# Hallmark Channel Sparks Outrage After Pulling Zola's Same-Sex Wedding Ads

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1 hour ago
The Hallmark Channel prides itself on steering clear of controversy, but the network has landed itself in a major fracas, smack in the middle of its most lucrative time of the year, during its Countdown to Christmas marathon.

On Thursday, in response to pressure from a conservative group, the network pulled several ads from wedding planning brand Zola that had been airing since last week, which featured a same-sex couple kissing at their wedding. Zola responded by saying it would no longer advertise on the network for the foreseeable future.

Hallmark's decision sparked outrage on Saturday, as the hashtag #BoycottHallmark trended on Twitter and GLAAD called the network's action "discriminatory," urging other advertisers to reconsider their own involvement with the company.

On Dec. 2, Zola began airing six ads on the Hallmark Channel, featuring various couples, standing at the altar during their wedding, wondering if using Zola would have helped them get better gifts, and whether those presents would have arrived in a more timely manner. (Zola worked with agency Mekanism on the campaign.) Several of the ads spotlighted heterosexual couples and a same-sex female couple; one of them, below, focused solely on the lesbian couple.

According to the New York Times, which first reported the story late Friday, One Million Moms, part of the conservative American Family Association, circulated a petition earlier this week asking Hallmark to “please reconsider airing commercials with same-sex couples.”

In a statement on its website, One Million Moms said it is “asking Hallmark to stay true to its family friendly roots that so many families have grown to love, and to keep sex and sexual content—including the promotion of homosexuality—out of its programming.”

In response, Hallmark pulled four of those Zola ads Thursday.

An unnamed Hallmark Channel spokesman told the Times that “the decision not to air overt public displays of affection in our sponsored advertisement, regardless of the participants, is in line with our current policy, which includes not featuring political advertisements, offensive language, R-rated movie content and many other categories.”

However, one of the two ads that Hallmark said it would continue to air featured a kiss between a heterosexual wedding couple.

Mike Chi, cmo at Zola, responded to Hallmark pulling those four ads with a statement announcing that the company would be cutting ties with the network: “The only difference between the commercials that were flagged and the ones that were approved was that the commercials that did not meet Hallmark’s standards included a lesbian couple kissing. Hallmark approved a commercial where a heterosexual couple kissed. All kisses, couples and marriages are equal celebrations of love and we will no longer be advertising on Hallmark.”

Zola has been advertising on Hallmark Channel for several years, and has featured same-sex couples in some of those ads since 2017.

The network said it had no comment on Zola’s decision to pull its ads or to the #BoycottHallmark hashtag trending Saturday on Twitter. But Hallmark Channel’s parent company Crown Family Media Networks addressed Thursday’s actions in a statement, “Crown Media Family Networks made the decision to pull the commercials. The debate surrounding these commercials on all sides was distracting from the purpose of our network, which is to provide entertainment value.”

GLAAD called Hallmark’s decision “discriminatory and especially hypocritical coming from a network that claims to present family programming.” It continued, “As so many other TV and cable networks showcase, LGBTQ families are part of family programming. Advertisers on The Hallmark Channel should see this news and question whether they want to be associated with a network that chooses to bow to fringe anti-LGBTQ activist groups.”

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