

# LGBT Representation in Film and Media: Social Impact and Future Development: A Literature Review

Gao Yuan<sup>1,\*</sup>, Ma. Agatha Anne D. Guintu<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Graduate School, Angeles University Foundation, Angeles City, Philippines

\*Corresponding author email: gao.yuan@auf.edu.ph

---

**Abstract:** The past decade has seen a dramatic transformation in the representation of the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) community in media and film from exclusion to mass acceptance. The transformation is reflective of changing society as well as the transformation of the film industry. Media and film representations that include LGBT themes have been pivotal in promoting social acceptance, shaping policy reforms, and solidifying the identity of the LGBT community. The present study uses a systematic literature review to examine different forms of LGBT representation in media and film, their impact on society, and areas of potential development. The results indicate that media and LGBT-related films not only influence the attitude of the audience and minimize societal prejudice but also expand their reach through the spread of streaming platforms. Nevertheless, the development of LGBT films still has to contend with challenges of different levels of cultural acceptance and different structures of the market in different regions of the world. In the future, LGBT films are most likely to gain from increased technological innovations, greater diversity in representation, and greater flexibility in foreign markets. The present study makes theoretical contributions to filmmakers, policymakers, and research scholars as well as practical suggestions for the future of LGBT films and media.

**Keywords:** LGBT representation in film; social impact; identity; market development; streaming media.

---

## 1. Introduction

The portrayal of the LGBT community in media and film has experienced drastic changes throughout the last century. From early implicit and usually coded portrayals to explicit and multifaceted portrayals in modern media, the development of LGBT representation mirrors wider socio-cultural and political changes. During the early to mid-20th century, censorious industry standards, including the Hollywood Hays Code (1930s–1960s), heavily restricted the appearance of LGBT characters, frequently keeping them in the subtext or relegated to negative stereotypes. Yet, as public opinion about sexual orientation and gender identity began to shift, so did the portrayal of LGBT individuals on film and television. By the 21st century, productions like *Modern Family* and *Pose* started introducing complex LGBT characters, consistent with growing social acceptance [1].

In addition to being entertainment, film and media have a critical role to play in influencing public attitudes towards the LGBT community. Studies show that media depiction shapes audience attitudes, reduces prejudices, and promotes policy endorsement for LGBT rights [2,3]. Research has established that audiences who watch LGBT-themed movies are likely to endorse inclusive policies, highlighting the intersection of media depictions and legislative reform [4]. Meanwhile, film and television representation profoundly affects the identity formation of LGBT people themselves, providing validation and visibility for oppressed groups [5]. Economic and commercial interests also influence LGBT representation in media. As audiences become more diverse and demanding of diversity and inclusivity, production companies have come to realize the economic viability of LGBT-themed content.

Market research indicates that movies with real LGBT representation are likely to get a better reception, especially among younger audiences [6]. Yet, commercialization of LGBT stories is a concern regarding reinforcement of

stereotypes, given that some productions focus on mainstream popularity rather than real storytelling [7]. Social media has added new dynamics in the debate on LGBT representation. Platforms like Twitter, Reddit, and TikTok are platforms where audiences both critique and celebrate and shape how LGBT characters are portrayed on television and in film [8]. These platforms not only echo LGBT voices but also influence industry decisions, with filmmakers becoming ever more attuned to online chatter.

Examples of content revisions in response to audience feedback demonstrate the increasing influence of digital engagement in determining representation [9]. In spite of significant progress made in representation, there are still major challenges. Stereotypical representations, for example, the "tragic LGBT character" trope or the representation of LGBT people as simple sidekicks, continue in modern media [10]. Additionally, cultural and national differences in tolerance still shape the way LGBT stories are presented and accepted. In areas where there are tighter censorship regulations, including some parts of Asia and the Middle East, LGBT issues tend to be avoided or handled using subtext instead of explicit portrayal [11].

Under these persistent issues, there is a critical need to investigate the trend of LGBT representation in film and media and what its wider implications are for social transformation, identity politics, and policy-making. This research performs a systematic review of the literature regarding LGBT representation in film and media, tracing its development, socio-political influence, and future outlook. It discusses how film depictions affect public opinion, make contributions to policymaking and lawmaking, and impact the construction of LGBT identity. The study also investigates the commodification of LGBT stories, the impact of social media in propelling representation, and cross-cultural differences in reception and censorship. By synthesizing insights from multiple academic perspectives, this research offers a

comprehensive framework for understanding the significance of LGBT representation in contemporary media landscapes.

## 2. Literature Review

The representation of LGBT identities on screen and in media has also changed considerably with the passage of time, as a result of socio-political changes, market forces, and audience response. Current research investigates these representations on various axes, such as the tension between stereotypical and differentiated representations, narrative mode changes, and commercial positioning of LGBT films. Furthermore, although tremendous advancement has occurred in Western settings, cross-cultural differences in representation have not been well explored. This section brings together related literature in order to create an overall understanding of the path and influence of LGBT representation in film and media discourses.

### 2.1 Types of LGBT Representation in Cinematic and Media Discourses

LGBT representation in media and film has long been swinging between stereotypical representation and more advanced, diverse portrayals. Previous film depictions were sometimes limited by societal biases and legal guidelines, with the result being heavily coded or negative depictions of LGBT characters. The "tragic gay trope," where LGBT characters come to untimely ends—death, alienation, or social exclusion—was especially common in early movies [10]. In a similar vein, LGBT characters were often portrayed as secondary characters, e.g., the "token gay character" as comic relief or supporting character without significant narrative exploration [7]. In others, portrayals were stereotypical, with LGBT characters being shown as hypersexualized or flamboyantly excessive, perpetuating reductionist stereotypes [2].

However, more realistic and multidimensional depictions of LGBT identities have been adopted in modern media. The idea of "normalized representation" has also picked up steam, where LGBT characters are incorporated into show formats without their sexual orientation or gender identity being the sole identifying factor. TV shows like *Modern Family* show this change with their depiction of same-sex couples in ordinary family contexts, thus defying conventional definitions of family structures [1]. In addition, more recent films have taken an intersectional approach, acknowledging the intersectionality of LGBT identity with other social categories, including race, class, and gender. Pose, for example, brings to the forefront the everyday experiences of transgender people and people of color in the ballroom scene, presenting a more nuanced and historically informed depiction of LGBT communities [12].

### 2.2 Narrative Modes in LGBT Films

The narrative strategies of LGBT films are generally differentiated as heteronormative framing and non-heteronormative or "queer" storytelling. Most of the earlier films featuring LGBT content followed heteronormative patterns, projecting LGBT relationships through conventional romantic templates involving concealment, repression, or eventual catastrophe. A notable example is *Brokeback Mountain*, which, though featuring a gay romance, very much adheres to traditional heteronormative scripts of prohibited love, strife, and social exclusion [7]. Some films that feature

LGBT characters also give them characteristics which mirror mainstream heterosexual standards, thus not engaging more multifaceted or politically uncomfortable definitions of LGBT existence [13].

Conversely, queer stories positively disrupt traditional gender and sexual norms, using non-linear narrative and undermining binary gender roles. These stories dispense with traditional tropes in favor of open, fluid representations of identity and relationships. For instance, *Moonlight* uses a fractured, reflective narrative to tell the story of the protagonist's self-discovery journey, offering a complex exploration of Black queer identity [8]. Equally, television series such as *Glee* have been cited for exploring gender fluidity and LGBT teenage life, creating a more inclusive and diverse representation of queer identities [14].

Another important element of developing narrative structures in LGBT filmmaking is a departure from staunchly defined endings. Most contemporary films eschew the stereotypical "happy ending" or "tragic ending" polarity in favor of stories that present the realities of real-world life. This reflects larger cultural demands for more genuine and representative narrative in media.

### 2.3 Market Positioning and Distribution of LGBT Films

The business environment of LGBT film has changed dramatically, with movies and TV shows now holding varied market positions from mainstream Hollywood fare to independent and specialty markets. Historically, LGBT films were mostly relegated to independent film, where directors enjoyed more creative latitude but limited audience penetration. Movies like *Call Me by Your Name* and *Moonlight* began as independent films before receiving critical success and wider commercial success, showing the possibility of independent LGBT films becoming mainstream [7].

Major film studios have increasingly included LGBT characters in mainstream films over the past few years. This change is best seen through the addition of LGBT superheroes in big franchises, like Marvel's *Eternals*, an openly gay character in which, in an expanding industry emphasis on diversity [6]. Commercial interests, however, tend to define the level and type of representation, resulting in examples whereby LGBT content is altered or diminished to remain marketable in more conservative territories. Certain movies use vague portrayals of LGBT relationships to avoid censorship while being attractive to liberal audiences.

The emergence of online streaming platforms has further changed the distribution and availability of LGBT films. Online sites like Netflix, HBO Max, and Disney+ have opened up a platform for LGBT content that might not have been feasible in the usual theatrical distribution. Streaming platforms have not only made LGBT stories more visible but also encouraged the creation of original LGBT-focused series, like *Sex Education* and *Heartstopper*, which have been widely praised for their representation [12]. In addition, the subscription model of streaming platforms enables sustained audience engagement with LGBT content regardless of mainstream box office success or advertising revenue.

While mainstream and online media have opened up more opportunities for LGBT representation, there are still wide gaps in international markets. Where LGBT content is legally or socially restricted in certain regions, films tend to be censored or employ symbolic narrative strategies that veil

overt representation [11]. As a result, the international positioning of LGBT films remains determined by cultural and political environments, requiring responsive approaches from filmmakers and distributors.

## 2.4 Gaps in Existing Research

Despite growing academic interest in LGBT representation in media, several critical gaps remain. Much of the existing research has been predominantly focused on Western media industries, particularly Hollywood and European cinema, while studies on LGBT representation in non-Western contexts are comparatively scarce. Studies have shown that cultural orientations towards LGBT matters strongly influence representation, but there is little research on how LGBT stories are framed and received in areas with robust legal or social bans on LGBT content [11].

Furthermore, while considerable research exists on the influence of LGBT portrayals on audience attitudes, it is necessary to have more empirical research on their long-term impact on social conduct, policy endorsements, and identity construction. Short-term attitudinal change post-media exposure dominates current literature with fewer studies addressing how continued engagement with LGBT narratives shapes longer-term societal norms [4].

Another aspect that needs to be explored is the economic viability of LGBT films in mainstream markets. Although there is proof that diversity representation can translate into favorable market reception, how much LGBT narratives impact financial performance in various cultural and commercial contexts is not yet well understood [6]. Further research is required to evaluate whether the rising visibility of LGBT characters in big-budget movies equates to meaningful shifts in industry practice or whether representation is still a tokenistic approach to engage diverse audiences.

As the media environment continues to change, the future of research must keep a focus on cross-cultural analyses, reception studies, and economic critiques in order to continue developing an understanding of the path of representation of LGBT people on television and film. Exploring these lacunae will offer a richer examination of how LGBT stories inform, and are informed by, the larger socio-political and economic sphere.

## 3. Social Impact of LGBT Cinema

LGBT depiction in cinema and the media is more than a mere mirror of societal and cultural opinion; it directly affects public opinion, policy formulation, and personal identity construction. As media researchers have contended for decades, film representation molds social norms by reinforcing or defying dominant stereotypes [3]. LGBT movies, however, have especially served an important role in breaking down prejudices, lobbying for law and policy reform, and ensuring LGBT persons receive visibility and affirmation. Besides this, due to advancements in online technology, social media now forms an incredibly powerful mechanism through which LGBT storytelling gets enhanced with wider influence and reaches an immediate audience to directly inform decision-makers [8]. This part discusses how LGBT film shapes audience attitudes, legislative policy, identity construction, and media production via social discourse.

## 3.1 How LGBT Films Shape Audience Attitudes

Exposure to the media has a basic role to play in determining social attitudes toward marginalized groups, and LGBT movies have been effective in promoting understanding as well as lessening societal prejudices. The direct or indirect exposure to stigmatized populations in social psychology reduces prejudice and inspires empathy through the contact hypothesis [15]. The media representations of LGBT people, that is, film and TV dramas about LGBT persons, can provide a channel for indirect contact so that people come in touch with LGBT persons, even without real-world direct encounter with them. Studies have also indicated that LGBT-inclusive audience members are likely to have more positive attitudes toward LGBT rights and be more inclined to favor policies for social inclusion [4].

Apart from alleviating bias, properly developed LGBT characters deconstruct stereotypes and extend social conceptions of sexual and gender diversity. Initial cinematic representation presented LGBT persons as tragic, deviant, or humorous characters, which promoted injurious misconceptions [10]. Yet, recent films like *Moonlight* and *Call Me by Your Name* have been hugely acclaimed for showcasing complex, honest representations that destigmatize LGBT experiences [8]. Such depictions hold a critical importance in transforming societal attitudes by humanizing various sexual and gender orientations and placing LGBT relationships in general themes of love, self-actualization, and survival.

Audience studies of reception further emphasize the significance of LGBT filmmaking in modifying social attitudes. Audiences that watch LGBT-affirmative media experience higher levels of empathy and a higher rate of challenging prejudiced attitudes [3]. Additionally, television programs like *Modern Family* and *Pose* have helped with greater visibility and acceptance of LGBT people by showing them as central members of society and not isolated or marginalized entities [1]. With ongoing audience exposure to varied LGBT stories, so increases the potential for these representations to promote cultural acceptance and inclusion.

## 3.2 Policy and Legislative Impact of LGBT Films

In addition to shaping individual attitudes, LGBT film has also had a profound effect on shaping legal and policy debates over LGBT rights. Film and media have long served as agents of social change, with depictions of the marginalized helping to shape public opinion and, on occasion, influence legislative changes [2]. LGBT films and television shows bring awareness to issues of discrimination, gay marriage, and trans rights, thus mobilizing public opinion in favor of legal protection.

One of the most popular examples of media shaping policy involves the influence of *Will & Grace* on US public opinion around same-sex marriage. Research suggests that the general popularity of the show helped make same-sex relationships appear more acceptable to mainstream consumers, and as such, played a role in driving up support for marriage equality in the United States [2]. In the same manner, movies like *The Danish Girl*, discussing the life of one of the pioneers to have gone through gender-affirming surgery, has helped fuel public discussions on transgender healthcare rights [6].

The influence of LGBT cinema in advocating for

legislation is also visible through its ability to raise awareness on systemic discrimination and human rights abuses. Documentary movies like *Disclosure* (2020) critically analyze the portrayal of transgender people in Hollywood and its actual implications, shaping public opinion on the need for legal safeguards for transgender individuals [12]. By projecting the issues that LGBT people confront—be it in the workplace, medical field, or judiciary—these films not only increase awareness but also make a strong case for policy reform.

Further, LGBT portrayal in media has affected anti-discrimination policies in corporatized and governmental environments. Several companies and institutions have incorporated diversity and inclusion programs as part of their corporate social responsibility agendas, partly motivated by the visibility and mainstreaming of LGBT identities within popular media [4]. Nonetheless, the extent to which LGBT media representation directly shapes legislation differs across political and cultural contexts. Where LGBT rights are contested, film representation could be censored or given restricted distribution, limiting their potential for legal and social change [11].

### **3.3 The Role of LGBT Films in Identity Formation**

Media representation is a fundamental source of self-identification, validation, and community-building for LGBT people, especially young people. Research has shown that positive representations of LGBT characters on television and in film can have a profound effect on the psychological health of LGBT viewers by diminishing feelings of isolation and affirming a sense of belonging [5]. Since many LGBT people spend their formative years in communities where they might not be represented or accepted, media is often a vital tool for investigating and validating identity.

LGBT movies help form identities by providing relatable stories that reflect personal experiences. Portrayal of coming-out stories, for instance, offers a model for most young LGBT people to go through their own self-discovery process. It is argued that watching relatable characters act on screen inspires LGBT youth to accept themselves and overcome internalized stigma [15]. Programs like *Sex Education* and *Heartstopper* have been lauded for their realistic and affirming representation of LGBT adolescents, providing positive role models for young audiences [12].

In addition, LGBT movies contribute to the building of collective identity among the LGBT community. Cultural works like *Pose*, which documents the ball culture of the 1980s and 1990s, are historical records of LGBT resilience and community formation. By depicting real-life struggles and victories, such films play their part in shared cultural memory, which reinforces solidarity among LGBT communities. Media representation therefore serves not just as a personal affirmation strategy but also as a method of collective empowerment.

### **3.4 The Role of Social Media in LGBT Film Reception**

The digital era has revolutionized how audiences interact with LGBT cinema, and social media has become a key platform for debating, marketing, and critiquing LGBT representation on screen. Social media provides more opportunities for audience feedback compared to conventional media since it allows real-time engagements,

which transform public opinion and sway industry policy [8].

Among the most significant effects of social media is how it can increase the visibility and outreach of LGBT films. Social media hashtags like #RepresentationMatters and #LGBTQinMedia have sparked conversations on the need for true representation, challenging filmmakers to give priority to diversity in narratives. Online streaming sites like Netflix and Amazon Prime have leveraged social media interactions by marketing LGBT-content through digital-focused campaigns, enhancing the availability of queer stories to international audiences [12].

Furthermore, social media holds the film industry responsible for how it represents LGBT characters. Online debate has prompted reevaluation of offending storylines and calls for better and more respectful representation. For instance, criticism of the "bury your gays" trope—a common trend where LGBT characters are disproportionately murdered—has forced showrunners and writers to reconsider narrative decisions in light of fan backlash [9].

In addition, social media acts as a feedback mechanism that affects subsequent productions. Producers and directors become more vigilant in tracking audiences' responses to determine how they receive LGBT content, adapting storytelling tactics in response. The fate of series such as *Heartstopper*, which attracted popular attention via fan discourse on Twitter and TikTok, is a testament to the influence of online discourse in determining the direction of LGBT media [8].

With social media continually reshaping audience participation, its impact on LGBT filmmaking is expected to increase, reasserting the dynamic feedback between digital activism, industry receptivity, and further evolution of queer portrayals on screen.

## **4. New Trends in LGBT Cinema**

As the social attitudes towards gender and sexual diversity change, so does the depiction of LGBT identity on film. In recent years there have been dramatic changes in the way LGBT characters are represented, with greater visibility in mainstream cinema, wider availability of streaming sites as prime distribution networks, and greater efforts to translate LGBT stories across a range of cultural settings. Moreover, technological advancement such as artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR) are starting to influence the future of LGBT storytelling. This segment discusses these new developments and how they will affect the future of LGBT film.

### **4.1 Growing Representation in Mainstream Media**

Traditionally, LGBT appearances on mainstream film were few, often hampered by industry censorship and market factors. Although, in recent years, there has been a discernible rise in the presence of LGBT characters in big-budget films, which indicates an overarching trend toward increased normalization of non-heterosexual and non-cisgender sexual and gender identities. Large film franchises, such as Disney and Marvel, have featured openly LGBT characters, indicative of a wider industry push toward inclusivity [6]. Though these representations are still open to criticism—tended to be tokenistic or shallow—they do reflect the evolution towards the inclusion of LGBT stories in international cinema.

Advances in mass media in the future are likely to go beyond inclusion to more richly textured and substantive representation. Rather than relegating LGBT characters to subplots or supporting roles, future movies will probably feature them as lead protagonists, examining their identities more deeply and complexly. Also, the growth of queer-led productions, where LGBT actors and directors have a more active hand in creating narratives, is expected to lead to more authentic storytelling [8].

Even with these developments, issues persist. LGBT representation in popular media remains subject to commercial factors, with studios frequently adapting or toning down LGBT material to attract conservative audiences. Examples of "queerbaiting," in which LGBT themes are teased but never directly established, are still common, and this reflects the conflict between commercial potential and genuine representation [12]. The direction of LGBT inclusion in mainstream films will thus hinge on how closely audience needs for diversity intersect with industry answers to market demand.

## 4.2 The Rise of Streaming Platforms and Digital Content

The meteoric rise of digital streaming platforms has considerably changed the delivery and consumption of LGBT films. In contrast to the conventional theatrical releases, which tended to be censored and not widely accessible, streaming platforms like Netflix, HBO Max, and Disney+ have provided a window for varied and global LGBT stories. Through these platforms, it has been possible to make and distribute globally LGBT content without the gatekeeper-style control of the conventional studios, leading to an explosion of queer stories reaching more and wider audiences [12].

Subscription streaming models have also modified marketing and monetization practices for LGBT movies. In contrast to box office-oriented movies, which focus on broad popular appeal, streaming platforms are based on audience segmentation and individual suggestions. This has enabled niche LGBT material to succeed, serving particular groups without the burden of commercial success at a wider level [9]. Programs such as *Heartstopper* and *Sex Education* are good examples of this trend, achieving widespread popularity through online word-of-mouth and social media interaction instead of marketing campaigns.

Moreover, streaming services have provided increased global visibility for LGBT stories, disrupting the Western-dominated representations. Asian, Latin American, and African films and TV shows that reflect local LGBT life are increasingly available to international audiences, promoting cross-cultural exchange and diversity of representation [11]. Yet even with these developments, streaming services are not completely immune to commercial imperatives. A few services continue to practice content regulation according to regional policy, censoring or cutting LGBT material to meet local censorship regulations.

Moving forward, the role of streaming services in shaping LGBT representation is likely to expand. As audience demand for diverse storytelling continues to grow, platforms may further invest in original LGBT content, allowing for more experimental and intersectional narratives that challenge existing stereotypes and conventions.

## 4.3 Cultural Adaptation and Cross-National Differences

The reception and depiction of LGBT themes on film differ markedly in cultural and national contexts. Whereas Western nations have gradually accepted LGBT representation in popular media, other parts of the world still struggle with legal and social constraints that curtail the visibility of queer stories.

In Western Europe and North America, LGBT inclusion has increasingly become mainstreamed, with big studios actively integrating inclusive sexual and gender identities into films. This realignment is mirrored in wider acceptance in society as well as laws such as marriage equality and protections against discrimination [4]. On the other hand, in countries like the Middle East, Africa, and some Asian nations, LGBT stories are still under strict censorship policies, with numerous films banned or censored heavily to eliminate queer elements [11].

In spite of these setbacks, filmmakers working in restrictive regimes have developed innovative ways to portray LGBT identities despite censorship. In other instances, LGBT themes are conveyed by means of subtext or metaphor to enable subtle narrative that appeals to local audiences without directly challenging legal restrictions. An example is found in Chinese and Indian films where same-sex love is occasionally cast in terms of intense friendship or historical allegory, offering veiled representation but not direct conflict with conservative conventions [11].

Globalization has also had an influence on the reception of LGBT films. Transnational film festivals, cyber distribution, and social media activism have helped bring queer themes to the fore in non-Western contexts. As transnational publics access diverse LGBT narratives, local film industries face mounting pressure to open up representation, mirroring changing cultural attitudes. But meaningful cross-cultural adaptation involves thoughtful attention to local histories, traditions, and social dynamics so that representation is authentic and effective.

## 4.4 Technological Innovations in LGBT Cinema

New technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) are on the verge of transforming the landscape of LGBT cinema, providing new means of engaging audiences and improving storytelling.

Artificial intelligence is more and more frequently utilized to process audience tastes and forecast the performance of LGBT-related content. Video streaming sites employ machine learning technologies to recognize consumption trends and suggest LGBT-related content to viewers with a higher propensity for consumption [6]. With this data-based strategy, the distribution of queer stories becomes more focused and assured, providing content to the groups of viewers interested in diversified portrayals. But AI-powered content curation also has ethical implications, as algorithmic prejudices could preclude exposure to some views, perpetuating echo chambers instead of engendering wider inclusivity.

VR and AR technologies provide new opportunities for immersive storytelling in LGBT film. Through the development of interactive experiences that position the audience in the shoes of LGBT characters, these technologies can potentially create greater empathy and understanding. VR movies like *Queerskins* have shown how immersive stories

can provide audiences with a more intimate connection to queer lives, moving beyond the passive spectatorship of traditional film [12].

As technology progresses, the use of AI, VR, and AR in LGBT film is expected to increase, determining the future of storytelling. Yet these innovations come with a need for careful regard for accessibility and ethical considerations to ensure that new technologies are used to create meaningful and inclusive narrative.

## 5. Conclusion

The depiction of LGBT identities in media and film has experienced a radical change in the last several decades, transforming from implicit and coded representations to complex and varied portrayals. This is a change induced by the larger societal shifts, growing advocacy for LGBT rights, and the growing power of digital media. Whereas early film depictions of the LGBT world were frequently limited by regulation and stereotype, today's LGBT films enjoy more visibility, depth, and cultural resonance. But as this book has shown, the reach of LGBT film goes beyond mere representation, as it can change attitudes among audiences, shape legal and policy discourse, create conditions for identity formation, and reshape industry norms. The growing visibility of LGBT characters in mainstream media mirrors increased social acceptance and altered marketplace dynamics.

The growth of digital streaming platforms has further fueled this change, offering a global platform for LGBT storytelling and facilitating greater diversity in telling stories. However, representation remains disproportionate across various cultural contexts, with differing levels of acceptance and censorship framing how LGBT identities are represented and received globally. In addition, although economic rewards have invited greater inclusivity in media creation, issues still surround tokenism, queerbaiting, and commercialization of LGBT storytelling at the cost of true storytelling [12,6]. Much still needs to be done in research and practice. Future research must feature cross-cultural comparisons of LGBT representation and explore how film representation is constructed by and, conversely, shapes social attitudes in non-Western societies.

Existing scholarship has tended to concentrate on Western film cultures, ignoring how LGBT stories are produced, censored, or remade in areas where legal and cultural prohibitions still exist [11]. More research would be necessary to investigate the long-term psychological impact of LGBT representation on viewers, especially among LGBT youth and marginalized groups. While research has illustrated the influence of media on identity construction and sense of belonging [5,15], more empirical studies are needed to determine the extent to which film representations foster mental health, resilience, and acceptance of oneself. Along with cultural and psychological considerations, subsequent studies should explore the economic feasibility and viability of LGBT film in mainstream and independent markets. Even though diverse representation has been linked to favorable audience response, it is not known whether such portrayals add up to sustained financial success across multiple commercial environments. The economic contribution of regional censorship regulations, as well as the contribution of streaming platforms to the monetization of LGBT content, remain areas for further study [6].

For policymakers and the film industry, the implications of

this research reinforce the need not only for increased visibility but for richer and more authentic representations of LGBT identities. Filmmakers must make intersectional and diverse storytelling a top priority, allowing LGBT stories to encompass a wide range of experiences instead of resorting to market-driven stereotypes. Policymakers, especially in areas where LGBT rights are still in dispute, must see the power of media representation as an agent of social change, supporting policies that facilitate inclusive storytelling without compromising creative expression to excessive censorship. With time, LGBT filmmaking will maintain its central functions in framing the culture's talk, inducing understanding and empathy, and decentering hegemony. By taking intellectual analysis to a new frontier, promoting respectful business practices, and advocating policy equalities, partners from academic research, filmmaking industries, and governmental apparatus can usher the future when not just abundant, but meaningful, transforming representation is ubiquitous among all cinema forms featuring the LGBT perspective.

## Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the scholars and researchers whose work has contributed to the foundation of this study. Special thanks to our academic mentors for their invaluable guidance and constructive feedback throughout the research process. We also appreciate the support of our peers and colleagues who provided insightful discussions and critical perspectives that enriched our analysis. Lastly, we acknowledge the broader academic and artistic communities dedicated to advancing inclusive and meaningful representations of LGBT identities in media, whose contributions continue to inspire scholarly inquiry and social progress.

## References

- [1] Stoiljkovic, A. S. Representation of race, gender and LGBTQ+ on Modern Family [D]. Malmö universitet/Kultur och samhälle, 2019. DOI: urn:nbn:se:mau:diva-21830.
- [2] Hicks, G. R. Beliefs and stereotypes about LGBT people [M]. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics, 2020. DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1240.
- [3] Miller, B., Lewallen, J. The effects of portrayals of gay men on homonegativity and the attribution of gender-based descriptors [J]. Communication Studies, 2015. DOI: 10.1080/10510974.2015.1018446.
- [4] Baldwin, G. The effect of LGBT film exposure on policy preference [J/OL]. Sigma: Journal of Political and International Studies, 2021. <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/sigma/vol38/iss1/6>.
- [5] Gomillion, S. C., Giuliano, T. A. The influence of media role models on gay, lesbian, and bisexual identity [J]. Journal of Homosexuality, 2011, 58(3): 330–354. DOI: 10.1080/00918369.2011.546729.
- [6] Cheng, Y., Zhou, X., & Yao, K. LGBT-inclusive representation in entertainment products and its market response: Evidence from field and lab [J]. Journal of Business Ethics, 2023, 183(4): 1189–1209. DOI: 10.1007/s10551-022-05075-4.
- [7] Cabosky, J. M. Advertising gay and lesbian-themed films to mainstream and niche audiences: Variations in portrayal of intimacy and stereotypes [J]. Atlantic Journal of Communication, 2017. DOI: 10.1080/15456870.2017.1324450.

- [8] Boisvert, S. 'Queering' TV, one character at a time: How audiences respond to gender-diverse TV series on social media platforms [J]. *Critical Studies in Television*, 2020. DOI: 10.1177/1749602020914479.
- [9] Soto-Sanfiel, M. T., Villegas-Simón, I. Scriptwriters' conceptions of audience attitudes toward LGBTQ+ characters [J]. *Mass Communication and Society*, 2024. DOI: 10.1080/15205436.2023.2292123.
- [10] Tagudina, I. Media representations of the LGBT community and stereotypes' homophobic reinforcement [J]. N/A.
- [11] Chimbanlang, P., Supasetsiri, P., & Inchan, N. The construction of gay films in Vietnam between 2007 and 2020 [J]. *Journal of Arts and Thai Studies*, 2025, 47(1): Article 1. DOI: 10.69598/artssu.2025.4054.
- [12] Cover, R. Making queer content visible: Approaches and assumptions of Australian film and television stakeholders working with LGBTQ+ content [J]. *Media International Australia*, 2022. DOI: 10.1177/1329878X221077851.
- [13] Holtzman, L., & Sharpe, L. *Media messages: What film, television, and popular music teach us about race, class, gender, and sexual orientation* [M]. Routledge, 2014. DOI: 10.4324/9781315702469.
- [14] Sarkissian, R. Queering TV conventions: LGBT teen narratives on *Glee* [C]. *Queer Youth and Media Cultures*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2014: 145–157. DOI: 10.1057/9781137383556\_10.
- [15] McInroy, L., Craig, S. L. Perspectives of LGBTQ emerging adults on the depiction and impact of LGBTQ media representation [J/OL]. ResearchGate, 2016. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303373346\\_Perspectives\\_of\\_LGBTQ\\_emerging\\_adults\\_on\\_the\\_depiction\\_and\\_impact\\_of\\_LGBTQ\\_media\\_representation](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303373346_Perspectives_of_LGBTQ_emerging_adults_on_the_depiction_and_impact_of_LGBTQ_media_representation).
- [16] Yadav, K., Kalia, N. LGBT themes in children's media and literature: Mirroring the contemporary culture and society [J/OL]. EBSCOhost, 2022, 14(2). DOI: 10.21659/rupkatha.v14n2.08.