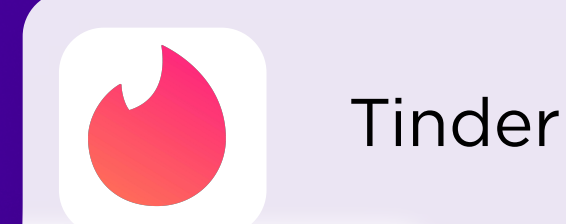


How Tinder tapped pride and purpose to relate to regional Australians



Kristen Hardeman
Tinder country director

Tapping into the unmet needs of regional Australian audiences gave Tinder its best-ever brand perception results.



Tinder country director, Kristen Hardeman, doesn't believe brands with inclusivity as a core value can afford to ignore regional Australian audiences.

"I don't think you can be a truly inclusive brand if you're only engaging with people in the top five cities," she comments. "At Tinder, we have this fundamental belief everyone deserves a chance at a meaningful connection with someone new. That extends to every single Australian, whether you're in regional areas or one of the cities."

It's this mantra, along with an ability to uncover compelling consumer insights, which provided the playbook for Tinder's Big Rainbow Project. This significant marketing and engagement campaign ran during the 2022 WorldPride festival and delivered the dating app record brand perception uplift.

Inherent to every aspect was knowledge regional-based LGBTQIA+ community members are at higher risk of social isolation, active prejudice, discrimination and exclusion.

"When you look at places we're celebrating Pride across Australia, those are usually Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Young people part of that community don't often get to recognise or celebrate Pride with people who understand them or understand their identity elsewhere," Hardeman says. "We wanted to do something with true meaning to give this specific community more visibility, recognition and something that stands for them. We also wanted to play a more meaningful role helping them connect with others like them."



A regional Rainbow Connection

The result was a permanent landmark called the 'Big Rainbow' in honour of Australia's fixation with 'big' tourist icons. Tinder opened up a nationwide submission process to ask where in regional Australia the landmark should live on as a lasting symbol of pride and inclusion. A shortlist of four regional towns went to nationwide vote, garnering 16,000 responses.

The winning town was Daylesford in Victoria, which has a history of supporting the LGBTQIA+ community through annual country queer event, ChillOut Festival.

"It was the perfect place really where our rainbow would be welcomed with open arms," Hardeman says. "We find just visibility and representation is one of the greatest ways to start to overcome some of those regional barriers for that community."

From a media and PR perspective, telling the stories of real-life regional Australians from the LGBTQIA+ community was paramount. Tinder worked with Queer Agency to identify and share the lived experiences of three diverse app members who grew up in regional Australia. Content was amplified through a national media and PR campaign via digital and social platforms where Gen Z spends the most time, including YouTube, Meta and Snapchat.

"We were careful as a brand to not just be talking at people, but to elevate and amplify the voices of actual Tinder members and hear their experiences of growing up in regional Australia," Hardeman says.



"We play such an important role in this space. We know 54 per cent of young LGBTQIA+ singles have come out online before doing so in real life. It is incredibly high. There are many types of online communities, Tinder being one of them, where it's easier to find other members of the LGBTQIA+ community to connect with, be accepted and understood. Online almost becomes a practice round before people are comfortable taking that news to their local communities."

In addition to a physical landmark, Tinder created a 'Virtual Big Rainbow' within the Tinder app. Location-based parameters recommending members to each other were turned off temporarily, allowing people to connect across Australia.

"That was especially relevant to very rural and remote communities that might struggle to find other members of the community, even on Tinder," Hardeman says.

While the in-app feature, media and PR activities ran for the month of WorldPride, Tinder's physical landmark provides a much more long-lasting connection to LGBTQIA+ communities.

"Brands can take a flash in the pan approach during WorldPride. For us, it was about doing something to focus on that community now and for long term. That's why it was important to have an idea outlasting Pride season," Hardeman explains.



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The results

The Big Rainbow Project was ultimately a values-based play for Tinder. While the team tracked registrations, reactivations and usage frequency, brand took centre stage in campaign metrics.

"First and foremost, we wanted to make sure we were communicating our values and changing brand perceptions," Hardeman explains. "Inclusivity is one of our most critical values from the get-go."

"We know the vast majority - 80% of Gen Z, and even millennials - feel it's important brands they use and brands they engage with align with their values. Knowing inclusivity is critical with our core demographics, we know when we shift those brand perceptions, people will ultimately, and especially long term, start using Tinder more or get on Tinder for the first time."

One highlight result was more than 200 PR hits with 100 per cent positive sentiment. Record-breaking brand uplift scores was another.

"Brand perception lifts were higher than we had seen for any brand campaign done in Australia before," Hardeman says. "These included upwards of 15-point lifts on key brand perceptions around Tinder being an inclusive brand, and Tinder being a brand for 'people like me'."

"It's probably one of the most successful media campaign we've ever had as well."

Significant brand lift beyond the core queer community targeted was another surprising result. "We saw those really big lifts when it came to the queer community, but we also saw them for heterosexual women; their brand lift results were at the same levels as the LGBTQIA+ community," Hardeman says.

"That showed us allyship is a stronger force than we even had recognised. We knew anecdotally this was the case, and that women care about inclusivity, but that was really nice to see. Not only from a brand perspective but from a business case perspective, this campaign ended up meaning something beyond the LGBTQIA+ community."

For Hardeman, a big takeaway is the importance of addressing regional Australian audiences not just for their own sake, but as a cornerstone of inclusive engagement nationally.

"Working off a regional insight doesn't mean broader Australia isn't going to care about what you're doing," she says. "Even though we did something with regional Australia in mind, and heroed their stories, many more people cared than regional Australians."

"There are really key differences when you're developing creative for the regions. But those similarities are equally as important if you want a campaign to have legs beyond regional Australia as well."



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Tips for other marketers

Despite citing similarities in attitudes, Hardeman does see the differences between regional and metro audiences as a powerful lever marketers can pull to drive impact. One of these distinctions is media clutter.

"I do think there is the opportunity for marketing and brands to cut through more in regional Australia. Obviously, the urban centres are very cluttered environments, where people are getting bombarded with messaging all the time. It's not the same in the regions," Hardeman says.

"When we were talking to regional Australia to find people for our community consult panel that helped us design the rainbow, or people who were going to feature in these regional stories, interest was really high. The regional Australia was so excited to be seen and for us to be doing a campaign specifically about them."

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The second point Hardeman makes about marketing to regional Australian audiences is capitalising on their unique needs, values, product and category nuances where they exist.

"It's about investing in uncovering critical insights from your customers that live in regional areas. Try to understand if their experiences with your product or your customers is different from the way people in urban centres are experiencing that product. Are there any unmet needs in the regions your products can help meet?" Hardeman asks.

The third and final lesson from Tinder's regional marketing success is one of test and learn. Hardeman points out The Big Rainbow Project was the dating app's second time leveraging this regional community insight.