Antecedents and Consequences of an Inclusive Brand Marketing

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INTRODUCTION

No more than four weeks after the death of George Floyd, Fortune 100 firms pledged approximately two billion dollars to racial justice causes, and over one hundred brands expressed support in social media messages according to a public database of brands’ racial justice stands (Perez et al. 2020). Yet few brands were able and ready to make the changes that the public seemed to call for. The current state of marketing practice suggests that there are no clear standards to guide managers’ actions nor assess the impact of a brand’s commitment to true inclusivity. For instance, even as 94% of the brands measured in the database of brands expressing support for Black Lives Matter (BLM), the US-based racial justice movement, less than half of them pledged financial support or made necessary changes to their products or services to reduce discrimination. The scrambling of many brands after the 2020 uprisings suggests that their inaction may be due to a failure to understand the practices and company environment necessary for inclusion to occur. If brands had such an understanding, they might be better equipped to assess their efforts in reducing marketplace discrimination, thereby becoming more inclusive.

A recent report by Kantar Inc. on a new Brand Inclusion Index states that the lack of inclusion has cost of businesses $5.4 trillion per year. Moreover, nearly 49% of US consumers indicate that they make purchases based on a brand’s diversity and inclusion efforts with those numbers being higher for marginalized groups such as LGBTQ+ (63%), Black (58%) and Asian Americans (57%) (Calfee 2023). Thus, it is not surprising that some brands are already taking steps towards increased inclusivity of their marketplace offerings. In 2017, Fenty Beauty took the beauty industry by storm by introducing 40 foundation shades to accommodate a wide range of skin tones. The brand, founded by the superstar singer Rihanna, reportedly generated $100 million in revenues shortly after its introduction. It further prompted the “Fenty Effect,” whereby
other beauty houses expanded their makeup lines to be more inclusive (Fetto 2020). In 2013, Bevel, a brand that creates razors and other grooming products designed to minimize razor bumps, found substantial success and was eventually acquired by Procter & Gamble (Cohen 2020). The brand’s success stemmed from centering the needs of consumers with coily and curly hair, which brands had mainly ignored despite significant product innovations within the grooming industry.

Significant research in the management discipline has examined diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace. Further, the extant marketing research on inclusion has explored issues of discrimination and exclusion in the marketplace, particularly in the financial and real estate sectors (Bone, Christensen, and Williams 2014; Grier and Perry 2018). Nevertheless, research on inclusion in the marketplace is somewhat limited. Given the success of brands like Fenty Beauty and Bevel, one might expect that academia and practice would have developed theory and concrete practices associated with marketplace inclusion. Yet, what does it mean for firms and their brands to be inclusive of groups of consumers who have historically been excluded or even exploited? The current work seeks to answer this important and timely question. Thus, our focus is on the whitespace of inclusion in the marketplace.

Our field interviews with executives from several consumer industries and review of marketing and management literature on inclusion/exclusion in the marketplace/workplace suggest a few crucial factors for an inclusive brand marketing strategy. First, marketing-related factors play a key role in fostering an inclusive brand marketing strategy. These factors may involve ensuring the presence of inclusion-committed talent within the marketing function and partner organizations (e.g., advertising agencies and other media partners). Typical marketing strategies, including product development, STP (segmenting, targeting, and positioning), and the marketing mix, which center the needs of underrepresented and marginalized consumer groups,
allow for specific changes in a brand’s priorities and, thus, its marketplace actions. For instance, pulse oximeters have been shown to give inaccurate oxygen readings when used on dark skin, contributing to poorer health outcomes for people of color (Su 2022). Product development that included testing on people with dark skin tones would likely have led to a product that worked for a broader range of people. Second, key stakeholder groups, including consumers, employees, and the public, can pressure brands, prompting changes necessary for a more inclusive marketplace. For example, consumer pressure and outcries from the public during the 2020 racial justice uprisings were instrumental in the name change of the Aunt Jemima brand, based on a racist caricature, to the Pearl Milling Company (Hsu 2020).

With explicating and delineating as our conceptual contribution (McInnis 2011), we define what it means to be an inclusive brand and develop a conceptual model of an inclusive brand marketing strategy, which will allow for subsequent empirical testing. This work contributes to the literature in three distinct ways. First, we provide a formal definition of an inclusive brand— a brand that *creates, communicates, and delivers product offerings that serve the needs of underrepresented and marginalized consumers through practices and activities that enhance the consumers’ perceptions of equality, respect, acceptance, belongingness, and empowerment*. To differentiate our construct, we contrast this definition, gleaned from our depth interviews, with conceptualizations of inclusion drawn from marketing and related literatures. Second, whereas the management literature provides insights on workplace inclusion and exclusion and the extant marketing literature offers an understanding of marketplace exclusion, we seek to provide an understanding of *marketplace inclusion*. Our focus on inclusion in the marketplace offers a bridge between the important findings from prior work while providing managerial insights on how a brand may become more inclusive. The focus on marketplace inclusion also provides fertile ground for further inquiry in both disciplines.
Our third contribution to the literature is the development of a conceptual framework of the antecedents and outcomes of an inclusive brand marketing strategy, drawing upon the theories-in-use (TIU) approach. We endeavor to offer a framework that sheds light on why some brands have effectively incorporated underrepresented and marginalized consumers into their marketing mix decisions while others have not. It provides actionable insights that consider factors related to the marketing function (inclusion-committed talent and partners, dedicated budget) and stakeholders (consumer pressure, employee pressure, and public pressure due to galvanizing events). We also identify factors that may inhibit inclusive marketplace actions, specifically strength of a brand’s business case for inclusion, its consumer base, and willful ignorance. Identifying these inhibiting factors further helps managers understand why their inclusive practices, even when adopted, may not resonate with their consumers. Fourth, we expect our framework will enable the identification of practices relevant to an inclusive brand and present a conceptual model that is empirically testable. Finally, we note that the foundation of this work is the U.S. Black community, given the U.S.’s history of systemic anti-Black racism and economic exclusion of this consumer group. Nonetheless, we focus our work on underrepresented and marginalized consumers (e.g., fat/plus-size, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities) more generally.

METHOD

Relevant Literature

Over the past few decades, management scholars have studied the impact of workplace diversity on individual, team, and firm performance. While most studies show mixed results, the findings suggest that diverse workplaces engender a broad range of perspectives, which may benefit strategy formulation and implementation, depending upon the context (Richard 2000;
Richard, Triana, Li 2021; Watson, Kumar, and Michaelson 1993). The management work on exclusion typically considers workplace discrimination, which is associated with adverse psychological health, physical health, and work-related outcomes (Jones et al. 2016). Yet, the work on workplace inclusion remains in the initial stages, with most studies focusing on defining inclusion and distinguishing between different inclusion constructs (e.g., workgroup inclusion, leader inclusion, perceived organizational inclusion, organizational practices inclusion, and inclusion climate) (Shore et al. 2011; Shore, Cleveland, and Sanchez 2018). Recent findings in this space have shown a positive link between inclusion and individual-level outcomes, including employee health outcomes, psychological safety, employee creativity, and employee retention (Shore, Cleveland, and Sanchez 2018).

Much of the prior work in marketing pertains to exclusion in terms of marketplace discrimination. One stream of research has focused on identifying marketplace discrimination, which may manifest as the dominant sociocultural group excluding, avoiding, or disparaging goods and services associated with marginalized groups (Bennet, Hill, and Oleksiuk 2013; Bennet, Hill, and Daddario 2015; Harris, Henderson, and Williams 2005). Another research stream has focused on the effect of marketplace discrimination on consumer perceptions among various consumer groups. For instance, Bennet, Hill, and Oleksiuk (2013) find that ethnic minority consumers in the U.S. perceive brands differently from majority U.S. consumers, which, the authors posit, stems from disparities in their marketplace experiences. Similarly, Bone, Christensen, and Williams (2014) show that discrimination in the marketplace can negatively affect ethnic minority consumers’ self-concept. Finally, Johnson and Grier (2012) find that when exposed to race-stereotyped advertising, stereotyped viewers (non-stereotyped viewers) form negative (neutral) attitudes toward the ad.
Despite the importance of this work, research that takes a critical approach to inclusion in the marketplace remains limited (Bennett et al. 2015; Davis 2018; Grier et al. 2019). There have been a few exceptions in recent years, whereby researchers have proposed frameworks for fostering marketplace wellbeing and positive customer DEI outcomes, or the extent to which the composition of a firm’s customer base reflects equitable participation by underrepresented customers (Demangeot 2019; Park, Voss, and Voss 2023). These scholars, however, do not focus on factors that might enable a marketing strategy centered around increasing underrepresented and marginalized consumers’ perception of inclusion in the marketplace. In Figure 1, we present a framework highlighting the current gap in the literature.

**Sample**

Given the sparsity of work related to the inclusion efforts of companies and brands, we adopt a theories-in-use (TIU) approach. TIU involves using findings from the extant literature and eliciting the mental models used by marketing stakeholders – managers, customers, employees, and public policymakers, of how things work within the marketing context. This approach has been instrumental in the development of organic theories, concepts, and constructs grounded in the marketing context (e.g., Chase and Murtha 2019; Kohli and Jaworski 1990; Tuli, Kohli, and Bharadwaj 2007), necessary for the growth of the marketing discipline (Zeithaml et al. 2020).

In this study, we use a purposive or “theoretical” sampling procedure, whereby researchers collect, code, and analyze data drawn from conversations with participants and decide on the next set of participants to develop the emerging theory. This procedure ensures that the sample includes practitioners from across hierarchical levels, functions, organization size, and industries who can provide rich insights (Tuli, Kohli, and Bharadwaj 2007; Challagalla, Murtha, and Jaworski 2014; Zeithaml et al. 2020). To recruit participants, we used contacts
obtained through BRIDGE (https://wearebridge.com), an organization that helps companies identify and close gaps related to DEI as well as our personal contacts.

As our focus is on traditionally underrepresented and marginalized consumers, our research involves interviews with executives from consumer goods brands and their media partners, who play a role in direct communications with consumers. Specifically, over a one-year period, we conducted 36 depth interviews with business practitioners from 25 consumer industries, including apparel, entertainment, finance, travel, retail, consumer packaged goods, among others. Of the 36 practitioners interviewed, eleven were chief marketing officers (CMOs), and another twelve held vice president of marketing roles. In addition, we interviewed six chief diversity officers (CDOs), four chief human resources officers, and two managers/business unit leaders. Each interview lasted approximately one hour, though a few lasted 30 minutes due to participants’ time constraints. The participants had various work experiences, hailed from varied hierarchical levels, and represented organizations ranging from 15 employees to 360,000 employees (see Table 1). The variation in our sample thus afforded a rich and diverse set of insights.

Each interview followed a standard format, using a structured set of questions along with follow-up questions to elicit clarification, details, or specific examples (See Appendix 3 for examples). At the beginning of each interview, we briefly described the research and asked permission to record the interview. All participants agreed to be recorded. We reviewed the interviews roughly halfway through the data collection process to identify emerging insights, themes, and definitions. We used these findings to develop and revise questions for subsequent interviews to tap insights that had yet to emerge from the interviews and the literature. All the interviews were transcribed and totaled 540 pages. We began to identify themes that multiple
participants discussed. Once data collection was complete, each researcher reviewed the interview transcripts for participants’ definitions of an inclusive brand, the key antecedents and consequences of an inclusive brand marketing strategy, and moderating effects.

We used open, axial, and selective coding to analyze our data, consistent with prior research (Challagalla, Murtha, and Jaworski 2014; Strauss and Corbin 1998). Using open coding, the researchers independently analyzed the interview transcripts, searching for variables related to an inclusive brand marketing strategy. Next, using axial coding, we identified relationships between the initial variables to develop higher-order, abstract, researcher-developed concepts. Finally, we employed selective coding, integrating the concepts into a central theme to develop our conceptual framework of inclusive brand marketing strategy (Figure 2).

DEVELOPING THE INCLUSIVE BRAND CONSTRUCT

A review of the extant literature points to a dearth of research discussing, describing, or analyzing brands’ inclusion efforts, particularly in the marketplace. Thus, in addition to the management and marketing literatures (Licsandru and Cui 2018; Mor-Barak and Chernin 1998; Park, Voss, and Voss 2023; Saatcioglu and Ozanne 2013; Shore, Cleveland, and Sanchez 2018), we also reviewed definitions of social inclusion from a variety of academic disciplines, inter alia psychology, educational studies, and social health and public health. The social inclusion literature offers theoretical grounding for defining an inclusive brand with three distinct commonalities – fair/equal treatment, access via organizational adjustments to fit community/group needs, and perceptions of equality, respect, acceptance, belongingness, and empowerment (Baumgartner and Burns 2014; Licsandru and Cui 2018; Marino-Francis and Worrall-Davies 2010; Ponic and Frisby 2010; Simplican et al. 2015). Appendix 1 includes a summary of these definitions.
A few common themes can be drawn. First, inclusion calls for the broader institution to treat historically underrepresented and marginalized groups fairly. Second, inclusion involves the broader institution providing access to an individual, group, or community, typically by adjusting to fit their needs. Third, inclusion requires that an individual, group, or community feel a sense of equality, respect, acceptance, belongingness, and empowerment. Despite the utility of social inclusion literature, this body of work does not provide an operational definition of what it means to be an inclusive brand that translates into specific brand practices and activities.

Our field interviews indicate that while many companies speak of the importance of marketplace inclusion, few have a clear definition of an inclusive brand and its related practices. Nonetheless, the executives interviewed echoed themes drawn from the academic literature. These field insights complement the findings from our review of the extant literature and suggest that inclusive practices are emerging among brands. For example, a vice president (VP) of marketing of a large consumer packaged goods brand described an inclusive brand as:

Inclusive brands, for me, are ones that are doing the listening. They’re listening to their consumers and there’s a level of empathy. They care about the behaviors and the things that are going on with their consumers’ lives and how they can help them.

Many interviewees focused on understanding customer needs. The CMO of a health insurance company and the senior vice president (SVP), of marketing at a mass media company offered parallel customer-centric ideas:

I would define an inclusive brand as one that really takes into consideration the wants, needs, desires, and interests of diverse audiences of consumers. I think inclusive brands need to be able to create space for consumers of all types to see themselves in that product or defend that brand.

It always starts with understanding our consumers – understanding that those consumers come from many different backgrounds and many different races and understanding different parts of their lives, their needs, their passions. In turn that informs what we do from a marketing perspective.
Other executives emphasized that inclusion is strongly related to providing access to underrepresented and marginalized groups:

There’s a part of this that’s about…who has exposure, who has access, and can you actually utilize the product, the service, or whatever the companies are offering. (SVP, Chief Talent Officer, luxury goods firm)

A few practitioners viewed *exclusion* as integral to brand marketing at times.

With brands, we have to make choices, and sometimes it excludes. How do you balance being selective, being true to your brand, and also being inclusive? Because sometimes excluding is important. I guess the question of an inclusive brand is how you exclude. (Former CMO, large tech company)

A lot of the way marketing as a discipline was developed, was almost the science of exclusion…select segment markets, identify different groups, pick some groups to serve and not others, and then focus on those groups. (EVP, large media company)

The insights on the exclusive nature of marketing are congruent with scholars who suggest that early twentieth-century U.S. marketing research efforts excluded underrepresented and marginalized consumers, specifically African Americans and other non-white populations. These scholars argue that these early survey designs replicated U.S. residential racial segregation, setting the stage for racially distinct consumption spaces with separate locales and diminished quality goods and services. They further note that early twentieth-century mass market research excluded populations of color from survey samples, resulting in race-based market segregation that they argue remains embedded in market research and segmentation practices (Rosa-Salas 2019). Given this history and the view emerging from our interviews, an explicit and critical element of an inclusive brand involves addressing systemic inequalities in brands’ market research and STP practices by going beyond traditional, majority mass markets.

The insights derived from the management and marketing literatures, literature on social inclusion, and practitioner interviews indicate that an inclusive brand embodies the following elements: it (1) reflects firm-wide commitment to DEI, (2) employs its marketing capabilities to
go beyond traditional markets in non-exploitative ways, (3) focuses on the needs of specific underrepresented and marginalized consumer communities, and (4) builds a sense of equality, respect, acceptance, belongingness, and empowerment among the underrepresented and marginalized consumers they serve. We thus incorporate these elements in our formal definition of an inclusive brand and define it as a brand that “creates, communicates, and delivers product offerings that serve the needs of underrepresented and marginalized consumers through practices and activities that enhance the consumers’ perceptions of equality, respect, acceptance, belongingness, and empowerment.” Next, we elaborate on each of these four elements.

Reflects firm-wide Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

DEI has become a focal topic for many organizations as it plays a role in organizational culture, talent recruitment, and, increasingly, business performance (Kipnis et al. 2021). Despite some progress in organizational and marketplace inclusion, some consumer groups who continue to face discrimination and other challenges in the marketplace. Some argue that overcoming these sources of marketplace discrimination requires embedding certain principles into an organization, especially its marketing function (Demangeot et al. 2019).

Prior work highlights the importance of firm-wide principles in providing guidance, simplifying and accelerating decision-making, and allowing latitude in decision-making (Challagalla, Murtha, and Jaworski 2014; Vilá, Bharadwaj, Morgana, and Mitra 2020). Accordingly, firm-wide principles, such as commitment to DEI, are likely to facilitate and guide marketers in creating, communicating, and delivering product offerings to traditional markets and underrepresented and marginalized consumer groups. Most executives indicated the importance of embedding DEI within the organization rather than reacting to a galvanizing event. For example, the CMO of a beauty and skincare company stated:
We now have a multifaceted view of diversity and inclusion… consumers, communities, and internal. Then underneath all of those things, there’s a whole bunch of stuff from product representation to customer experience and diversity of our workforce…the whole thing.

The CMO of a beauty and skincare brand noted that companies should ask themselves:

Do you have DEI within your own organization? Within your own team, and not only in the marketing team, but more broadly, within your organization? Are you actually living out the DEI principles?

Research on corporate social responsibility (CSR) suggests that consumers may perceive organizations as demonstrating hypocrisy and inauthenticity when inconsistencies emerge between organizational statements and observed behavior. Perceptions of hypocrisy and lack of authenticity may then negatively impact consumer attitudes toward the firm (Vilá and Bharadwaj 2017; Wagner, Lutz, and Weitz 2009). Consequently, even as consumers and other stakeholders generally reward companies for socially responsible behavior, these stakeholders are often skeptical of companies. Thus, the authenticity of a brand’s socially responsible behaviors, such as DEI initiatives, is critical as stakeholders perceive such actions as inauthentic (Alhouti, Johnson, and Holloway 2016) or as woke washing (Mirzaei, Wilkie, and Siuki 2022) when done to save face. Thus, having a firm-wide commitment to DEI that consistently guides a brand ensures alignment between a brand’s communications, image, and observed behavior and is a foundational aspect of an inclusive brand. At the same time, merely writing up brand guidelines to include DEI will likely lead to superficial actions. As one CMO we interviewed pointed out,

People are so busy half the time; I don’t even know if they’re reading the brand [DEI] guidelines. Even if they read the guidelines, the interpretation is broad. So, you have in [the guidelines] that there must be DEI representation in your talent in an ad. People can think that by putting a black person and a Hispanic person in the ad, then, boom, you are done—you are not done, it goes way beyond that. Of course, [DEI] needs to be in there. But in order to really move the agenda, you have to have people thinking in a different way…Just having [DEI] in a brand guideline, it can be missed, or people could interpret it as a checkbox.

**Employs Marketing Capabilities in Non-Exploitative Ways**
Marketing capability plays a critical role in a firm’s ability to sense, understand, and respond to the needs of consumers using organizational resources (Mishra and Modi 2016). Doing so requires that firms gather market intelligence by assessing customers’ current and future needs and analyzing external factors influencing those customer needs and preferences (Kohli and Jaworski 1990). Such gathering of market intelligence is essential for firms engaging in socially responsible behavior, such as reaching non-traditional consumer markets. Marketing capability permits firms to gather market intelligence on these consumer groups to align with their needs (Mishra and Modi 2016). For example, a senior vice president of a mass media company suggested that becoming an inclusive brand necessitates using market intelligence to understand current and future markets:

Audiences do change all the time. Data can help show that...you can get some data that tells you, 75% of your audience is white, and 10% is black. Next thing you know, budget decisions are made based on those percentages. But they don’t account for shifts, they don’t account for growth, or for how a product was never positioned in the right way for a POC (person of color). For that company, it should not be surprising it is not reaching a diverse audience. Successful marketers know the audience well...But if they continue making the same products, they could be making a product that is not right for different audiences.

Likewise, the former chief customer experience officer of a consumer packaged goods company (CPG) noted that inclusive brands use organizational resources to sense and respond to underrepresented and marginalized consumers’ product needs:

The head of research instituted a standard business of oversampling [underrepresented groups] on every research project...Even when it made the project more expensive...he’s like, “Go figure it out. This is how we do things.”

Many firms have deployed their marketing capabilities to effectively implement socially responsible activities to enhance their competitive advantage and appeal to paritcular consumer segments. Yet, it is important to note that using a firm’s marketing capabilities to include underrepresented and marginalized consumers may result in consumer exploitation. Ultimately, such actions negatively impact consumers and the firm (Szabo and Webster 2021). Thus, one
media and advertising agency’s CMO emphasized that a firm should use its marketing capability to reach non-traditional consumers non-exploitatively:

McDonald’s has done a really good job of inclusion, but McDonald’s shows up in food deserts in Black and brown communities and that’s the only access they have and that leads to issues with obesity.

Our field interviews and the extant literature indicate that marketing capability is crucial in gathering market information about consumer needs and translating that intelligence into activities that cater to those consumers non-exploitatively.

**Focuses on Needs of Underrepresented and Marginalized Consumers**

Because the needs of majority consumers dominate the marketing landscape, there has been little consideration of the needs of underrepresented and marginalized consumers who comprise viable segments (Bennett, Hill, and Oleksiuk 2013). For instance, in their work studying Black communities in Milwaukee, Crockett and Wallendorf (2004) note that Black and Hispanic consumers experience attenuated access to goods and services in their neighborhoods. Grier and Perry (2018) find that as racially segregated areas undergo gentrification-related changes in consumption opportunities, marketers ignore the preferences of traditional residents.

At the same time, marketing theory suggests that segmenting and targeting activities, which include understanding the needs of target segments, should result in appropriate product offerings for all viable market segments (Grier and Perry 2018). Hence, when it comes to underrepresented and marginalized consumers, brands should ensure that they are paying attention to them and focusing on their specific needs. A CMO of a large beauty retailer explained some of the steps that the brand had taken to understand the needs of underrepresented and marginalized consumers:

We were taking scans in our store…We were actually realizing that there were gaps in our assortment. We started creating brands and so we spun off a division that started making brands and launched a couple of sub brands.
A VP (Global Brand Marketing) for an employment services firm noted the efforts of her brand:

[W]e really went to market, thinking about people who had less opportunity …So that naturally leads you to trying to understand…what are the barriers different segments of job seekers are facing when it comes to the world of work, and really digging in and trying to understand those barriers, and then building tools and programs.

Inclusive brands thus intentionally focus their marketing efforts on understanding the various challenges faced by underrepresented and marginalized consumers in the marketplace. They also recognize the importance of market opportunities that they derive from the insights.

*BUILDS A SENSE OF EQUALITY, RESPECT, ACCEPTANCE, BELONGINGNESS, AND EMPOWERMENT*

In the United States, the freedom of choice is often unequally distributed and systemically restricted to certain consumers based on social identity (race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, ability, religion, sexual orientation, etc.) (Bone, Christensen, and Williams 2014). Indeed, research in psychology shows that individuals with marginalized social identities vigilantly monitor the inclusivity of their environments, including the consumer domain (Chaney, Sanchez, and Maimon 2019). Such is the backdrop for marketplace exclusion, a form of social exclusion that prevents consumers from fully participating in marketplaces (Saatcioglu and Ozanne 2013). In addition to outright exclusion, the marketplace is also the scene of explicit misrepresentation and mistreatment of certain consumer groups in stereotypical, discriminatory, or unethical ways. When marketers exclude or fail to include the experiences and perspectives of specific groups of consumers through marketplace exclusion, those consumers risk alienation, consumer vulnerability, lower self-esteem, and feeling oppressed (Bennet et al. 2016).

These findings suggest that an inclusive brand must confront these difficult marketplace realities. An inclusive brand thus ensures that underrepresented and marginalized consumers not only have marketplace access to ethical and considered offerings but also perceive a sense of equality, respect, acceptance, belongingness, and empowerment from the brand. Some scholars view marketplace exclusion, discrimination, and misrepresentation through the lens of trauma.
inflicted upon underrepresented and marginalized consumers (Bennett et al. 2016). Thus, an inclusive brand at a basic level should ensure that underrepresented and marginalized consumers experience equality in the marketplace. An inclusive brand should also treat underrepresented and marginalized consumers respectfully, i.e., fully recognize them as people with the same basic moral worth as others (Liscandru and Cui 2018). Likewise, executives noted the fundamental nature of equality and respect in the marketplace. As one CMO of a mass media company remarked when discussing recently implemented inclusive practices:

For instance, we have eliminated the use of brand symbols and associations that perpetuate barriers to equality.

The former CMO of a large tech company discussed respect from the perspective of marketing communications:

Your advertising should be such that nobody feels excluded. While I, as the consumer, may not be interested in your benefits or what your product is, I should at least feel as though you see me as part of the larger population, and I feel respected.

Acceptance, or an individual’s sense of being valued and sought after for social interactions, and belongingness, related to an individual’s sense of connectedness through positive interpersonal relationships, are related yet distinct constructs, which scholars describe as fundamental human needs and core aspects of social inclusion (Baumeister and Leary 1995; Baumgartner and Burns 2014; Leary, Cottrell, and Phillips 2001; Shore et al. 2011). The CMO of a large beauty and skincare brand concurred when describing the brand’s focus on enhancing underrepresented and marginalized consumers’ sense of acceptance and belonging despite financial metrics:

It’s in the eye of the beholder. Whoever is experiencing the brand feels that that brand includes them, was made for them, represents them. Even though I lead brands, it’s not up to me to say my brands are inclusive. I have to hear that from the consumers of the brand…That’s why we’re putting a lot of emphasis on making decisions based on where we want the consumer makeup to be not on financial metrics, always…Now, I am asking my team every single time – do we have representative shades?
Finally, the extant literature (marketing, management, education, health, etc.) on inclusion identifies empowerment, which pertains to individuals having a voice and, thus, agency within a society, as acutely relevant for underrepresented and marginalized consumers, who often experience vulnerability in society (Liscandru and Cui 2018; Ponic and Frisby 2013). An executive also described empowerment as an essential dimension of inclusion:

Inclusivity means that it’s an equal opportunity environment where everyone’s voice not only matters but is given the same level of importance. (EVP, mass media company)

Consistent with extant literature, the insights gleaned from our field interviews suggest that an inclusive brand focuses on ensuring that underrepresented and marginalized consumers experience equality, respect, acceptance, belongingness, and empowerment in the marketplace.

We next discuss the differences between an inclusive brand and constructs that may also relate to the marketplace inclusion of underrepresented and marginalized consumers.

**DISTINGUISHING THE INCLUSIVE BRAND CONSTRUCT FROM RELATED CONSTRUCTS**

The inclusive brand construct is related to concepts of multiculturalism in marketing, acculturation, and marketplace exclusion. In the most common manifestation of multicultural marketing, the marketplace recognizes diversity and culture as an economic asset that individuals and companies can market and consume (Demangeot, Broderick, and Craig 2015; Veresiu and Giesler 2018). Similarly, acculturation encompasses the interaction, adaptation, and assimilation of a new culture with an old culture using marketplace resources. Consumers may construct their identities, and the marketer may adapt to consumers of a different cultural market system (Luedicke 2015; Peñaloza and Gilly 1999; Veresiu and Giesler 2018). Thus, multicultural marketing and acculturation aim to foster social inclusion through consumption (Veresiu and Giesler 2018). In contrast, the purpose of an inclusive brand is to center the needs of
underrepresented and marginalized consumers to enhance their perceptions of equality, respect, acceptance, belongingness, and empowerment. Thus, an inclusive brand does not have for its aim “selling” culture or assimilation into another culture.

In addition, marketplace exclusion typically examines how stigmatized consumers engage in the market to build collective identity, cope with marketplace exclusion and misrepresentation/stereotyping, and mobilize to challenge status quo market dynamics to obtain greater inclusion (Claytor 2019; Johnson, Thomas, and Grier 2017). In contrast, an inclusive brand marketing strategy considers specific marketing (and other business) practices, whereby brands may facilitate and create greater marketplace inclusion.

In sum, while the concept of an inclusive brand is related to multiculturalism in marketing, acculturation, and marketplace exclusion, it is a novel and distinct construct. Unlike multicultural marketing and acculturation, an inclusive brand does not center the needs of underrepresented and marginalized consumers solely for consumption. Unlike prior work on marketplace exclusion, which explores how stigmatized consumer groups respond to lack of access to and fair treatment within the marketplace (Johnson, Thomas, and Grier 2017; Saatcioglu and Ozanne 2013), the concept of an inclusive brand reflects marketing practices that foster consumers’ sense of inclusion within the marketplace. In Appendix 2, we provide further detail distinguishing this novel construct from related concepts.

**BASELINE CONDITIONS FOR AN INCLUSIVE BRAND MARKETING STRATEGY**

The market orientation literature shows that top management commitment is essential for developing an organizational state of mind and communicating this commitment throughout the organization (Felton 1959; Kohli and Jaworski 1990). Market-driven leadership, which shapes an open culture and a well-developed market learning capability, is necessary for the superior
execution of marketing capabilities (Day 2011). Similarly, scholars assert that to effectively implement socially responsible practices, including inclusivity or working with minority suppliers, top management must be committed to said practices as marketers typically face tradeoffs between limited budgets and the need to adopt more socially responsible practices (Adobor and McMullen 2007; Demangeot et al. 2019). Across interviews, participants discussed top management leadership commitment as foundational for brands’ inclusion efforts and meaningful progress. To this end, organizational implementation of marketing processes and strategies, whether related to market orientation, marketing capabilities, or DEI, typically requires support and commitment from senior management.

Management literature has long established that organizations develop processes that become routine. Organizations become increasingly committed to practices that decrease the volume and diversity of information processed (Fredrickson and Iaquinto 1989). Thus, despite the public call for brands to address DEI, brands may hold back from making significant advances due to inertia. Many interviewees also described inertia's challenge to an inclusive brand marketing strategy.

Similarly, interviewees discussed how psychological safety within the organization contributes to an inclusive brand marketing strategy. Psychological safety refers to “perceptions of the consequences of taking interpersonal risks” (Edmundson and Lei 2014, p. 23). When an organization’s psychological safety is high, employees are more likely to challenge existing strategies and offer ideas to improve processes, which can promote better organizational performance (Edmundson and Lei 2014). A psychologically safe environment that encourages employees to speak up can help brands become more sensitive to the concerns of underrepresented consumer groups, thereby avoiding harm to financial performance due to backlash.
While we acknowledge the importance of top management commitment, inertia to organizational change, and psychological safety to the working environment within organizations, we focus our conceptual model on novel constructs most pertinent to the marketing function. We treat these constructs as a necessary baseline condition for an inclusive brand marketing strategy and thus do not include them in our conceptual model.

ANTECEDENTS TO AN INCLUSIVE BRAND MARKETING STRATEGY

Becoming an inclusive brand and adopting an inclusive brand marketing strategy moves a brand beyond crisis management, damage control, or simply reacting to societal trends. It is an approach to marketing and branding whereby brands create an equitable marketplace and ensure that underrepresented and marginalized consumers perceive a sense of equality, respect, acceptance, belongingness, and empowerment from the brand. We suggest that a brand has a greater likelihood of adopting and implementing an inclusive brand marketing strategy when key stakeholders, specifically the general public, consumers, and employees, exert pressure on a brand to address issues pertaining the DEI. Such pressure may be active through boycotts, complaints, etc., or passive due to changing expectations. Similarly, the likelihood of adopting and implementing an inclusive brand marketing strategy increases when brands have a dedicated budget for conducting inclusive brand objectives. Finally, adopting and implementing an inclusive brand marketing strategy is more likely to occur when a brand’s internal talent and external partners are committed to inclusion. We next discuss each factor and develop propositions that consider their relationship to an inclusive brand marketing strategy.

Stakeholder Pressure

Marketing research suggests powerful stakeholders recognizing a threat can precipitate change efforts within the marketing function (Gebhardt, Carpenter, and Sherry 2006). Scholars
also argue that threats to the survival of organizations due to globalization and shifts in customer tastes have prompted many companies to become less ethnocentric and to develop new attentional structures to remain competitive (Kim, Toh, and Baik 2022). In the current marketing context, stakeholders are placing ever-growing pressure on companies to respond to important societal issues, including DEI issues (Bhagwat et al. 2020; Kipnis et al. 2021). We posit that pressure for greater marketplace inclusion from three stakeholder groups – consumers, employees, and the general public, can prompt brands to recognize the needs of underrepresented and marginalized consumers.

*Consumer pressure*

We focus on consumer pressure for inclusion, as centering the needs of underrepresented and marginalized consumers is the raison d’etre of an inclusive brand. As noted, underrepresented and marginalized consumers have faced considerable exclusion and misrepresentation (Bennett, Hill, and Daddario 2015). While an individual consumer may wield little power, consumers as a bloc may threaten a brand financially by boycotting (negative impact on sales), complaining (negative impact on brand reputation), or even simply seeking out alternatives elsewhere as their tastes change (negative impact on sales). A CMO of a beauty retailer described the importance of consumer pressure on marketplace inclusivity:

> I think the brands can be rather lazy unless the marketplace starts to demand change. More and more consumers are standing up and saying, “Hey, make some products for me, create experiences for me. I am your consumer. I’m holding you accountable as a brand and I need to see change.”

A VP of marketing at a consumer packaged goods company discussed changes necessitated by an ever more diverse customer base, particularly among younger consumers:

> My company is going after a younger cohort, which is inherently more diverse. So, you can’t have one without the other. You can’t say you’re going after the younger cohort and not build for a diverse consumer base. Those two things are the same.

*Employee pressure*
Employee pressure is a material concern for brands as employees implement and conduct a brand’s marketing strategy. Also, an increasing number of employees desire to work for companies that share similar values and prioritize DEI (Caminiti 2021). Failure to recruit and retain top talent who may seek out companies that focus on DEI, also poses a material threat to brands, enough to prompt a pivot towards more inclusive marketplace actions. Many executives underscored the effect of changing employee expectations:

Their employees will start to put the pressure on them to do something and act and behave differently. (CDO, financial services company)

[After George Floyd’s murder], our head of social media, who’s a Black woman, said, “I really think that we should say something.” I think about how brave that was of her in a place where she’s the only Black woman on the team and she’s putting herself out there. So, we ended up posting a statement early relative to the other brands. (CMO, beauty and skincare brand)

Public pressure due to galvanizing events

We also consider the general public, which can exert significant pressure on a brand, often following a galvanizing event (e.g., the 2020 racial justice uprisings) (Hsu 2020). Prior work suggests that such external threats are among the most impactful drivers of the creation of any change in organizational culture (e.g., deeply rooted patterns of general beliefs, assumptions, values, and norms shared among its members). These threats may include social conflicts, which can lead to changes in societal expectations. The CDO of a distilled beverages company noted the impact of public pressure due to galvanizing events on inclusivity:

Companies often can see [the importance of DEI] once things have happened…Once things like [a galvanizing event] get loose in social media, you can’t get the horse back in the barn and it takes a life of its own.

Given the arguments thus put forth, we propose the following:
P1: The greater the pressure exerted by a brand’s consumers, employees, and the public for marketplace inclusion, the more likely it is to have an inclusive brand marketing strategy.

**Internal Resources**

Scholars assert that implementing and sustaining marketing concepts, such as market orientation or marketing agility, requires financial (and other) resource investment (Kalaignanam et al. 2021; Kohli and Jaworski 1990). Demangeot et al. (2019) identify strategies that strengthen multicultural engagement in the marketplace. Among them is building critical multicultural consciousness, which entails committing resources to gather market intelligence on multicultural engagement and providing employee training. This work thus also highlights the importance of resource commitment.

**Dedicated budget**

Hence, another important outcome of top management commitment is the availability of organizational resources to implement practices necessary for an inclusive brand. Research suggests the provision of resources, direct and indirect, ensures the successful implementation of an organization’s strategy specifically, about DEI. Sufficient financial resources are needed for employee training, recruitment, and measuring and assessing strategic initiatives (Adobor and McMullen 2007; Gebhardt, Carpenter, and Sherry 2006). For instance, when discussing some of the challenges and motivations facing organizations that want to enact inclusion policies and practices, the CDO of a large financial service company remarked,

> I think it goes back to money. Really dedicating financial resources to the [DEI] efforts. I think the biggest thing is budget, dedicating and having the budget to really put at driving the change that you need.

We therefore expect that:

P2: The greater a brand’s budget committed to marketplace inclusion, the more likely it is to have an inclusive brand marketing strategy.

**Talent and partner commitment to inclusion**
Internal talent and external partners are imperative for nurturing a culture that focuses on the needs of underrepresented and marginalized consumers. Hence, brands’ prioritization of recruitment and retention of individuals and partners whose values align with those of the brand is a critical component of an inclusive brand marketing strategy.

Variations exist in people’s ability and propensity to sample, experience, and champion cultural diversity in products, ideas, and causes, which has substantial implications for a brand. Individuals seeking out diversity and other cultures are more likely to disseminate DEI ideas and policies to individuals who do not typically seek diversity. While prior work centers around the consumption behaviors of “diversity seekers,” or inclusion-committed talent, research similarly suggests that they value diverse work environments. For instance, diversity seekers are also likely to support out-group members in championing their own causes and may be members of minority or nonminority groups (Brumbaugh and Grier 2013). Such findings imply that inclusion-committed talent, who are more likely to cross normative lines between cultural groups, is important for facilitating change throughout a social network such as an organization and its stakeholders.

That’s why you see more people of color in executive roles at the company today than you did two plus years ago. Once you get representation in your leadership, you start to have these [inclusion] conversations more. (CMO, large beauty and skin care company)

Many interviewees underscored the relationship between talent and the marketing function:

Last year, we ran into some issues with [Brand X], which, in particular, had not been very diverse in terms of the content, but also in terms of the talent that we had at the helm. The byproduct of that is we were producing content that didn’t represent the world. (A CMO, a mass media company)

Every time we hire an influencer or creator, are we ensuring that we are bringing in enough diversity of people and talent that allows us to represent to the outside world the diversity that exists within our consumer base? (CMO, beauty brand)

For example, [Brand X], had an African American brand [advocate] position within the brand management team. This role was reflective of who we were marketing and
advertising to. So, we were inclusive in that respect. (VP, Brand and Consumer Engagement, food company)

Taken together, inclusion committed talent thus may be engaged to create and foster the success of their brands’ internal and external inclusivity efforts (Brumbaugh and Grier 2013). Thus,

P3a: The greater a brand’s internal talent’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, the more likely it is to have an inclusive brand marketing strategy.

A brand’s external inclusivity efforts (i.e., inclusivity efforts associated with its ecosystem of business partners) are of growing importance, especially within its supply chains. In the U.S., supplier diversity refers to the purchasing of goods and services from businesses owned and operated by Black Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Pacific Americans. Beyond ethical considerations for organizations, supplier diversity improves efficiency and reflects purchasing organizations’ efforts to meet the needs of diverse consumers. Suppliers can provide critical information on new products, processes, or services that appeal to underrepresented and marginalized consumers (Adobor and McMullen 2007; Blount 2021). The Global Head of Engagement of a media and advertising company commented on the relationship between an organization’s media partners and its customers:

We do marketing. We do advertising. To do that effectively, you want to be able to have the voices at the table that attract a consumer. To do that, you need the lived experiences of those individuals to help inform how you go to market.

The Chief People Officer at a minority-owned media collective described the role of suppliers in aiding a brand on its inclusion journey:

The big brands, they sit in a room and say, “Who helps us navigate this?” “We don’t have this expertise.” Now we get to come in and say, “We’ll help you navigate that.” As such, the preceding arguments suggest that:

P3b: The greater a brand’s ecosystem partners’ expertise in diversity, equity, and inclusion, the more likely it is to have an inclusive brand marketing strategy.

CONSEQUENCES OF AN INCLUSIVE BRAND MARKETING STRATEGY
An inclusive brand marketing strategy provides an approach and a set of practices whereby organizations can create, communicate, and deliver product offerings that serve the needs of underrepresented and marginalized consumers, enhancing their perceptions of equality, respect, acceptance, belongingness, and empowerment. This marketing approach aligns with an institutional theoretic framework, whereby the organization is part of a complex environmental system, and its actions reflect the norms of its environment. Indeed, societal expectations influence organizational structure and practices such that the organization can be an agent of collective purpose, including social progress, social integration, and justice (Handelman and Arnold 1999). Therefore, implementing brand practices vis-a-vis inclusion in marketing can enhance brands’ triple bottom line objectives, including performance on financial and social dimensions (Beer 2019; Bhagwat et al. 2020; Chabowski et al. 2011; Kipnis et al. 2021).

**Consumer Inclusion**

Established marketing practices may constrain brands from engaging in an inclusive brand marketing strategy. For example, marketing mix elements such as price, modes of delivery, and marketing communications signal the type of customer the brand accepts (Bennett et al. 2016). One senior executive emphasized the link between price and consumer acceptance when describing one women’s apparel brand:

> There were a lot of white women yoga instructors who were representing the brand, and these are $120 leggings, which then fed who the brand became. That is now something they’re digging out of.

A brand may unknowingly fail to accept certain consumers without an inclusive approach to these marketing mix elements. Indeed, the marketing literature has increasingly called for a reexamination of the core principles of good marketing (e.g., segmenting, targeting, and positioning) and a greater focus on strategies and tactics that lead to equitable consumer outcomes (Grier 2020).
Because an inclusive brand marketing strategy involves embedding DEI within the marketing function, it is thus likely to require changes to established marketing practices.

Regarding inclusive approaches to distribution, an executive noted the importance of working with distribution partners when making product changes:

We made a decision as an executive team last year to launch those shade extensions, even though they weren’t going to turn at a fast enough rate to meet our retailer thresholds. So, we are deliberately putting ourselves in a precarious financial position with our retailers who expect certain level turns… We can have that conversation now. And we’re making business decisions together that may not be exactly where we want it to be financially on day one, but we know we’ll get there.

The CMO of a beauty brand contrasted traditional advertising media with the brand’s embrace of advertising via social media and influencers:

Because the consumer voice is louder, content creation can suddenly be much more diverse, right? In the past, if you had a 30-second television commercial coming from the brand to the consumer, there was no place to disrupt that conversation…I think there were a lot of interesting things that all came out of social media that affected beauty in particular, but of course the influence of the consumer.

This quote highlights how changes in marketing practices have the potential for empowerment, in this case, social media advertising allows brands to hear a diverse range of consumer voices.

In many firms, the sampling process for evaluating market opportunities is often limited to traditional demographics, typically consisting of customers above certain income levels, in particular zip codes with traditional characteristics in terms of family and gender. This default has led to brands ignoring potential customers who did not fit these established demographic characteristics (Kipnis et al. 2021). As a senior executive in a media firm explained,

Research is really important. But also making sure that your audience sample is representative of the world; however, you define your world. I’ve looked at research before and it is not telling me anything new. The data might say “We’re serving customers that look like our existing base.” Well, that’s not helpful. So, getting at research, but being very pointed about the research is really important.

Thus, to size underrepresented and marginalized consumer markets, brands may have to change their sampling techniques. As a former CMO of a technology firm put it,
How a brand samples its products matters as well. Lululemon sampled its products with a white woman population. The practice of sampling…is really a critical practice that needs revamping.

Without an active and deliberate focus on this critical step in the marketing process, it becomes easy to ignore underrepresented and marginalized consumers.

Another standard step in the marketing strategy process is segmentation. Firms that utilize typical demographic segmentation may ignore non-traditional segments. For example, for years, LEGO has created product offerings for boys and seen girls as an afterthought with limited stereotypical characterizations. Illustrative is the letter written to LEGO by a seven-year-old girl,

Today I went to a store and saw Legos in two sections, the girls’ pink and the boys’ blue. All the girls did was sit at home, go to the beach, and shop, and they had no jobs, but the boys went on adventures, worked, saved people, and had jobs, even swam with sharks. I want you to make more Lego girl people and let them go on adventures and have fun ok!?! (Samakow 2014)

Similarly, Gillette has served the men’s razor market for years by creating innovations that met the same needs of the same customers (white customers) in seemingly better ways. However, none of these innovations work for customers with coily and curly hair, primarily consisting of Black people (Cohen 2020). Both illustrations demonstrate firms following a demographic segmentation that ignores heterogeneity in consumer needs. Changes to established marketing practices, such as those above, that encourage fairness in marketplace interactions can also help mitigate the alienation of underrepresented and marginalized consumers (Bennett et al. 2016).

Taking these illustrations together with the extant literature and our interviews suggests that using inclusive marketing practices will spur enhanced consumer feelings of equality, respect, acceptance, belongingness, and empowerment among underrepresented and marginalized consumers. Hence,

P4a: The greater the use of an inclusive brand marketing strategy in the firm, the stronger underrepresented and marginalized consumers’ perceptions of equality, respect, acceptance, belongingness, and empowerment by the brand.
**Brand Financial Performance**

Furthermore, an organization is likely to garner support from a given constituency based on how well it enacts and upholds environmental norms of that constituency (Handelman and Arnold 1999). Likewise, an inclusive brand marketing strategy will likely garner support from underrepresented and marginalized consumers as brands introduce offerings considering their needs and circumstances. Introducing these offerings will likely lead to consumer perceptions of acceptance and belongingness. Consumers outside those groups may also support the brand’s inclusion efforts or find the offerings desirable (Beer 2019; Brumbaugh and Grier 2013). As one executive from a large company in the hospitality industry explained:

Black women 50 to 60 years old – What problem do they have? Okay, let’s bring that to light. Because if we can solve for that person. Then that’s where the inclusivity lens comes in and I’m sure the other people besides Black women are going to also get some benefits from it. But the opposite isn’t true.

Due to enhanced consumer perceptions of the various dimensions of inclusion, support from both underrepresented and majority consumers in the form of increased purchase behavior will likely lead to more significant financial outcomes for the brand. Our field research also suggests that an inclusive brand marketing strategy will likely drive financial performance because it renders the brand relevant to a broader population of consumers. Regarding financial performance, the CMO of a mass media company stated,

We know that appealing to diverse audiences, it’s good business…The more people that we have that care about our brands, understand our brands, have an affinity for our brands, the greater the opportunity for me to sell them on the new things that we’re launching in our portfolio.

P4b: The greater the use of an inclusive brand marketing strategy in the firm, the greater the firm’s financial performance.

**MODERATING EFFECTS OF THE INTERNAL BRAND ENVIRONMENT AND THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT**
Research has suggested that as organizations manage their current business demands while adapting to changes in the environment, firm-specific factors may affect the strength of the relationship between an inclusive brand marketing strategy and brand outcomes (Raisch and Birkinshaw 2008). We thus examine the moderating effects of four brand-specific factors (perceived strength of the business case, fear of alienating majority customers, fear of alienating underrepresented and marginalized customers, and willful ignorance) on the inclusive brand marketing strategy-brand performance relationship.

**Perceived Strength of the Business Case**

While scholars assert a clear moral imperative for DEI, tension often exists between moral and business considerations (Ferraro, Hemsley, and Sands 2022). This tension may influence how brands consider the needs of underrepresented and marginalized consumers and whether they implement marketing practices that can perpetuate marketplace inclusion. Further, the extent to which marketers believe there is a strong business case will likely affect the relationship between stakeholder pressure and brand resources and an inclusive brand marketing strategy.

While research has shown that, regarding the business case for inclusion, organizations with high levels of diversity realize superior productivity compared with lower levels of diversity (Richard, Triana, and Li 2021), other work has shown that diversity may impede decision-making. This slower decision-making may lead to lower performance levels in the short run, though, in the long run, the performance level of diverse groups tends to surpass homogenous groups (Triana, Richard, and Su 2019). Despite stakeholder pressure to incorporate the needs of underrepresented and marginalized consumers, the positive effects of inclusion may take longer to materialize. Therefore, some brands may perceive the business case for inclusion as weak,
decreasing the likelihood of using an inclusive brand marketing strategy. For instance, the former Head of Media of a large hospitality company suggested that:

The demographics that are underrepresented in society, are going to be underrepresented in any needs-based thing, unless there is a specific need for that audience and there is a revenue potential associated with it.

Other organizations may be more likely to perceive a strong business case inclusion, for instance, due to the nature of the brand offerings or their current customer base. Our interviewees discussed the impact of having a naturally diverse consumer base:

We’re a young brand, that specifically targets Gen Z and young millennial segments. And we know that diversity and representation is important to our young audience… We know that diversity and representation is important to our young audience. And that should be one of our values. (CMO, beauty brand)

I think that even in businesses that don’t necessarily rely on Gen Z, it’s the influence of Gen Z on other audiences. Most families have Gen Z in their household. So now we’re just not talking about Gen Z, we’re talking about Gen Z influencing families and family decisions. (Global Head of Consumer Insights, large hospitality company)

With such a consumer base, consumer pressure manifests itself by compelling brands to cater to the needs of these consumers for survival. In such cases, brand managers are likely to perceive a strong business case for inclusion and be more likely to have an inclusive brand marketing strategy.

These managerial insights suggest that brands will be more likely to employ an inclusive brand marketing strategy as the perceived business case for inclusion increases. Thus,

P5: The stronger the perceived business cases for inclusion, the stronger the positive relationship between stakeholder pressure and the use of an inclusive brand marketing strategy.

**Fear of Alienating Majority Consumers**

Scholars point out that as underrepresented and marginalized groups gain social influence through inclusion, traditionally privileged groups (i.e., majority consumers) may perceive these changes as a loss and become resentful (Demangeot et al. 2019; Fitzgerald and Donovan 2018;
Grier, Thomas, and Johnson 2019). This mindset may stem from the zero-sum heuristic that consumers often use when considering firm resource allocation (Chernev 2007). Instead of inferring that a firm may “grow the pie” and demonstrate superior performance across multiple dimensions, they assume that a firm must necessarily “share the pie,” with superior performance on one dimension at the expense of performance on another. In other words, traditional consumers may assume that any progress made on the marketplace inclusion of underrepresented and marginal consumers may reduce their own inclusion.

When a brand rebalances such privilege with its marketplace actions, majority consumers’ resentment may manifest as ideological conflicts with the brand or lack of product purchase (Bennet, Hill, and Oleksiuk 2013). Thus, even when brands recognize the importance of inclusive efforts, they may struggle to adopt an inclusive brand marketing strategy. It is not unusual for brands and their managers to fear that they may alienate traditional majority consumers when targeting underrepresented and marginalized groups or when engaging in ethnic-oriented messaging (Johnson, Thomas, and Grier 2017). Specific concerns include the failure of majority consumers to connect with advertisements featuring individuals from underrepresented and marginalized communities. In addition, inclusive marketing strategies may not be consistent with the preferences of majority consumers, resulting in a lack of product purchases (Bennett, Hill, and Oleksiuk 2013; Grier and Brumbaugh 1999). Similar notions emerged from our field interviews. Some of the practitioners described the backlash from their traditional audiences and the subsequent negative impact on revenues when their organizations attempted inclusive marketplace actions:

There is a fear of what we might lose… If you’re afraid that you might lose Chardonnay white women drinking, then that’s going to hold you back. (Former CMO, large technology company)
Marketers may say, “We are making white people comfortable.” “I’m uncomfortable for us to go and consider others. That could threaten me, my livelihood, rights, my growth and so forth.” That could limit companies. (CDO, financial services company)

Black and brown dolls that we had in other [traditional] segments weren’t selling. Every year they do a doll of the year. Every year that it was a non-white, non-blonde doll, they knew sales would go down. (Former Head of Global Consumer Insights, large toy brand)

The finding from these interviews is that when there is greater fear of (or actual1) backlash from a brand’s traditional customer segments, a brand will be less likely to consider stakeholder pressure to address the needs of underrepresented and marginalized consumers or leverage its marketing resources to serve those consumers. Thus, the brand will be less likely to employ an inclusive brand marketing strategy. In other words:

P6a: The stronger the fear of backlash from a brand’s traditional customer segments, the weaker the positive relationship between stakeholder pressure and the use of an inclusive brand marketing strategy.

P6b: The stronger the backlash from a brand’s traditional customer segments, the weaker the positive relationship between marketing resources and the use of an inclusive brand marketing strategy.

Fear of Alienating Underrepresented and Marginalized Consumers

Brands may also fear backlash from the underrepresented and marginalized communities they target. It is not uncommon for brands to use stereotyped depictions of underrepresented and marginalized communities in their marketing communications (Bennett, Hill, and Daddario 2015). While some of the ugliest and most overtly racist imagery has been regulated to the past, racist and stereotypical depictions in marketing communications persist. Thus, brands fear “getting it wrong” by perpetuating harmful stereotypes or offensive images, which can spur criticism from the underrepresented and marginalized communities (understandably so):

What holds them back? I think number one is I genuinely believe that people are afraid that they’re going to do something wrong.

1 The experience of Bud Light is illustrative of the backlash from customers to the firm’s inclusive advertising with a transgender influencer. While the brand invested marketing resources behind the advertisement, the backlash and subsequent boycott from traditional customers lead to short-lived support for the campaign (Cantor 2023).
Similarly, the CEO of an agricultural industry trade group underscored this point,

But I also hear from a lot of them - How do I as a senior white male executive actually participate in this conversation? I mean, many of them, frankly, are terrified to say the wrong thing, to make the wrong decision, to be judged.

Despite brands recognizing the importance of leveraging their brand resources to respond to the needs of underrepresented and marginalized consumers, they may not use an inclusive brand marketing strategy. Formally,

P7a: The stronger the fear of backlash from a brand’s underrepresented and marginalized customer segments, the weaker the positive relationship between stakeholder pressure and the use of an inclusive brand marketing strategy.

P7b: The stronger the fear of backlash from a brand’s underrepresented and marginalized customer segments, the weaker the positive relationship between marketing resources and the use of an inclusive brand marketing strategy.

(Willful) Ignorance

Across interviews, several executives alluded to the prevalence of a related phenomenon of ignorance, often willful, as a critical barrier to becoming an inclusive brand. Marketing scholars typically study willful ignorance from the perspective of consumers who underfocus on or ignore an offering’s ethical attribute information to avoid negative emotions (Zane, Irwin, and Reczek 2016). In other fields of study, such as finance, willful ignorance implies that managers intentionally avoid or disregard facts, empirical evidence, and the like because they oppose existing beliefs (Pryor 2015). Thus, individuals present ignorance as a means of avoiding responsibility for adverse outcomes of their actions or inaction (Jennings 2013). The chief talent officer of a large luxury brand highlighted this point, stating that, regarding inclusion:

Some companies may be aware there are concerns, but there’s a choice being made, perhaps, and [inclusion] is not the biggest concern. “There’s no need to invest.” “We don’t have that problem here.” Going from “I don’t know what I don’t know” to “I know, but I’m choosing to focus attention elsewhere.”

Alternatively, managerial mental models are outdated, as one executive pointed out,
Really outdated, because it’s happening and changing in real time. We haven’t caught up to consumer behavior. It has changed before we were ready for it as an industry. We don’t look at the data enough. Now with that said, data is only one part of it. That’s the input. As we process that data is where sometimes our unconscious biases come in.

These arguments, therefore, suggest that willful ignorance may impede brands from using an inclusive brand marketing strategy in the face of data related to changes in stakeholder expectations or sufficient brand resources.

P8a: The greater the willful ignorance of a brand’s managers, the weaker the positive relationship between stakeholder pressure and the use of an inclusive brand marketing strategy.

P8b: The greater the willful ignorance of a brand’s managers, the weaker the positive relationship between marketing resources and the use of an inclusive brand marketing strategy.

DISCUSSION

While the past few years have brought forth a slew of public commitments by brands to address DEI issues, many brands lack clarity on how to translate public statements into action. Indeed, with a mission to benefit both business and society, the Marketing Science Institute highlighted diversity and inclusion as one of its 2022-2024 research priorities, emphasizing inclusion in the marketplace and its impact on societal and firm outcomes (Marketing Science Institute 2022).

While the extant literature provides valuable insights, these findings do not suggest how brands can become inclusive in their marketplace actions. Against this backdrop, this research draws on an interdisciplinary literature review and theories-in-use methodology to develop an operational definition of an “inclusive brand.” We identify important antecedents affecting an inclusive brand marketing strategy and highlight the impact of such a strategy on consumer and brand outcomes. We also present contingent factors that modify the strength of the relationship
between an inclusive brand marketing strategy and consumer and brand outcomes. In doing so, we provide insight into specific practices of brands beyond public relations communications and lay the foundation for further scholarly investigation of this new potential brand strategy.

**Theoretical Implications**

The marketing literature offers a rich body of work examining discrimination in the marketplace and consumption settings (Bennett, Hill, and Oleksiuk 2013; Davis 2018; Grier, Thomas, and Johnson 2019; Harmeling et al. 2021). Nonetheless, there is limited work examining how marketers, specifically consumer-facing brand marketers, mitigate discrimination in their marketing activities. In response, our research proposes that an inclusive brand marketing strategy offers one way for brands to address these persistent issues with their marketplace actions. Our approach can be categorized as a delineating and explicating approach to develop a conceptual model of an inclusive brand marketing strategy's antecedents, consequences, and moderators (McInnis 2011).

While our work draws on the marketplace discrimination and multicultural marketing research streams, we delineate the inclusive brand marketing strategy construct from these constructs. We argue that an inclusive brand marketing strategy represents a novel conceptualization. Within the marketplace discrimination research stream, the focus is mainly on discriminatory marketing practices that target specific groups or the treatment of particular groups in the marketplace (Davis 2018). Research considering traditional multicultural marketing has typically examined whether distinct cultural groups require specific marketing approaches, the response of various consumer groups to such marketing, and the marketing of various cultural identities (Burton 2002; Grier and Brumbaugh 1999; Crockett 2008; Johnson and Grier 2012). In contrast, an inclusive brand marketing strategy identifies internal and
external practices that, while intentionally centering underrepresented and marginalized groups non-exploitatively, the brand implements across the marketing function and the brand.

Research on societally focused brand actions and financial performance continues to provide mixed results (Bhagwat et al. 2020; Mishra and Modi 2016; Nickerson et al. 2022). These findings are understandable given the various firm and brand characteristics and the disparate means by which firms and brands engage in socially focused efforts. The inclusive brand marketing strategy concept provides a systematic way through which consumers positively respond to brands’ socially focused actions within the DEI domain, given that it connects internal brand practices and marketplace actions. For instance, when a brand’s internal practices are congruent with and thus inform its socially focused marketplace actions, it will likely be less susceptible to accusations of inauthenticity, leading to negative consumer response.

In the management discipline, studies exploring the relationship between workplace diversity and firm outcomes such as innovation, productivity, and profitability also offer mixed results (Brimhall and Mor-Barak 2018; Richard, Triana, and Li 2021; Shore, Cleveland, and Sanchez 2018). These studies often pertain to the diversity of the firm’s board of directors, management team, or work groups and rarely focus on the marketing function. We propose that considering the marketing function and, specifically, the extent to which it has employed an inclusive brand marketing strategy may also help clarify some of the mixed findings. Therefore, we believe that the current work connects the marketing strategy literature to the workplace inclusion and diversity research streams within management literature (Richard, Triana, and Li 2021; Shore, Cleveland, and Sanchez 2018; Wooten 2008). For example, a firm with a diverse and inclusive workplace is likelier to have an inclusive brand marketing strategy. Thus, its marketing efforts may lead to marketplace offerings that align with the needs of consumers who
increasingly expect offerings and marketing communications to be relevant to the current social context.

**Managerial Implications**

The 2020 racial justice protests made the relationship between business and DEI salient to the public, prompting many brands to issue statements affirming their commitment to and the adoption of DEI initiatives. Yet just a few years later, brands struggle to make meaningful progress on these commitments. Our findings suggest that while galvanizing events or shifts in consumer preferences may prompt brands to address the issue of inclusivity, such actions cannot be a “one-off” or even an “add-on” to an existing strategy. The very consumer groups that brands may seek to include are likely to view such actions skeptically. One vibrant example is the concern that brands’ Pride Month support is merely for marketing purposes with minimal effort towards helping to create a safer, freer society for the LGBTQ+ community (Cantor 2023). Our inclusive brand marketing strategy suggests that brands should incorporate inclusion throughout the marketing function, affecting change within the organization and in its marketplace actions. Embedding inclusion within the marketing function enhances the likelihood that inclusion in a brand’s marketplace actions will reflect the actual values of the brand and will thus be authentic.

For many underrepresented and marginalized groups in the U.S., discrimination in the marketplace continues to be a phenomenon that negatively affects many aspects of their lives. This discrimination typically surfaces as a lack of inclusion, such as when retailers place clothing for plus-sized individuals in hidden, out-of-sight locations. In contrast to prior work, this research attempts to understand what it takes for brands to include underrepresented and marginalized consumers in their marketing strategy. We further suggest factors that can facilitate or impede an inclusive brand marketing strategy. Because these factors are generally controllable by managers, this research may help brands to become more inclusive in their marketplace
actions. Such a strategy also contrasts with brands’ typical multicultural marketing practices, which involve developing marketing approaches for different cultural groups or utilizing cultural symbols from non-majority consumer groups in their marketing efforts.

At a time when missteps in the marketplace can spur negative viral responses and actual harm, this approach has significant implications for marketing practice. First, an inclusive brand marketing strategy facilitates inclusive marketplace actions by considering the needs of underrepresented and marginalized consumers throughout the brand’s marketing function, thereby reducing the risk of brands merely reacting to societal events related to DEI. We note the importance of a brand’s internal environment – financial resource availability and an inclusion-committed culture as personified by the brand’s employees and partners. The post-2020 context highlighted the mismatch between companies’ internal environment and public-facing statements. Some employees have spoken out about their companies’ racial justice proclamations even as their workplaces do not necessarily reflect these values (Roberts and Grayson 2021). An inclusive brand’s marketplace actions are internally derived, thus organic to the brand’s values and practices, and not typified by reactions to a specific event.

Second, a critical outcome of an inclusive brand marketing strategy is consumers’ well-being and perceptions of equality, respect, acceptance, belongingness, and empowerment from the brand. Failing to include underrepresented and marginalized consumers in a brand’s marketing process can preclude such consumers from full engagement in the marketplace, can perpetuate stereotypes causing harm to these consumer groups’ social identity, and increase physical harm (e.g., health outcomes). An inclusive brand marketing strategy can help reduce such marketplace inequities in consumer well-being.

Becoming an inclusive brand is not an overnight process. Though beyond the scope of this research, a crucial first step is identifying the underrepresented and marginalized groups to
be centered. To this end, technological advances enable small-batch manufacturing and greater personalization to meet the needs of ever-smaller consumer segments. Further, effective inclusion will likely require a longer-term focus, resulting in different brand timelines based on the abovementioned brand factors. While future research may examine issues related to the implementation timeline, this point also surfaced during our field interviews. One mass media executive explained that, on the one hand, if a brand only looks at what is currently working and their traditional customers, there is significant potential for missing out on who its customers could be.

On the other hand, when one of the company’s brands, with an older, whiter customer base, pivoted relatively quickly towards an inclusive brand marketing strategy, there was a significant backlash. This anecdote alludes to the need to understand and plan for the pitfalls between where the brand is and where it is trying to go. Doing so may call for the brand to bring its current customers along by, perhaps, pacing the rollout of its inclusive brand marketing strategy.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

While we attempt to construct an organic marketing theory of an inclusive brand marketing strategy, much is needed to develop measures of marketplace inclusion and empirically test the theoretical propositions advanced in this work. Most of the brands across our interviews were relatively large, well-known, U.S. or global brands with a strong presence within the U.S. While we posit that an inclusive brand marketing strategy could be adopted by non-U.S. based brands or even smaller brands within the U.S., for such brands, there may be unaccounted factors that could impact strategy implementation and brand- and consumer-based outcomes. For instance, it may also be necessary to account for country- or regional-specific cultural characteristics, which
could influence this strategy. Our interviews also suggest that a dedicated budget is crucial for the success of an inclusive brand marketing strategy, which could be challenging for smaller brands.

Finally, this work considers inclusion, which focuses on incorporating underrepresented and marginalized groups in all aspects of a brand’s marketing strategy. Inclusion goes beyond diversity, which centers representation and considers a brand’s internal and external compositional. This work, however, does not concern equity, which involves fairness in opportunity and outcome. Equity addresses systemic disparities between groups in social advantages such as wealth, power, and prestige (Bernstein et al. 2020; Park, Voss, and Voss 2022). By this measure, the current work is limited in scope as it does not address what it would mean for brands to right systemic and structural injustices. We posit that this type of work would require a critical evaluation of all marketing strategies, which were created and exist within the structures responsible for marketplace discrimination in the first place. While true equity will likely only be achieved within a wholly different conceptualization of the market (beyond the scope of the work), we encourage future scholars to explore equity in the marketplace.
## APPENDIX 1

### Table Appendix 1: Extant Definitions of Inclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saatcioglu and Ozanne 2013</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>“Marketplace inclusion involves access to and fair treatment in the market.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licsandru and Cui 2018</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>“We define subjective social inclusion as a multi-dimensional construct comprising of acceptance, belongingness, empowerment, equality and respect.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park, Voss, and Voss 2023</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Customer inclusion captures the extent to which participation rates reflect equity, or fairness and impartiality towards customers in both opportunity and outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferraro et al.</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Inclusion involves “creating a culture that fosters belonging across diverse groups.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brimhall and Mor-Barak 2018</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>“Inclusion, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which employees feel valued for their unique characteristics and have a sense of belonging, thus feeling comfortable about sharing their “true selves” within the work organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shore, Cleveland, and Sanchez 2018</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>“In sum, inclusion involves equal opportunity for members of socially marginalized groups to participate and contribute while concurrently providing opportunities for members of nonmarginalized groups, and to support employees in their efforts to be fully engaged at all levels of the organization and to be authentically themselves.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baumgartner and Burns 2014</td>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>“Being included and integrated within the community and society means that the individual feels and experiences a sense of belonging to, identification with and acceptance by that community and society.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marino-Francis and Worrall-Davies 2010</td>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>“Social inclusion is about each person taking part in society and having control over their own resources. It is also about a community that cares for its members, makes them feel welcome and is willing to adjust to fit their various needs.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ponic and Frisby 2010</td>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>Inclusion comprises four dimensions: psychological (acceptance, safety &amp; trust, recognition); relational (being welcomed, respect, support); organizational (addressing barriers, access to resources, ethic of care); participatory (contributing, having a voice, engaging in activities).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplican et al.</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>“Broad conceptions of social inclusion can involve being accepted as an individual beyond disability, significant and reciprocal relationships, appropriate living accommodations, employment, informal and formal supports, and community involvement.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX 2

### Table Appendix 2: Distinguishing the Inclusive Brand Construct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Marketing Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multiculturalism Marketing</strong></td>
<td>Culture is a commodity used by marketplace actors such that all individuals have the right to market themselves and their cultures and to consume the cultural products of others (Demangeot, Broderick, and Craig 2015; Veresiu and Giesler 2018).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Multiculturalism</strong></td>
<td>Critical multiculturalism challenges the suitability of existing multicultural marketing strategies and how they might be improved to be more inclusive (Burton 2002; McLaren 1994).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acculturation</strong></td>
<td>Acculturation involves the interaction, adaptation, and assimilation of a new culture with an old culture from the perspective of the consumer and marketer (Veresiu and Giesler 2018). Consumers may adjust their established consumption practices and brand relationships to their evolving relationships with consumers from unfamiliar national, social, or cultural backgrounds (Luedicke 2015). Marketers may adapt one cultural market system to consumers of another cultural market system (Peñaloza and Gilly 1999).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marketplace Inclusion</strong></td>
<td>Marketplace inclusion concerns access and fair treatment within the marketplace (Saatcioglu and Ozanne 2013).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Inclusion</strong></td>
<td>Social inclusion encompasses objective measures such as not at risk of poverty, proper living standards, access to education, employment opportunities, good quality healthcare and the marketplace (Liscandru and Cui 2018).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusive Brand</strong></td>
<td>An inclusive brand creates, communicates, and delivers product offerings that serve the needs of underrepresented and marginalized consumers through practices and activities that enhance the consumers’ perceptions of equality, respect, acceptance, belongingness, and empowerment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 3

Table Appendix 3: Sample Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is an inclusive brand (emphasize marketplace/product offerings)?</td>
<td>What are examples of inclusive marketplace exist in your firm?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you list 3 practices?</td>
<td>What are the internal factors that help a brand become inclusive?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are some factors that hold back inclusion efforts?</td>
<td>What would you say are the benefits of adopting inclusive practices for a brand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your organization have a budget for developing and implementing inclusive marketing practices?</td>
<td>What examples have you seen of outcomes generated by the adoption of inclusive practices?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What would you say are the benefits of adopting inclusive practices for a brand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What examples have you seen of outcomes generated by the adoption of inclusive practices?</td>
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</table>
REFERENCES


## TABLES AND FIGURES

**Figure 1. Extant Views on Workplace/Marketplace – Inclusion/Exclusion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workplace</th>
<th>Inclusion</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exclusion</strong></td>
<td><strong>Inclusion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An exclusionary work environment negatively influences individual well-being, job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Mor-Barak et al. 2006).</td>
<td>For firms pursuing a growth strategy, there is a positive relationship between workplace diversity and firm performance (Richard 2000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace exclusion is associated with adverse psychological health, physical health, and work-related outcomes (Jones et al. 2016).</td>
<td>Congruence between upper-management racial diversity and lower-management racial diversity positively affects firm productivity (Richard, Triana, and Li 2021).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketplace</th>
<th>Inclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exclusion</strong></td>
<td><strong>Inclusion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers show that race and ethnic discrimination persist in marketplaces, specifically in retail settings (Harris, Henderson, and Williams 2005).</td>
<td>By fostering diverse cultural groups’ proactive engagements with one another, marketplaces can enhance culturally diverse market actors’ well-being (Demangeot et al. 2019).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketplace exclusion, in the form of systemic restricted choice, inflicts harm on minorities’ self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Bone, Christensen, and Williams 2014).</td>
<td>Marketing-related factors play a key role in fostering a brand’s inclusion efforts in the marketplace (The current study).</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 1. Sample Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Interviews</th>
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<td>Vice-President</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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<table>
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<th>Interviews</th>
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<td>Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion</td>
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<td>Human Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media/Advertising</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Industry (number of firms)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media/Entertainment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food and Beverage</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hospitality</td>
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<td>Retail</td>
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<td>Consulting</td>
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<td>Employment</td>
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<td>Packaged Goods</td>
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<td>Motor Vehicle Dealer</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
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<td>Pharmaceuticals</td>
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Figure 2. Inclusive Brand Marketing Strategy