.

- Bruhn et al. (2012) conclusion that authenticity is desired by consumers - transgender and non-binary people feel the same way.
- Afzal et al. (2009) proposition that firms' offerings are devalued when asymmetric information persists which can now also be seen in this case with transgender and non-binary consumers attaching little value to affiliated companies and the Rainbow Tick.
- Oakenfull and Greenlee (2005) notion that firms will use icons and symbols to portray information to consumers which can be seen for the first time here with third party diversity certifications by the actions of affiliated firms using the Rainbow Tick symbol.
- Moulard et al. (2016) and Morhart et al. (2015) studies that found that brand authenticity and perception are connected, which is found to also be the case for transgender and non-binary consumers in general, and related to third-party certifications.

- Vredenburg et al. (2020) proposition that consumers will surmise that a company is disingenuous when their messaging is incongruent to their practices. That reflects these non-binary and transgender consumers' inference about the practices they observed from affiliated companies.

- Vince (2018) that highlight that community acceptance is an important contributor to the credibility and legitimacy of third-party certifications. Overall, there is a lack of acceptance of the Rainbow Tick from these consumers and as such this reduces the tick's legitimacy mechanism to influence Rainbow people.

- Beckers et al. (2018) that noted the importance of attaining and implementing feedback from consumers will create value – as seen with the negative sentiments from consumers concerning the Rainbow Tick being non-responsiveness to feedback.

- Penz and Hogg (2011) study that found that consumers will avoid brands that are perceived to create risk which is seen in the avoidance behaviour from those that do not trust and wholly accept the Rainbow Tick certification.

- Stravinskiene et al. (2020) that deduced that that the image of an organisation's leadership has an effect on the reputation and value of the firm which can be seen in the consumers' reactions towards the previous leadership which created a negative impression of the Rainbow Tick.

- Hall et al. (2004) that found that the actions of the leaders affect trust consumers have in an organisation. The consumers in this case do not trust the third-party certification because of thier negative impression of the previous leadership.

- Darke and Robin (2007) posit that consumers are cynical towards companies that have gaps in their functionality – a notion evidenced by the reactions of these consumers to Rainbow Tick branding in this research.

- Irani et al. (2002) conclusion that a lack of accountability creates negative brand attitudes from consumers as seen with attitudes that are apparent from the non-binary and transgender consumers towards the Rainbow Tick and their affiliates lack of accountability.

Contradicting existing literature this thesis also found that, in contrast to Deaton (2004), third-party certification did not reduce information asymmetry in and of itself. This is because these consumers found the tick to be inadequate and misrepresentative of reality.

The rest of this section highlights other areas in which this thesis provides unique contributions to existing literature. Based on the literature review chapter, the major gap that this research fills is regarding third-party diversity certification. No research explores consumers' perceptions and consumer behaviours towards diversity certifications. This research fills that gap and opens further research areas that can positively affect the longevity and legitimacy of using third-party diversity certifications in the market.

This thesis found that non-binary and transgender consumers are cautious about the Rainbow Tick being used by companies to represent Rainbow friendliness or allyship. Overall, they believe that it is being used to convey an image that does not reflect actual actions. Additionally, the certification scheme, including the training, evaluation, monitoring and accountability process, is an inadequate measure or standard of inclusivity. Therefore, the effect on purchasing behaviour is weak. For example, some consumers choose to engage with an affiliated company, but it is not a strongly influential criterion. Alternatively, some remain unaffected by the Rainbow Tick when making a purchasing decision – a neutral position. Moreover, some actively avoid the Rainbow Tick, which is in opposition to what branding literature tells us. Furthermore, some desire to use other alternatives that are not Rainbow-affiliated but cannot due to lack of accessibility and inconvenience.

In figure 5.1, a framework is presented which is adapts a framework developed by Deaton (2004) by incorporating the findings of this research. Figure 5.1 provides a further theoretical contribution from this research. It provides additional elements from those identified by Deaton (2004) which showed that buyer observations of market signals and their beliefs affect their willingness to engage with a company. The elements highlighted in blue in figure 5.1 are the unique additions from this research which will now be explained.

Perceived adequacy of the certifier, environmental influences and experience working in an affiliated company affects buyer's (e.g. consumers') beliefs. Those elements were added by the researcher to the original framework. The buyer's beliefs are their assessments and inferences concerning the nature of firm appeal strategies in the marketplace. Due to the responses from the participant, it is evident that the perception of the adequacy of the certification affects the buyer's beliefs.
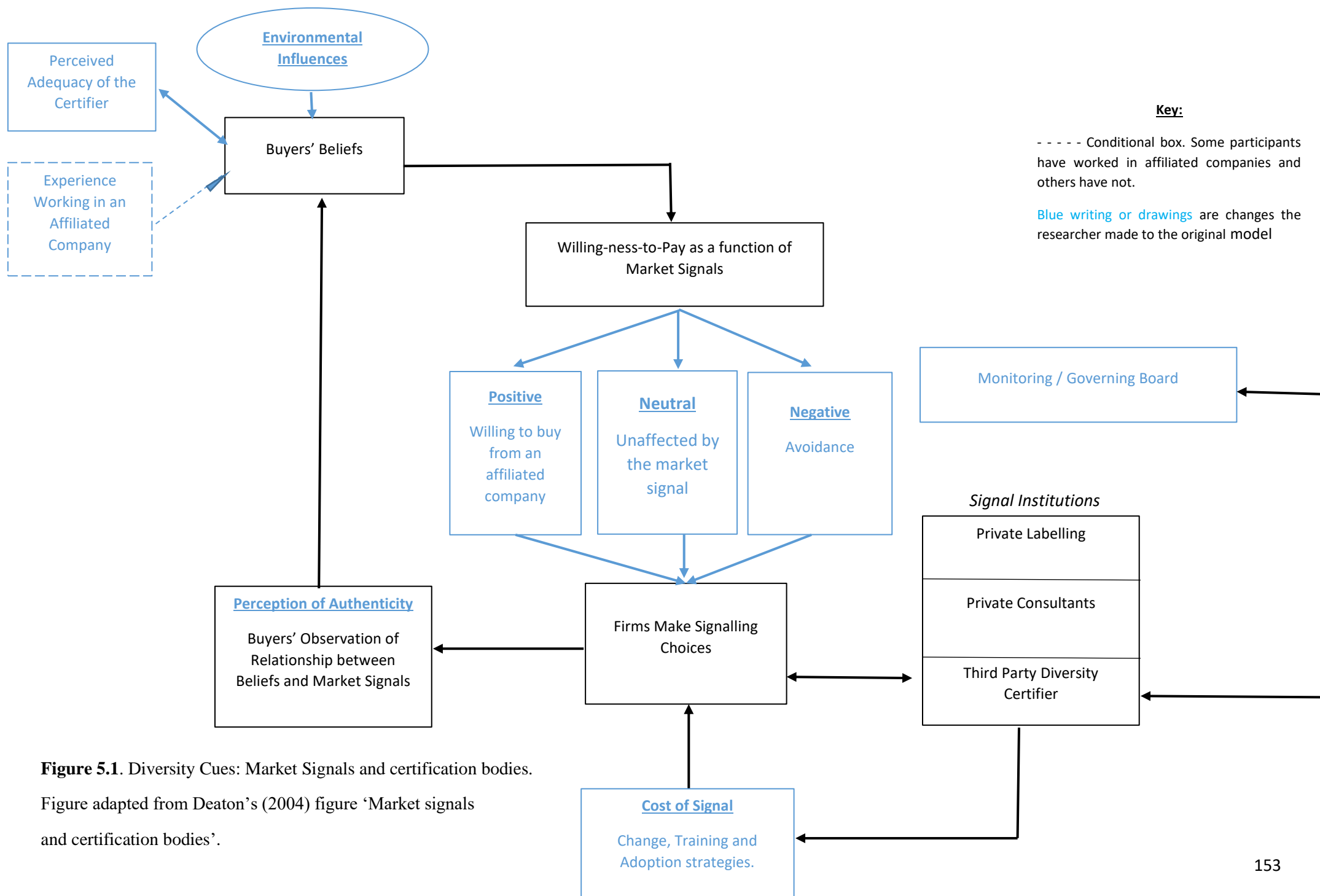
The perceived authenticity has a dual arrow going to buyers' belief. Both affect each other. Consumers' assessment of the certifier is continuous. This is reflective in the fact that consumers are paying attention to certifier's activities to ensure that they are enforcing

appropriate standards. At the same time, their beliefs will affect how they perceive that strategic action. This assessment will be based on their own criteria for inclusivity that was built based on personal knowledge and experience. Their beliefs can also be affected by environmental factors. The different environmental influences include word of mouth sharing, brand image, company reputation, and news and media. The third element that affects the buyer's belief is their experiences working for an affiliated company. It is in a dashed box because it is conditional. If someone worked in an affiliated company that would affect their beliefs but there are some that may not have been afforded that opportunity.

The buyer's beliefs affect their willingness to engage with a brand or company, given a third-party diversity certification as a market signal. The resulting attitude will be either negative, neutral or positive, which then affects firms' signalling choice. The firm will then choose among different signal institutions. The focus here is on third-party certification; thus, the arrow points to third-party certifiers. There is a dual arrow going from the third-party certifier to monitoring/governing board. The original element here from Deaton (2004) is an International/National Standardisation board. The researcher proposes that a monitoring/governing board be implemented to regulate the certifier (see section 5.4 for more details). The third-party certifier would communicate with and report to the governing board to maintain the integrity of the certification. This differs from a standards board that manages and coordinates standards adopted by different parties to maintain uniformity in the quality of the offering across those parties.

Choosing a signal comes at a cost. The cost would have been borne as a result of change, training, and adoption strategies. Given the cost of the signal, the signal institution, and consumers' willingness, the firm makes signal decisions and then acts accordingly. Consumers will then review the actions of firms, compare them to their beliefs, and decide whether they believe that the firm is being authentic in presenting a friendly image. For this reason, the buyer's observation box was given the title "Perception of authenticity." This perceived authenticity affects the buyer's beliefs. The loop then begins again, and consumers will continuously evaluate different firms that have used third-party diversity certifications.

Figure 5.1. Diversity Cues: Market Signals and certification bodies.

Figure adapted from Deaton's (2004) figure 'Market signals and certification bodies'.

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Vredenburg et al. (2020) recommended that a tactic to improve authenticity would be acquiring third-party certification. The affiliated companies acquire the Rainbow Tick to create the image that they are Rainbow friendly or allies overusing self-declared messaging. This research provides contradictory insights into the recommendation provided by Vredenburg et al. (2020). It was discovered that companies using the Rainbow Tick (as a third-party certification) are translating as woke washing verses authentic commitment to Rainbow communities. This translation has the opposite effect of Vredenburg et al.'s (2020) proposition, and results from negative perceptions of these consumers about firm inclusivity messaging and practices. This thesis further extends existing literature by applying woke washing to third-party diversity certifications.

The other contribution to the area is in reflecting on its link to institutional theory. The main avenue here would be through managerial pressure (Scott, 1994). The manager or executives are the parties that initiate actions to be taken by the company to attain the Rainbow Tick. In furthering Tayar (2017) research conclusion that firms are only prescribing to an archetype of inclusivity, this thesis shows that some consumers perceive that affiliated companies are following that same pattern (aligning to the archetype of inclusion). They are only attaining the tick to seem Rainbow friendly for economic and brand equity gains. It could also be a way for them decoupling themselves from negative associations because they are perceived to be legitimate due to isomorphism (Kennedy & Buchanan-Oliver, 2011). The macro-environment is becoming more open to Rainbow people even though there is room for improvement in terms of social inclusion and positive/neutral behavioural intents—the changes in legislation help to propel this change.

Another area of theoretical contribution regards providing findings on transgender and non-binary people. Existing literature is quite limited in comparison to other gender identities. It points to a need for continued research as knowledge about non-cisgender identities continue to be expressed in society. This research heeds the warning of Dobscha (2019) for market researchers. There needs to be a new paradigm of thinking around gender in consumer research. This research contributes to the literature about transgender and non-binary consumers. It opposes what literature traditionally shows us about the effects of Rainbow/Queer branding [for example (Cunningham & Melton, 2014; DeLozier & Rodrigue, 1996; Oakenfull, 2012)]. It shows that these consumers highly scrutinise companies that perpetuate images of inclusivity given their perspective and experience. There is a strong demand from these consumers to affiliated companies to clearly show active change in their organisations and continuous involvement in Rainbow communities for the Rainbow Tick signal to be effective. Overall, this thesis acknowledges that non-binary and transgender people are valid

consumers that researchers should aim to understand – not just for economic gain but also to create value and improve their market experiences.

5.4 Managerial Implications

This next section outlines managerial implications based on findings from this thesis. It will offer implications not only for the Rainbow Tick certification body but also affiliated companies. These implications arose from analysing participants' opinions and recommendations, as well as the literature.

5.4.1. Image and the Authenticity Problem

An important pertinent skill that managers of any company should know is changing and adapting to evolving environments (Kolter, 2003). For a company to sustain themselves in any environment, they must use strategies that utilise their internal resources and capabilities to respond to an external environment that evolves (Barney, 1991). The socio-cultural context is becoming more progressive and accepting of Rainbow identities (Roberts, 2019). Rainbow identities are becoming more apparent and understood in today's society. There is more access to resources and information about Rainbow communities through online media, support organisations and NGOs, scholarly sources and Rainbow people themselves. A company needs to understand its target market and its needs (Smith, 1995). It is from there that they can provide an offering that the consumer will find relevant.

Many participants believe that firms are not doing anything that benefits Rainbow communities beyond the requirements they had to meet during the evaluation process. It is unclear whether the Rainbow Tick requires companies to go beyond the pre-set standards. However, the findings point to the fact that consumers are expecting more supportive action from certified companies. For them, Rainbow friendliness and allyship is attained by continuously growing in knowledge and adapting offerings and support for Rainbow communities. Affiliated companies are perceived to be pushing inclusive messaging through the Rainbow Tick but are not doing a socially acceptable amount of prosocial practices that benefit Rainbow communities. It has left them with a negative impression of the Rainbow Tick scheme and those who have been entrusted with it. More specifically, it has come across as though the affiliated companies are being inauthentic in their communications that they are Rainbow friendly.

Additionally, many participants have found that the Rainbow Tick is a mechanism only for marketing rather than a tool for inclusion. Once firms get the tick, they can show the symbol on their marketing communications. It is being used for part of its intended purpose, i.e., a type of branding that companies can use to signal to Rainbow people. The problem is that the participants do not have an

optimistic view of it. There is a gap between its intended purpose and what is being translated to the participants. A couple of participants have been more optimistic in their interpretation of the Rainbow Tick because it has the potential to help Rainbow people even though it is perceived as deficient in its ability to do so. For example, Devin shared the following:

> *"[interviewer] And do you believe it is serving the purpose it says it is?*
>
> *I think it is doing it, but to a much smaller extent than it thinks it is. Like, if it was serving the purposes of really well, it would be a ten, but I'd give it maybe a three. (Devin 31)*

Consequently, one can deduce that a major image and reputation issue is emerging because of these negative perspectives. Even though some could not recall which companies were affiliated, they could discuss their opinions of the Rainbow Tick. Some form of word of mouth or other modes of communication are perpetuating a negative image. Companies affiliated to the Rainbow Tick and communicating that they are allies or Rainbow friendly are perceived as disingenuous – that is linked to the idea of woke washing. The following are managerial implications for both the Rainbow Tick organisation and its affiliates, as well as any third party diversity certifiers and their affiliates.

5.4.1.1 A Considered Branding Strategy

The Rainbow Tick needs to follow Portal et al. (2019) recommendation that a brand strategy should be credible and continuous over time. It must be a strategy that represents the intended values of the Rainbow Tick and is transferable to the public. There needs to be a strategic plan to improve and maintain proper brand management from the Rainbow Tick. Each of the companies that they evaluate has its image in the marketplace. Attaching the Rainbow Tick causes consumers to assess the image of the company as a whole and the Rainbow Tick and how their actions are congruent with their intent.

5.4.1.2 Vredenburg (2020) Three Mechanisms for Building Authenticity.

Vredenburg et al. (2020) recommend improving authenticity. They point to three different factors that can help to build authenticity. They include third-party certification, brand-policy and public and private partnerships.

5.4.1.2.1 Third-party Certification

The interesting point made by Vredenburg et al. (2020) is that there should be third-party certification used to build authenticity. However, this research is already focused on third party diversity certification and discovered problems with the perceived authenticity of firms' motivation to use it. What would help is if the Rainbow Tick got verified by an independent body. This proposition is in keeping with, Vredenburg et al. (2020) recommendation that the third-party certification should be

verified. Verified in this case means that they the Rainbow Tick would have an independent party that audits and monitors their activities and service offering.

The researcher recommends that a governing body should be established to monitor the Rainbow Tick. The Rainbow Tick would then be accountable to this governing body. The individuals on this board could be representatives from different Rainbow organisations from around the country or community leaders with strong community ties and reputations. However, that depends on those organisations' willingness and ability to be a part of such a board. This action would be in keeping with the practices from other reliable third-party certifications that have a standardisation or governing board that monitors the quality of their evaluation practices.

5.4.1.2.2 Brand Policy

Regarding brand policy, a mediating practice that the Rainbow Tick could use to improve its reputation is to provide more information and examples for consumers. Their Facebook page currently includes information about affiliated companies. It would be helpful to aggregate that information in one space that is easily accessed by consumers. This could be as simple as creating a separate page on their website that provides informative blurbs about a handful of firms. This information could include any meaningful actions the company has taken to foster inclusivity, motivation for attaining the tick, and a rationale for awarding them the Rainbow Tick. Over time they could add more companies. This would create a robust database of information for the average consumer and companies that want examples to gauge whether the Rainbow Tick is an appropriate acquisition for them. A consistent and illustrative source such as this shows consumers that companies are doing what it takes to emulate and embody inclusive characteristics in workplace cultures and Rainbow policies.

An informative database would also contribute to the awareness problem currently presented by the Rainbow Tick in terms of consumers' knowledge of who is affiliated and who is not. If a user-friendly interface is on the website, then that could influence consumers in a way that makes them re-use the website and digest the information presented. It creates an appealing and credible source of information that reinforces in consumers' mind who is affiliated and why.

Moreover, it may be helpful to develop an integrated messaging strategy that provides consumers with different touchpoints that elaborate on the practices and choices made by the Rainbow Tick. These touchpoints include but are not limited to social media, a possible newsletter, emails, online portals and community initiatives. Consumers will evaluate different sources in making decisions (Neslin et al., 2014). There is a benefit to having different touchpoints that consumers can access. There is positive potential benefit that can come from providing integrated touchpoints for consumers, but it

needs to be based on a thoughtful and considered strategy which ensures that the company's brand is similar across the different platforms (Larke et al., 2018). Such a strategy creates consistent, and prolonged messaging that will hopefully make new associations in the minds of these consumers. Further research is needed to look at the complexity and multi-level influence present during consumers engagement with different touchpoints (Baxendale et al., 2015).

Open communication between the Rainbow Tick and the community, in general, will prove helpful. We have seen significant issues related to transparency and accountability around the Rainbow Tick. Companies that are open and transparent with their business practices stand a higher chance of gaining trust and loyalty from their consumers (Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011). It can show potentially genuine efforts of the Rainbow Tick to ensure that companies follow inclusive guidelines and their material is representative of Rainbow people s' lived experiences. Thus far, we have seen distrust and discontent towards the Rainbow Tick. Consumers, in general, are sceptical regarding firms' activities to appeal to them. We mentioned earlier that consumers can be cynical toward firms overtly pushing messages directly (Dapko, 2012). However the researcher, in this case, calls for more messaging based on what the participants said and what he has observed when researching the Rainbow Tick. Providing consumers with more information can enable more informed decisions when evaluating both the Rainbow Tick and its affiliated companies. It provides more evidence of actual inclusive practices from affiliated firms. It allows participants to see positive examples of firms being inclusive. Or it might be an instance of a company recognising a problem, highlighting it and then illustrating through the Rainbow Tick's communication that they are taking active steps to address it. Therefore, improving the image or perception of the Rainbow Tick given this information in a more positive light if done properly. Thus far, there are negative examples that seem to be dominating the conversations surrounding the Rainbow Tick.

The researcher recommends that the Rainbow Tick releases an annual report highlighting key achievements by the certification body and its affiliates in line with the previous arguments. It does not require extensive detail about the processes and evaluations for each company. Still, it should highlight steps companies took to gain the Rainbow Tick and why they received the accreditation. It could also show the evaluation system set up by the Rainbow Tick.

Alternatively, the research heeds the guidance of Court et al. (2009). They recommend that research needs to acknowledge other sources that consumers use in their evaluations other than the companies communication channels, whether owned or through connections (Court et al., 2009). This calls for public relations management that manages the stories and discourse described in instances connected to the Rainbow Tick. The researcher believes that the focus needs to be on their channels first because

they lack depth in the amount of information available. He alludes it to the famous analogy – "put on your own oxygen mask before you help your neighbour."

For the affiliated companies, brand policy is about being calculated and precise. Vredenburg et al. (2020) propose that these brand policies need to be simple and specific. One needs to use clear language that is understandable for consumers. Instead of using broad statements, use messaging that is targeted, exact, and measurable (Vredenburg et al., 2020). It creates benchmarks that not just the company can follow but also the consumer. It is imperative to communicate the company's values, not just in general but about Rainbow related issues. With these practices informed by appropriate policies and communication of the values, the affiliated firm's motivations become evident.

The participants want to see their motivation for attaining the tick and what actions they have taken to attain the tick. Fritz et al. (2017) did research that found that when consumers gain more information about a brand that gives them certainty which improves consumers' evaluation of a brands authenticity. If they can properly show their motivation and if it is perceived to be good, then that would lead consumers to describe that company as one that is authentic in their expression of Rainbow friendliness or allyship. Some companies are known to issue a press release when they attain the Rainbow Tick. Like the recommendation made for the Rainbow Tick, it might be helpful to have a page dedicated to representing and illustrating the motivations that the company had for getting the Rainbow Tick.

5.4.1.2.3 Public and Private Partnerships

The last point made by Vredenburg et al. (2020) is about public and private partnerships. It is essential that the Rainbow Tick certification body remains connected to Rainbow communities. Rainbow communities are stakeholders in the Rainbow Tick because their services can affect their experiences in workplaces. It is important to use communication channels to speak with community leaders, support organisations and advocacy groups. These channels should be collaborative and make it known to the broader community that the Rainbow Tick is open to learning and being flexible given the perspectives of these parties. It also ensures that the material they are sharing with these organisations is reflective of their experiences. It also gives the wider community the chance to influence what is taught to these companies. This occurs due to the flow of information from the community leaders and groups that is then filtered to the Rainbow Tick. If the Rainbow Tick acts in that capacity, then it creates a higher likelihood that consumers will have more buy-in into the process. This is in line with the finding by Vega-Vazquez et al. (2013). They found that value co-creation and positively contributes to customer satisfaction- there is a positive relationship (Vega-Vazquez et al., 2013). The co-creation would involve Rainbow communities collaborating with the Rainbow Tick to

adopt and improve the quality of the service they offer. Community leaders can represent the interest of Rainbow people during this co-creation process. As a consequence, the offering remains up to date and relevant.

For the affiliated companies, this relates to the community support that they provide for the general public. The participants highlighted that they believe many of these companies are very vocal and supportive of Rainbow communities during pride season. In its own right, that can be a good thing. The problem is that it is coming across as disingenuous because it is believed that the companies are doing this for economic gain and not out of genuine concern for the welfare of Rainbow communities. They want to see engagement from these communities beyond the initial acquisition of the tick. This engagement and support process has to be active. These consumers would like to see companies continuously supporting community groups and initiatives. It can be in the form of physical assistance, asset acquisitions, grants, sponsorship, affirmative actions and more. In that way, their claims of Rainbow friendliness and allyship would be more accepted by these consumers.

The other benefit of staying connected with these community groups is providing another reliable medium of communication and source of reference for Rainbow people. Community leaders are very influential points of impact in the community (Boehm, 2002). Many studies have pointed to the importance of community groups in improving and contributing to the welfare of Rainbow people [for example (Chiang et al., 2019; Kokozos & Gonzalez, 2020; O'Shea et al., 2020)]. Community leaders and groups are continuously engaging with Rainbow people and assisting them where needed. The goal is not to have them be brand ambassadors of the Rainbow Tick, but it is about creating a credible point of reference when the dialogue about Rainbow inclusivity and the Rainbow Tick comes up in conversation. If they are fully aware of the Rainbow Tick's actions, they can naturally interject and share positive points about the tick because they know that they are putting in satisfactory effort. If it is truly harmful, then they can also describe that instance as well. For the most part, a more positive orientation should be desired.

5.4.2 Effective Leadership

One of the other issues that participants highlighted was the problems they experienced or witnessed regarding the leadership of the Rainbow Tick. The actions of the leadership of any organisation affect their overall performance (Finkelstein & Boyd, 1998). They make managerial decisions based on discretion which then affects the way in which the business operates (Finkelstein & Boyd, 1998) . The Rainbow Tick's leadership structure has changed, but the previous leaderships' negative influence is still evident.

Many participants found gaps in functionality which left them with a bad perception of the Rainbow Tick scheme as a tool for promoting inclusivity. Consumers have more trust in an organisation with leaders that have positive associations with their image (Stravinskiene et al., 2020). The leaders need to ensure that they remain accountable to Rainbow communities by being transparent about the actions taken to ensure that affiliated companies maintain an acceptable standard of inclusivity. They need to take on the feedback of Rainbow individuals and actively address their needs if they want to garner trust and support. Therefore, positive associations will erupt in the minds of Rainbow consumers because the leaders are open concerning their actions.

5.4.3 Training

It has been inferred that the quality of the training provided by the Rainbow Tick is inadequate and needs to be adjusted. There has been feedback that has been provided to the Rainbow Tick, and they must ensure that they are responding accordingly. Cohen and Lee (1990) posit that after-sales service is essential. Companies should still be engaging with their target markets to ensure that they are satiated by the products they provide (Cohen & Lee, 1990). If changes are necessary, then they can adapt the product (Cohen & Lee, 1990). In a similar sense, the Rainbow Tick must stay connected with Rainbow communities to ensure their service offering stays relevant and meets the needs of Rainbow communities. The companies themselves as the direct clients are essential, but the offering has more of an effect on Rainbow people since it aims to measure, train, and reward companies for their inclusive practices.

On the other hand, the affiliated companies need to have a look again at the post-training activities. The Rainbow Tick can improve the quality of the training material, but the post-training activities are essential. This could be an area for further investigation for affiliated companies within their working environments to ensure that employees are equipped with the right resources to ensure transfer of training occurs. This follows Salas et al. (2012) recommendation that companies need to provide their staff with support tools and reinforcement systems that increase the likelihood of training transfer. Depending on the company, they can discover what works best for their employees. For example, paying for an advisor from a respected community group that the workers can consult if they have further concerns. This individual can be contracted over a fixed period after the training modules are presented.

5.4.4 Improving the Assessment System

The quality and real-time relevance of the evaluation process has been called into question. The participants believe it is not a strong enough measure of Rainbow inclusivity. That is a significant problem because there is the possibility that if this is the case, then there is inaccurate information

being fed into these organisations that can negatively affect the experience of Rainbow people in these organisations. The problem is that there is low transparency from the Rainbow Tick. The website does provide a short description of what they look out for. Given the perspectives of these participants, those words are not enough. They want more detail. That needs to be provided if perception shifts are to happen – from more negative to positive.

The researcher recommends collaborating with community leaders, community support organisations, and advocacy groups to help develop new resources and adopt the current ones where necessary. They can be used as a sounding board of ideas because they are knowledgeable about experiences in Rainbow communities. Given consumers' feedback, the evaluation process can be adopted, making it more adequate than it is currently perceived. They are being accountable to the community by directly engaging with them to ensure their actions are promoting useful inclusivity practices versus ones that are not so helpful. As a result, it contributes to fixing part of the perceived accountability issue.

5.4.5 Stronger Standard maintenance Systems.

The Rainbow Tick needs to make it clear how they manage the standards set in these different companies. Consumers observe examples where companies were engaging in actions that were actively harmful to Rainbow people. The participants want to see them being more accountable and imposing punishments for inappropriate behaviour. The major action participants talked about was if the Rainbow Tick was something that can be revoked, it should be done where necessary and the public made aware of it. If it cannot be revoked, some remedial actions need to occur, which needs to be made apparent to Rainbow communities. That will show that they are being open, transparent and accountable and give consumers confidence in knowing that the Rainbow Tick is engaging in actions that should help Rainbow people in workplaces.

Interestingly, the Rainbow Tick has an audit system. They reassess companies based on what they have been doing to maintain the tick's integrity by ensuring that Rainbow people are appropriately treated in the workplace. It does not seem to be well known by the public. It might be the case that the certification body needs to be more public about the results of the audits that they have done. Therefore, it is then a tool they can use to show that they are keeping the affiliated companies accountable. It might just be an issue of transparency.

5.5 Limitations and Future Research

The final section of this chapter looks at limitations and areas of future research identified by the researcher. This section identifies these limitations and what the researcher did to mitigate their

negative influence on the thesis. The limitations were related to the method, sample and the researcher. After that, future research directions will be discussed.

Semi-structured interviews were used. With any method, there are always limitations. In this case, the researcher was located in one city in New Zealand. Some individuals were willing to participate that were located in other parts of the country. As a result, some of the interviews were conducted either through online video conferencing platforms or over the telephone. That meant ensuring that the proper infrastructure was available. Technological issues caused problems during some online interviews. For example, this meant that an interview began online and then moved to the phone because the internet was not working. The researcher stayed at the university when he was conducting the interviews. He used the same room for in-person, online, and telephone interviews to maintain a consistent environment. Even with the different communication modes, the researcher endeavoured to build rapport with the participants and adequately complete the interviews, following the same interview guidelines.

The other issue is that the researcher cannot pick up on subtle expressions or mannerisms in phone interviews compared to in-person and online interviews. A researcher can use those mannerisms to ask questions in a specific manner. Given the limitations, the researcher still tried to notice any non-verbal communications or reactions depending on the questions. He noted the participants' responses, both verbal and non-verbal in the interview guides notes. In that way, he could refer back to them during the data analysis and discussion stage.

Another issue was related to sampling. The researcher had significant problems in attaining their sample. He faced major barriers when trying to collect this sample. He reached out to people on public platforms. Many seemed sceptical about the researcher completing this project. He received messages that not only questioned his motives but also his own identity. Many people were cautious about the researcher reaching out because they assumed his motivation was for economic gain. A representative from a well-established community group reached out to the researcher and discussed the issue. It was then that the researcher became aware of the unfortunate history that transgender and non-binary people have had in society, especially during pride celebrations. He also reached out to the Rainbow advisor from the university that also offered support for the thesis. Also, he took advice from his supervisors concerning dealing with public scrutiny. After several conversations, the researcher reformulated his recruitment messages following advice from the representative, Rainbow advisor, and supervisors. The representative and the Rainbow advisor publicly support the thesis and agree that the researcher's intentions are kind. In the end, he was able to gain his sample and complete the research.

Due to the scope of the requirements for this thesis, only a specific sample size was used. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to obtain greater depth and higher quality of data. The trade-off is scope. This research is not representative of all transgender and non-binary people. Future research can be done that replicates this thesis but uses a survey method that can measure certain opinions and behaviours towards the Rainbow Tick by a wider variety of individuals. The results here do not represent the thoughts of the whole Rainbow community because all identities were not represented in the sample.

The researcher has his own opinions of the Rainbow Tick. This was a contributing factor that led him to choose the Rainbow Tick as a research topic. That also means that there could be the possibility of moderator bias in the interviews. The researcher followed the guidelines of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and the interview guide approved by his supervisors. During the interview, he commented on things stated by participants in a way that helped build rapport with the participants. However, he ensured that he never placed his thoughts on the participants in a way that could corrupt their original thoughts about the Rainbow Tick. Agreement from the supervisors also shows that the researcher managed his own biases during the data collection and analysis stages.

Following on from these limitations, several areas for future research have emerged from this thesis. Firstly, as a follow on from this research, a study can measure consumer-based brand authenticity. Napoli et al. (2014) developed a scale that can be used to measure consumer-based authenticity. Since this is such an important issue here, consumer-based authenticity is likely relevant for the Rainbow Tick and affiliated companies. This research could be used as a source of guidance into further managerial action for authenticity to be improved or attained. The scale can be monitored over time, and adjustments made according to how it shifts. The companies and the Rainbow Tick can respond accordingly to any changes in the scale measuring consumer brand authenticity.

Secondly, given the sentiments of many of these participants, it could prove helpful to complete a study that measures awareness of the Rainbow Tick. Not just a gauge of the awareness but also the nature of that awareness. Do the consumers know what the Rainbow Tick is? Do they know which companies are affiliated? That study can have a specifically transgender and non-binary people sample or it could include other identities within Rainbow communities. This research could adopt a quantitative method rather than qualitative.

Further, a study could be done that uses case study as a method of data collection for an affiliated company. The case study will examine the workplace experiences of Rainbow people in that organisation. For even more clarity, the researcher could include cisgender heterosexual workers. In this way, a wide variety of data could be captured that add to the richness and potential application of

the data. The case study could then be used by both the Rainbow Tick and affiliated companies as a guide for making a strategic decision where necessary that ensures that Rainbow people are being serviced according to an acceptable inclusivity standard. The strategic actions could be in relation to evaluation systems, the training materials, monitoring systems, public relations management, brand management, and a communications plan.

Future research could also look at the efficacy of the Rainbow Tick competency training. It could adopt a similar methodology to Leyva et al. (2014) that compared aggregated knowledge, skills and attitude (KSA) scores of each participant. The KSA scores are measured before and after the training program. In the end, it could inform the Rainbow Tick on necessary areas of improvement from the perspective of the participants. It could also aid in the transfer of training process because the Rainbow Tick can adapt its training to provide the trainees with needed resources. If the training is done properly, then that positively affects the narrative being publicly noted about the Rainbow Tick and could garner more support from consumers. Additionally, mainly for client-facing affiliated firms, it improves the quality of services that the company provides to Rainbow people.

Moreover, there could be research that explores consumers' decision making in terms of their reactions to brand touchpoints. The researcher suggests that the Rainbow Tick used their different communication modes to share information about the Rainbow Tick and affiliated companies. There are multiple factors that affect a consumer when they evaluate different touchpoints. Research could be completed that explores different points of influence affecting Rainbow people when they evaluate the touchpoints from the Rainbow Tick. Different influences could include but are not limited to social pressures, cultural expectations and family dynamics. It is essentially about understanding their multi-level influences and transforming the message strategy and medium to be more effective in reaching Rainbow people.

Lastly, this research could be replicated but instead use heterosexual, cisgender consumers as the target group. Although the Rainbow Tick may be seen as a valuable tool for Rainbow communities, its presence and effects could impact non-Rainbow employees and consumers. The results from this type of research could inform some policy and application changes. Not all heterosexual, cisgender people are fully supportive of Rainbow people. Understanding how they think could help to find strategies that create middle ground so that the Rainbow Tick can be more effective in these organisations. The same would go for how they market the fact that they are affiliated and their values. Legally one cannot discriminate against someone for their idealism or beliefs when seeking employment. The research could discover what strategies could be implemented that respect both Rainbow people and those that are not. What plan of action takes into consideration different idealisms and beliefs? What

integrative marketing and creative message strategy could be used that would be most effective? Overall, this should create a positive experience for Rainbow people in these organisations, resulting in more positive perceptions and positioning for the Rainbow Tick.

5.6 Conclusions

This thesis illustrated perceptions of the Rainbow Tick from a selection of non-binary and transgender consumers. It uncovers a problem that the Rainbow Tick needs to recognise. For many of these individuals, the Rainbow Tick is faulty. It is a third-party certification that allows companies to brand themselves in a certain way. Unfortunately, these consumers have limited it to precisely that. Though it is a branding signal that can be used to appeal to Rainbow people, it is viewed as an effort by companies to be seen as Rainbow friendly without implementing strong inclusivity practices. It is coming across as virtue signalling and disingenuous expression of support for Rainbow inclusivity. Participants had negative experiences working in affiliated companies, heard second-hand stories about experiences in affiliated companies, and witnessed news stories that portrayed negative instances of firms acting in discord from expected inclusivity standards. These have negatively affected their perception of it, such that the Rainbow Tick has little to no effect on their behaviour. This was the case for most individuals. If the Rainbow Tick did have a substantial impact on their purchasing behaviour, it would be avoidance. This opposes what literature has historically shown us about Rainbow branding and how it should positively affect consumer behaviour.

This study emphasises the importance of consumers' perceived brand authenticity and adequacy of diversity third-party certification. The participants described different areas in which the Rainbow Tick would be classified as inadequate. These affect the legitimacy and reliability of the Rainbow Tick as a representation of firms with strong inclusivity practices. It becomes even more important in the context of management strategies that directly affect the lives of Rainbow people working in these organisations. There seems to be a higher expectation from companies that acquire the Rainbow Tick. Inclusivity is crucial in improving the welfare of Rainbow people in society. As consumers, these individuals want to see tangible, active steps that companies are doing to foster inclusivity. That is not the case here. The Rainbow Tick so far has been deemed inauthentic regarding the intent of affiliated companies and inadequate concerning its functional ability in the market. This is related to its evaluation criteria, training modules, maintenance systems, monitoring/accountability protocols, and the likelihood of making changes in different organisations. The findings offer recommendations that can be adopted by both the Rainbow Tick and affiliated companies so that the quality of their offering to Rainbow individuals and Rainbow people, in general, is improved.

However, there is more significance to this type of branding than just randomly using Rainbow or Queer related images or iconography that is identifiable by Rainbow communities. It has a stronger tie to the welfare of those in Rainbow communities. The affiliation programme should provide Rainbow people with security in knowing that they can express themselves freely outside of the gender binary within affiliated workplaces in a world that is so limiting. It creates a flow-on effect for consumers because it should illustrate that the company is an ally and Queer-friendly. As a consequence, this means that they are willing to engage with Rainbow people in a way that makes them feel accepted because they act impartially and appropriately. In the end, companies recognising and operating according to this notion create social value.

Part of the benefit of having a diversity related third-party certification in the marketplace is that it provides value for Rainbow people. It offers better outcomes for them economically, emotionally, and psychologically. Lloren and Parini (2017) study showed that companies that employed LGBT – supportive workplace policies had employees with better mental and psychological wellbeing. For a company to have become accredited, they would have needed Rainbow supportive workplace policies. As a result, it should create value for Rainbow people. Many consumers felt that it did not, or it did but to a small extent.

This study also pointed to the vulnerability present in the market for transgender and non-binary people as stated by McKeage et al. (2018). There is more visibility in terms of transgender and non-binary identity, but there are also a disproportionally larger number of examples where they are being victimised and misunderstood. From the participants' stories, you can see a plea for people to notice the issues arising from a certification like the Rainbow Tick. This archetype of inclusivity is "dangerous". Yes, it perpetuates inclusivity somehow, but it hides very disconcerting experiences of many Rainbow people to a more considerable extent. There needs to be more consideration from the heterosexual cisgender majority and identities who can assimilate easier. The Rainbow Tick should be educating individuals in affiliated companies, but there needs to be more supportive actions taken. It is not just the onus of the leaders in these companies but also the employee, co-workers, comrades, friends, allies, and neighbours. The leaders make the first step and initiate change. However, it is each person's responsibility to manifest the difference in their environment.

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Appendices
Appendix A: Table of Gender Identities and Expression

Identity	Definition
Androgyne	(1) A person whose biological sex is not readily apparent; (2) a person who is intermediate between the two binary genders; (3) a person who rejects binary gender roles entirely
Androgynous	A person who may appear as and exhibit traits traditionally associated as both male and female, or as neither male nor female, or as in between male and female. People of any gender identity or sexual orientation can be androgynous.
Cisgender	Someone whose gender identity aligns with what they were assigned at birth, a term created to refer to "non-transgender" people without alienating transgender people.
Designated Sex	The sex one is labeled at birth, generally by a medical or birthing professional, based on a cursory examination of external and/or physical sex characteristics such as genitalia and cultural concepts of male and female sexed bodies. Sex designation is used to label one's gender identity prior to self-identification
Gender binary	The pervasive social system that tells us there can only be masculine cis gender men and feminine cis gender women, and there can be no alternatives in terms of gender identity or expression. May include a sensed requirement that a person must be strictly gendered as either/or.
Gender expression	How one expresses gender through outward presentation and behaviour . It is usually an extension of our gender identity. This includes, for example, a person's name, clothing, hairstyle, body language and mannerisms. Gender expression may change over time and from day to day, and may or may not conform to an individual's gender identity.
Gender fluid	A gender identity where a person identifies as (1) neither or both female and male; (2) experiences a range of femaleness and maleness, with a denoted movement or flow between genders; (3) consistently experiences their gender identity outside of the gender binary. People who are gender fluid may feel that their gender identity or expression is constantly changing, or that it switches back and forth
Gender identity	An individual's internal sense of being male, female, both, neither, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others. One's gender identity can be the same as or different from their sex assigned at birth.
Gender neutral	Denotes a unisex or all-gender inclusive space, language, etc. For example, a gender-neutral bathroom is a bathroom open to people of any gender identity and expression
Gender-neutral pronouns	Pronouns other than the usually gendered he or she. Some examples are ze/hir/hirs, and they/them/their, but there are many others.
Gender nonconforming	(1) Gender expression or identity that is outside or beyond a specific culture or society's gender expectations; (2) a term used to refer to individuals or communities who may not identify as transgender, but who do not conform to traditional gender norms. May be used in tandem with other identities

Genderqueer	People who possess identities which fall outside of the widely accepted gender binary. The term can be used as an umbrella term for all people who are gender nonconforming, or as a specific non-binary gender identity.
Gender spectrum	The broad range along which people identify and express themselves as gendered beings or not
Gender variant	(1) People whose gender identity and/or expressions are different from the societal norms; (2) a broad term used to describe or denote people who are outside or beyond culturally expected or required identities or expressions.
Intersex	People who are assigned a sex that does not match their chromosomes, external genitalia, and/or an internal reproductive system that is not considered "standard" or normative for either the male or female sex. About 1.7 percent of the population is intersex.
Metrosexual	A heterosexual male or masculine person who has a strong aesthetic sense or interest in personal fashion and appearance.
Neutrois	An identity generally having to do with feeling one does not have a gender, a gender identity, or a defined gender. Some people who identify as neutrois also identify as agender or genderless, and some neutrois people desire to minimize their physical gender markers and to have a more gender-neutral appearance.
Non-binary	Those who identify as a gender that is neither man nor woman or who are not men or women exclusively. Non-binary can refer to a specific gender identity or it can function as an umbrella term which can include (though not always) people who are genderqueer, agender, bigender, neutrois, and others
Pangender	A person whose gender identity is comprised of many gender identities and/or expressions.
Passing	(1) The ability to present oneself as their chosen gender identity rather than one's assigned gender; (2) being normatively accepted as one's promoted identity, as part of specific cultural expectations; (3) an individual's desire or ability to be perceived as a member of a particular gender, race, or cultural group. (See also: Read/Being Read.)
Polygender	Identifying as more than one gender or a combination of genders.
Questioning	A person who is in the process of questioning or analyzing their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression
Read (Getting/Being Read)	(1) How a person's gender is perceived by a casual observer, based on gender cues or expression; (2) a trans* person being perceived as transgender, another gender than what they wish to be perceived, or as their designated sex. Also used in reference to how one's race is perceived based on cues or expression.
Sex	A medical term designating a certain combination of gonads, chromosomes, external gender organs, secondary sex characteristics and hormonal balances. A binary system (man/woman) set by the medical establishment, usually based on genitals and sometimes chromosomes. Because this is usually divided into 'male' and 'female', this category ignores the existence of intersex bodies.
Third gender	(1) A gender identity that is neither male nor female, nor androgynous; (2) term used in cultures where another gender is recognized in addition to male and female (genders which have historically fallen under the label 'third gender' include Hijra in India, Two-Spirit in many Native American cultures, and Fa'afafine in Samoa); term used to denote people who are not

	considered men or women for the purpose of social categorization or documentation; generally used for transgender and/or intersex people.
Trans*	Umbrella term, originated from transgender. Used to denote the increasingly wide spectrum of identities within the gender variant spectrum. The asterisk is representative of the widest notation of possible trans* identities. Aimed at promoting unification among gender variant communities by placing focus on gender transgression over specific identity labels, genders, or bodies.
Transgender	(1) An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth; (2) expressions and identities that challenge the binary male/female gender system in a given culture; (3) anyone who transcends the conventional definitions of man and woman and whose self-identification or expression challenges traditional notions of male and female.
Transition	The coming out process of a trans* person; may be continual or deemed to be a set period of time or series of events; (2) to physically change one's appearance, body, self-describing language, and/or behaviour s in accordance with their gender identity. The process may be broken down into parts: social transition (language, clothing, behaviour , legal documents) and physical transition (medical care such as hormones and/or surgery).
Transphobia	The fear, hatred, or intolerance of transgender people or those who exhibit gender-nonconforming behaviour
Transsexual	A person whose gender identity is different from their designated sex at birth and has taken steps of physical transition so that their body is congruent to both their gender identity and the conventional concept of sexually male and female bodies.

(Mckeage et al, 2018)

Appendix B: New Headlines

The following links connect to news stories that show example of instances where affiliated companies faltered in the actions:

https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/408418/auckland-council-in-talks-with-Rainbow-tick-over-controversial-event

https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/116223573/massey-university-Rainbow-tick-likely-to-be-reviewed-if-controversial-feminist-event-goes-ahead

https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/390787/box-ticking-are-Rainbow-tick-workplaces-really-safe-for-lgbtqi-staff

Appendix C: Rainbow Tick Certification Signal

Department of Management, Marketing and Entrepreneurship
Telephone: +64 3 369 3888

Email: Johnpaul.smith@canterbury.ac.nz

Date: November 19, 2020
HEC Ref: HEC 2020/83

Does A Tick Make it Alright?

Information Sheet for Interview Participant

My name is Johnpaul Smith, and I am a student studying towards a Masters of Commerce degree in Marketing. I identify as gay and gender fluid. I will be the primary researcher for this project based around the Rainbow Tick. The Rainbow Tick is a certification that companies can acquire as an objective representation of their commitment to inclusivity and diversity in their workplace as well as their desire to engage with the Rainbow population in the marketplace actively. The purpose of this project is to explore the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of non-binary individuals, transgender women and transgender men towards the Rainbow Tick and the organisations that are affiliated. The project should indicate the effectiveness of the certification from the perspective of a subset of the community represented in this project and offer applicable recommendations for companies that are affiliated. You have been approached to take part in this study because you met the criteria for being non-binary or transgender and showed your willingness to participate. Thank you for responding to my advert regarding participation.

If you choose to take part in this study, your involvement in this project will be in the form of an interview. We will meet at a mutually convenient time and location to discuss your thoughts and experiences. Before the interview, you are asked to create a small collage with cut-outs of images, pictures or graphics that depict your experience and identity as non-binary or transgender in New Zealand. This task should only take approximately 15 minutes to complete. During the interview, we will discuss the meaning of the images in your collage in more detail. I will have some pre-prepared questions to ask you but the structure of the interview will allow us to discuss other questions or ideas that were not predetermined but sill fit under the research theme. The interview process will last between 60 - 90 minutes and includes discussion surrounding consent, elaboration about the project, the interview itself and a small break for you to rest and rehydrate if needed. If you consent to audio recording, the interview will be audio recorded for transcription and analysis purposes only.

As a follow-up to this investigation, you will be asked to read the transcript of your interview. The purpose of this step is to ensure that you are comfortable with what you have said and give final consent for that data to be analysed.

In the performance of the given tasks, there are some risk and possible inconveniences that you may face. We will be discussing your lived experiences, and that has the possibility of triggering emotional distress as a result of recounting uncomfortable past experiences. If you feel as though you cannot answer a question or are feeling any discomfort in completing a question, please feel free to either not answer the question or opt-out of finishing your answer for that question.

Participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. You have the option of opting out of the study entirely if you receive your transcript and in a timely manner, communicate your discontent and desire for your responses not to be used for the thesis and destroyed. If you withdraw, I will remove information relating to you. However, once the analysis of raw data starts on the 8th of January 2020, it will become increasingly difficult to remove the influence of your data on the results.

The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: your identity will not be made public without your prior consent. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms (or aliases) will be used as identifiers in the project to ensure that you cannot be identified. The only individuals that will have access to your data include my supervisors and me. Information from respondents will be individually password protected and left on my password-protected university computer. In addition, data will be backed up on the university servers using my password-protected IT account. The data will be destroyed five years after my thesis has been submitted. A thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.

Please indicate to the researcher on the consent form if you would like to receive a copy of the summary of the results of the project.

Table 1 shows a number of helplines that you can contact if you are ever feeling distressed prior, during or after the interview:

TABLE 1 – List of Contacts for Helplines

Name	Description	Contact Details
OUTLine NZ	Support line is answered by LGBTIQ+ people who have trained to help others over the phone on issues around sexual orientation and gender identity. Currently the organisation has over 40 telephone volunteers who have all undertaken ongoing training and supervision.	Support Line - 0800 688 5463 Counselling Team - 09 972 0054
Safe to Talk NZ	They offer free confidential contact with a trained specialist. You can contact them if you are concerned about your own thoughts or about harming someone. **They even have interpreter services for 44 languages**	Text on 4334 and they will text you back Email: support@safetotalk.nz
Gender Minorities Aotewaroa	Local, national, and international information resources covering whanau, employment, study, media, relationships,	Phone - 04 385 0611 Mobile – 020 404 92568

	and other useful information. Also useful for local community support and health information.	

The project is being carried out as a requirement for a Masters of Commence degree for Johnpaul Smith under the supervision of Dr. Ann-Marie Kennedy, who can be contacted at ann-marie.kennedy@canterbury.ac.nz. She will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, and participants should address any complaints to The Chair, Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

If you agree to participate in the study, you are asked to complete the consent form and return it prior to the beginning of the interview.

Department of Management, Marketing and Entrepreneurship
Telephone: +64 3 369 3888
Email:
Johnpaul.smith@canterbury.ac.n

Does a Tick Make it Alright?

Consent Form for Interview Participant

☐ I have been given a full explanation of this project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐ I understand what is required of me if I agree to take part in the research.

☐ I understand that my interview will be recorded and used for research purposes only.

☐ I understand that my collage will also be used for analysis in this research project.

☐ I am 18 years and old and can make my own choices.

☐ I understand that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without penalty. Withdrawal of participation will also include the withdrawal of any information I have provided should this remain practically achievable.

☐ I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher, their supervisor and the transcriber and that any published or reported results will not identify the participants. I understand that a thesis is a public document and will be available through the UC Library.

☐ I understand that all data collected for the study will be kept in locked and secure facilities and/or in password-protected electronic form and will be destroyed after five years.

☐ I understand the risks associated with taking part and how they will be managed.

☐ I understand that I can contact the researcher Johnpaul Smith at johnpaul.smith@canterbury.ac.nz or supervisor, Dr. Ann-Marie Kennedy at ann-marie.kennedy@canterbury.ac.nz, for further information. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz)

☐ I would like a summary of the results of the project.

☐ By signing below, I agree to participate in this research project.

Name: Signed: Date:

Email address:

*Please take the time to read and consider whether you would like to participate. Bring a
signed hard copy of the form to the interview*

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Begin with a sound check – ensure that the interviewee can hear and you clearly. Go through the zoom protocols –

- Keep mic and video on.
- In the break, you are free to turn your mic and camera off. But please return at the stipulated time.

Introduction:

- Remind them of your name, what you study, your gender identity, orientation and preferred pronouns.

- Introduce the thesis and why you are doing i: Key points include:
    o Investigating the significance of the Rainbow Tick
    o Explore whether non-binary and transgender consumers behaviour change as a result of a company being affiliated.

- Remind them that the project is in the field of marketing. Why?
    o There may be marketing jargon used like consumers or market (please define if necessary)
    o There are management implications which you will be prompted on but the study is being done from a marketing standpoint.

- Open the floor for discussion regarding the information sheet and the consent form.

- Re-iterate the steps you will be taking to maintain privacy and confidentiality
    o Only the researcher is present in the room
    o The supervisors will have access to the transcript but aliases will be used. Gender identity and preferred pronouns will be used but that should like directly to the interviewee –
        ▪ They can choose an alias or you can choose it for them
        ▪ If they choose one it cannot be linked to their life in anyway.
    o The only people that have access to the recording is the researcher and a transcriber (if chosen). The transcriber has signed a confidentiality agreement.
    o Transcripts storage:
        ▪ Locked computer at the university in a locked office.
        ▪ Hard copy is kept in my personal desk draw at the university. It stays locked at all times.

If there is any line of questioning that makes you uncomfortable please say so. There are support service that can assist you if any of this discussion triggers uncomfortable past experiences.

Name	Description	Contact Details
OUTLine NZ	Support line is answered by LGBTIQ+ people who have trained	Support Line - 0800 688 5463

	to help others over the phone on issues around sexual orientation and gender identity. Currently the organisation has over 40 telephone volunteers who have all undertaken ongoing training and supervision.	Counselling Team - 09 972 0054
Safe to Talk NZ	They offer free confidential contact with a trained specialist. You can contact them if you are concerned about your own thoughts or about harming someone. **They even have interpreter services for 44 languages**	Text on 4334 and they will text you back Email: support@safetotalk.nz
Gender Minorities Aotewaroa	Local, national, and international information resources covering whanau, employment, study, media, relationships, and other useful information. Also useful for local community support and health information.	Phone - 04 385 0611 Mobile – 020 404 92568

Let the participant know that if they see you taking notes and looking down, it is because you are taking field notes. The field notes help to strengthen the analysis.

Are there any FINAL questions before we begin?

<<BEGIN RECORDING>>

<u>Introductory Questions</u>

What is you gender identity?

What is your age?

What are you preferred pronouns?

What is your ethnicity?

> *<<ALWAYS BRING IT BACK TO MARKETING AND WHETHER THE RAINBOW TICK BRANDING AFFECTED THEIR DECISION MAKING>>*

<u>Interview Questions</u>

- What do you **know about the Rainbow Tick**? What purpose does it serve?
    a. Is there a social benefit attached to the Rainbow Tick? What is it?

- Read an extract from the website that says what the Rainbow Tick certification is all about.

> "Rainbow Tick is a certification mark for organisations that complete a Diversity and Inclusion assessment process.
>
> Rainbow Tick is about accepting and valuing people in the workplace, embracing the diversity of sexual and gender identities. A supportive work environment that is accepting of peoples' differences benefits everybody in your organisation.
>
> The certification process tests whether a workplace understands and welcomes sexual and gender diversity. The process involves an on-going quality improvement process."

opportunity for dialogue around that.

- Do you believe that it is **serving the purpose that it says it is?** In what ways is it or is it not serving thing the needs of the community? Can you provide examples you have seen in your own social circles or the news?
  a. Rephrase if you need it: Can you give examples that you have seen where affiliated companies did not cater to the needs and desires of the LGBT community
  b. Within your community or social circle, what is the general feeling people have towards the Rainbow Tick?

- Have you ever **engaged with a company or organisation that was Rainbow Tick affiliated**
  a. Can you describe what that experience was like? Did you feel that they were open and welcoming?
  b. If yes, how did you find that company?
     i. Did your knowledge of that company being affiliated made you choose to engage with them versus other substitutes that were not affiliated?
     ii. Was it just a happy coincidence?

> *<<ALWAYS BRING IT BACK TO MARKETING AND WHETHER THE RAINBOW TICK BRANDING AFFECTED THEIR DECISION MAKING>>*

- Have you ever **worked in a company or organisation that is Rainbow Tick affiliated**?
  a. How did you find out about their affiliation?
     i. Do you think that method is effective in reaching you?
     ii. Are there any other methods that they could have used?(to reach you and the wider community)
  b. Can you tell me about your experience working in that company?
     i. Does knowledge that the company is Rainbow Tick affiliated influence your decision to work there? Why?

1. Are there any other criteria, along with that, you would look for when seeking employment with a company? For example what their diversity policies are, their perquisites or their commitment to corporate social responsibility

   ii. Did it meet your expectations?
       1. If not, was it better than what you thought it would be or vice versa? In what way?

- Would you **prefer to engage with a company that has the Rainbow Tick versus one without**? Why?
    a. If they knew a company had one but chose to go with a company without, why did they do that? *(Really spend a minute or two trying to understand why they did that)*

- Do you believe that companies that are Rainbow affiliated **need to change their processes and engagement with the community**? Why? How do you think they should go about changing that?
    a. Is it mainly internally based on your experiences working at a specific affiliated company?

- Do you believe that the Rainbow Tick certification body needs to **improve on what they are doing in terms of their evaluation and training processes**?
    a. If not please feel free to make recommendations about how they should be assessing and managing those companies that become affiliated?

<u>Appendix G: Human Ethics Approval</u>

HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

Secretary, Rebecca
Robinson Telephone:
+64 03 369 4588, Extn
94588Email: human-
ethics@canterbury.ac.nz

Ref: HEC 2020/83

11 September 2020

Johnpaul Christopher Smith
Management, Marketing and
EntrepreneurshipUNIVERSITY OF
CANTERBURY

Dear Johnpaul

The Human Ethics Committee advises that your research proposal "Does a Tick Make it Alright?"has been considered and approved.

Please note that this approval is subject to the incorporation of the amendments you have providedin your emails of 7th and 9th September 2020.

Best wishes for your project.

Yours sincerely

Dr Dean Sutherland
Chair
University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee

F E S