# Beyond Performativity: Inclusive Marketing as A Tool of Social Transformation

**Asst. Prof. Altug Ocak**

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P R E S S

# Preface

Marketing is one of the strongest cultural forces of our era. It determines our wants, our selves and our relationships, not just with brands, but with one another. And marketing has, for too long now, excluded, misrepresented or flatly ignored those at the edges of power.

This book was produced out of a promise that has not changed: marketing can and should be improved.

I ventured into this journey as a professional or researcher, but above all, as a citizen committed to justice, equity and humanity. I saw the damage extractive branding and tokenistic inclusion can do. But I've also seen the revolutionary power of co-creation: where marketing is a space for dignity, voice and change.

Co-Creation with Marginalized Communities is no guidebook on how to do cause marketing. It is a call to reframe the logic behind building brands, doing research and establishing value. From theory to practice to case study, it presents a model of partnership-based inclusive marketing rather than paternalism.

The way forward will be hard. But it has to be traveled. It is only through listening differently and collective building, that we can construct markets that embody the world's diversity, strength and inventiveness.

This book is for all types of change makers: marketers, researchers, designers, community leaders and changemakers. It is my hope that it gives not only understanding, but inspiration.

# Contents

# Rethinking the Marketing Paradigm

## 1.1 Introduction

Marketing has been touted for so long as the driver of innovation, customer satisfaction and economic development. It is the department that gets people to products, services, experiences and increasingly, to causes and values. And yet despite all its communications muscle and creativeness, marketing has also been culpable of perpetuating systemic disparities. Marketing has tended to talk to disparate groups but not hear them out. It has boasted about diversity in elections but not about putting inclusion into strategy. And it has too often put profit ahead of people, efficiency ahead of equity and scale ahead of solidarity.

This book starts with a straightforward question: Who gets to build value in the marketplace today? And just as crucially: Whose voices, needs and worldviews have been systematically excluded from that endeavor?

Since centuries, marketing has been shaped by a prevailing logic, a logic of domination of exchange, coercive targeting and segmentation of customers. Although these have facilitated mass market extension, these are actually ways of framing by which businesses produce value and customers are subjected to this passively. This never opens up the variety of lived experiences of the economically excluded, the culturally misrepresented, the geographically excluded or the structurally silenced. It seldom inquires: What constitutes value to someone who exists outside the formal economy? How does identity, dignity and trust get invoked in the brand experience of historically marginalized populations?

To effectively close such gaps, we need to redefine the marketing paradigm. The future is inclusive co-creation: a relational, ethical and systems-based vision putting the knowledge, creativity and agency of marginalized communities at its center. Co-creation is not a buzzword but a return to a more human, relational and justice-based foundation for value creation.

The concept of co-creation is already understood in social innovation, participatory research and service design. But marketing, with marginalised groups, has its application few, patchy and under-theorised. It is this absence that this book seeks to fill.

We draw upon design thinking, social work, community development, marketing theory and critical consumer studies. Drawing upon that multi-disciplinary perspective, we look at:

- How exclusionary marketing logic has been.

- What it means to involve marginalized consumers as co-creators, rather than data points.

- How co-creation for good is already being done in current everyday brands and community organizations.

- What tools, metrics and ethics are required to continue doing it the right way.

This is not a book for traditional marketers. It is for anyone who cares about making markets more human, inclusive and fair. If you are a brand strategist, academic researcher, social entrepreneur, NGO leader or policy adviser, the learning here hopes to give you both a moral compass and a practical tool kit.

On the next few pages, we walk you through critical theory and practice, not simply examining what inclusive marketing is but also what it feels like, to whom it is accountable and why it is important. We seek to reclaim marketing as a site of co-created meaning and instrument of collective flourishing,not merely an economic mechanism of persuasion.

Let us start.

## 1.2 From Transactional to Relational and Co-Creative Marketing

For most of the 20th century, marketing practiced transactional logic, emphasis on efficiency, quantity and persuasion. Customers were passive information recipients and companies favored market share optimization with the classic 4Ps: product, price, place and promotion (McCarthy, 1960).

Measurement was in units of sales and short-term income and relationship was secondary, if not irrelevant, to exchange.

This transactional approach clearly had its limitations. It presumed consumers made decisions in rational, linear fashion and that markets were value-free, socially context-free spaces (Sheth, Gardner, & Garrett, 1988). Provided functional requirements were fulfilled, emotional or cultural dimensions were regarded as noise. In such a model, marginalized consumers,whose needs were not typically in line with mainstream provision in markets or whose consumption was directed by identity, history or restriction,were seldom seen or addressed (Penaloza, 1994).

By the 1980s and 1990s, this machine model was being criticized. Theorists and practitioners realized that consumer loyalty, trust and lifetime value could never be guaranteed through transactional logic. This formed relationship marketing, a long-term relationship, mutual gratification and continuous communication model (Grönroos, 1994; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The hypothesis was easy to grasp: marketing did not necessarily have to stop at the moment of sale,it must form relations that serve both the company and the consumer over a period of time.

This transformation revolution was historic in scope. Relationship marketing evolved from mass markets to even contemplate bases of one, making use of technology to create personalized interactions (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). It also emphasized the positioning of trust, commitment and satisfaction as mediating variables for brand-consumer relationships (Garbarino & Tounsel, 2022).

However, even relationship marketing had some managerial control. Although consumers were no longer passive, they were still relatively reactive in their role, they reacted to CRM programs, loyalty schemes or content generated by companies. They were still choosy in their participation and there were power disparities (Tadajewski, 2009).

The relational shift in marketing was further developed with the development of the Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logic) during the beginning of the 2000s. Vargo and Lusch (2004) developed the concept of S-D Logic, which upgraded marketing to a co-creative value creation process. In this framework, companies do not "deliver" value, they offer it. Value is produced while interacting and is always co-created between various actors in the ecosystem, ranging from customers to employees, partners and communities (Vargo & Lusch, 2008).

Such a paradigm promoted experience, contexts and networks to the forefront of thought in marketing. The paradigm also posits that value is neither objective nor universal but rather phenomenologically constructed by the individual according to lived experience (Chandler & Vargo, 2011). This left space for wider imagination: if value is not merely context-dependent and subjective, but co-created, then the people on the edges of the marketplace, those with different geographies, abilities, identities and experiences, have distinct and equally valuable senses of value itself (Arnould, Price, & Malshe, 2006).

And yet for all its conceptual potential, in practice co-creation has too often rested with wealthy, digitally literate consumers. Co-participation is generally conducted in managed environments such as innovation hubs, team sessions or leased spaces which require time, self-esteem and accessibility, privileges which are not enjoyed by marginalized groups (Ind & Coates, 2013). Further, co-creation has been historically employed for business-led purposes: generating new product concepts, increasing engagement or lowering R&D expenses, not equity, agency or social authority (Frow et al., 2011).

In order to become wholly embracing of co-creation in its deep and collaborative sense, marketers must step beyond measures of efficiency and engagement. They must pose more profound questions:

- Who gets to set the problems and the solutions?
- Whose knowledge is worth involving in the innovation processes?
- How can we make sure that co-created value is shared, not extracted?

This book is a call for an even more revolutionary rethinking of co-creation, one relational, reciprocal and grounded in justice. We invite a change from "co-creation for the market" to "co-creation for equity." That requires working with marginalized communities not only as customers, but as co-owners of brand meaning, product direction and systemic transformation.

By refocusing marketing on shared co-creation with others, we don't give up strategy, rather, we expand its moral horizon and social purpose. We shift from thinking of consumers as segment targets to thinking of them as located individuals with histories, limitations and imagining possibilities (Hill, 2001; Crockett, 2008). And in the process, we create new opportunities for innovation, authenticity and shared prosperity.

**Conclusion**

This development from transactional via relational to co-creative marketing reflects a general paradigm shift in thinking about and making value in today's markets. Instead of viewing consumers as passive recipients of persuasive communication, newer marketing is increasingly acknowledging them as active, competent co-creators of value. Not only does this development create brand relevance and loyalty, but also it paves the way for more ethical, inclusive and contextual marketing practices. The adoption of co-creation requires companies to re-imagine their roles,not just as manufacturers of products or services,but as enablers of meaningful, two-way relationships with a multitude of stakeholders. The foundations are thus established for a more humane, justice-oriented marketing logic developed in the later chapters.



*Figure 1.1: The evolution of marketing logic from transactional to inclusive co-creation. Each phase reflects a shift in how value is understood, who creates it and the nature of engagement between firms and consumers.*

## 1.3 Critiquing Mainstream Marketing's Blind Spots

Mainstream marketing, all its strategy acumen and technological innovation notwithstanding, still works within a set of blind spots of critical proportions,most significantly around issues of inclusion, equity and representation. While diversity is now ubiquitous in the vocabulary of buzzwords and corporate social responsibility initiatives are numerous,

mainstream marketing's underlying logics, assumptions and practices are framed by a worldview that is homogeneous around the powerful and excludes the subordinated (Crockett, 2008; Sandikci & Ger, 2010).

### a. Who is Excluded from the Data?

The most obvious blind spot in marketing practice is data bias. Market segmentation, persona building and predictive modeling frequently are built upon datasets systematically down-sampling oppressed groups (Hill, 2001; Martin & Murphy, 2017). Nationally representative data, for instance, might exclude informal settlements, undocumented migrants or those without digital connection,quite literally making them invisible within the market.

This invisibility has tangible consequences (Pullin, 2009; Penaloza, 1994; Noble, 2018):

- Product designs that disregard accessibility needs.
- Cultural insensitivity and lived experience in campaigns.
- Algorithms reflecting structural biases in service delivery and targeting.

### b. Stereotyping in Representation

Even when marginalized populations appear in advertisements, they are often represented via symbolic and limited roles. Studies have found that racial minorities and people with disabilities are generally represented in tokenistic or stereotypical roles (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004; Kates, 2002; Sender, 2012).

These representations:

- Reinforce dominant ideologies.
- Flatten complexity.
- Risk alienating the very groups they attempt to include.

Representation without authenticity morphs into what Ahmed (2012) describes as "diversity optics."

### c. Ignoring Structural Inequality

Conventional marketing deals with consumer needs as decontextualized conducts and not as embedded social conditions. Solutions therefore concern an isolated preference or attitude and independent of the structural limitations that frame them (Penaloza, 1994; Visconti et al., 2010).

Examples (Dutta-Bergman, 2005; Martin & Murphy, 2017):

- Health campaigns disregarding food deserts or housing instability.

- Digital service launches presuming broadband penetration and PC literacy.

Such strategies position marginalized consumers as irrational or uninformed, while they could be encountering system barriers.

### d. The Problem of Marketing Universality

Marketing theory tends to promote universalized models and "best practice" as universally applicable. These kinds of models are, however, based on Western, middle-class, able-bodied assumptions (Daykin, 2022; Escobar, 2018).

For example (Hofstede, 2001; Banerjee & Linstead, 2001):

- Individual taste might come second to family or community taste in collectivist cultures.

- Value in indigenous cosmologies can be based on stewardship or reciprocity, rather than consumption.

All of these epistemological distinctions are ignored, which causes marketing that is not only wasteful, but also unfair.

### e. Neglecting the Role of Markets in Reproducing Inequality

Conventional marketing presumes that markets are unbiassed sites of exchange. Researchers suggest, however, that markets mirror and construct social hierarchies (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995; Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Marketing shapes:

- Who is listened to.

- Who is offered customized service.

- What ideals are copied or lost.

Marketing hence becomes an economic and cultural influence that may disaffirm or reinforce inequity (Baker et al., 2005).

### Conclusion

To bemoan the blind spots of marketing is not to turn it back,rather, it is a request to open out. By understanding how exclusion is embedded within data systems, representation, segmentation and value, marketers can start to create more reflexive, fair and inclusive strategies. This does more than demand diverse imagery,structural re-design and co-creation with those that have been historically excluded by marketers.

**MAINSTREAM MARKETING BLIND SPOTS**

**DATA BIAS**
Marginalized groups underrepresented in data sets

**STEREOTYPING**
Flattened or misrepresentative portrayals of diversity

**STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY**
Focus on individual behavior, not systemic barriers

**FALSE UNIVERSALITY**
Western, corporate-centric models assumed to apply to all

**REPRODUCTION OF INEQUALITY**
Markets seen as neutral, but perpetuate power imbalances

*Figure 1.2: The five major blind spots of mainstream marketing that contribute to exclusion, misrepresentation and inequity in market systems. Source: Author's illustration.*

### 1.4 Inclusive Marketing: A New Normative Direction

With marketing moving beyond transactional and even relational approaches, a new imperative comes into view,one that is not only strategic but also ethical: inclusive marketing. This ethic acknowledges that markets are not arenas of neutrality and that marketing not only has the power and potential but also the obligation to correct for inequalities, raise muted voices and co-create value with justice-based practices (Ozanne et al., 2015; Mick et al., 2012).

Inclusive marketing is not a campaign or checklist for diversity,it is a normative stance that upsets who gets to contribute to the making of meaning, value and identity in the marketplace (Banet-Weiser, 2012; Daykin, 2022).

Inclusive marketing is embedded within broader global trends toward equity, decolonization and consumer empowerment (Escobar, 2018).

### a. What Is Inclusive Marketing?

Inclusive marketing is the deliberate design of methods, messages and systems that:

- Reflect the lived hopes and dreams of several groups (Crockett, 2008; Visconti et al., 2010).

- Counter historical and structural exclusion from representation, access and participation (Penaloza, 1994; Martin & Murphy, 2017).

- Reassign power by co-authoring stories, goods and value propositions with,not for,marginalized groups (Cova et al., 2011).

It extends beyond representational diversity to encompass:

- Ethical storytelling (Banet-Weiser, 2012).

- Communication and design accessibility (Pullin, 2009).

- Cultural and contextual fluency (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

- Participatory governance frameworks (Chambers, 1994; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995).

### b. Diversity Optics to Structural Inclusion

Mainstream companies will borrow the iconography and rhetoric of diversity, primarily in marketing. Short of structural reform, however, such visibility is superficial,diversity optics, as critiqued by Ahmed (2012). Inclusive marketing demands profound organizational transformations, such as (Ind & Coates, 2013; Frow et al., 2011):

- Participatory product design.

- Community-based campaigns.

- Equitable value-sharing alliances.

It involves asking:

- Who is making our campaigns?

- Whose data are informing our strategies?

- Who is the recipient of our platforms and profitor?

### c. The Role of Transformative Consumer Research (TCR)

Inclusive marketing contributes to the vision of Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) to enhance the lives of marginalized communities and develop ethical marketing practice (Mick et al., 2012). TCR asks us to pay attention to:

- Marketplace exclusion (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008).
- Stigmatized or vulnerable consumers (Ozanne & Phipps, 2009).
- Empowerment and system change (Dutta-Bergman, 2005).

TCR is convinced that marketing can be a force for freedom,not simply persuasion,when equity, dignity and inclusion become central goals.

### d. Why Inclusive Marketing is Needed Now

Today, inclusivity is needed due to prevailing socio-political and tech facts:

- Demographic change and international migration necessitate culturally sensitive marketing (Hofstede, 2001; Askegaard et al., 2005).
- Becomes more ethical in its positions and less performative (Banet-Weiser, 2012).
- Internet inclusion still isn't balanced and threatens to entrench inequality (Noble, 2018).
- Value-conscious younger generations and want real, responsible brands (Edelman, 2023).

Edelman's 2023 Trust Barometer reveals that more than 70% of consumers worldwide report being more loyal to brands which they feel are inclusive.

### e. A Value Proposition Rooted in Justice

Traditional marketing conceptualizes value as a balance between reward and sacrifice. Inclusive marketing reimagines value as:

- Social, visibility, identity and inclusion (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995).
- Symbolic, cultural affirmation and dignity (Miller, 1995).
- Systemic, redistributing voice and power (Fraser, 2008).

Equity is not something to be added on in this case,it is foundational to brand value and market salience.

**Conclusion**

Inclusive marketing presents a revolutionary and necessary paradigm shift. It challenges marketers to move away from transactional models towards relational, co-creative and justice-practice models. This new direction imagines the practice of marketing beyond the drive for consumption to creating equity and belonging in the market.
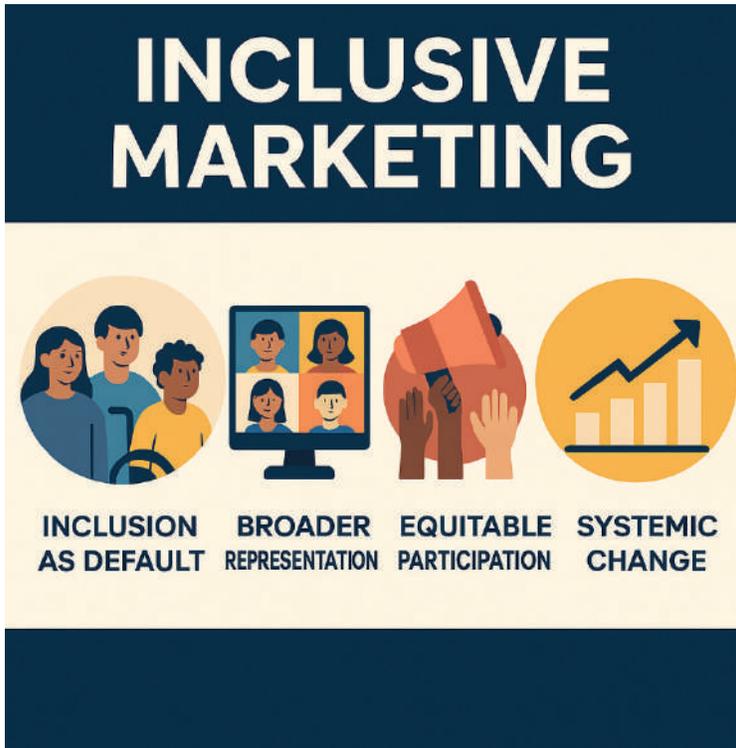


*Figure 1.3: Inclusive Marketing – A New Normative Direction*

*A conceptual shift from market segmentation and token representation to justice-driven inclusion, systemic co-creation and ethical brand transformation.*

**1.5 The Case for Co-Creation with Marginalized Communities**

Co-creation has grown more popular in marketing, service design and innovation as the vehicle of more intense engagement, improved product design and more real brand connections (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Co-creation for marginalized individuals, though, needs to extend beyond strategic application to an instrument of inclusion, power and justice (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008; Ind & Coates, 2013).

### a. From Consultation to Collaboration

Traditional marketing practices generally utilize marginal groups as research participants instead of knowledge collaborators. Despite good intentions, extraction of knowledge with no value return or agency to communities may be a possibility (Spivak, 1988; Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

Co-creation in its true sense involves:

- Collaborating with communities as epistemic experts, not passive informants (Frow et al., 2011).

- Sharing decision-making and problem-framing power (Chambers, 1994; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995).

- Designing with communities, not for them (Cova et al., 2011).

This method recognizes lived experience as knowledge and resists top-down approaches characteristic of mainstream marketing studies.

### b. Ethical Arguments: Redressing Historical Exclusion

Exclusion and misrepresentation in marketing have been longstanding,through stereotypical representation, exclusion of access and Western culture as the universal (Crockett, 2008; Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). Ethical co-creation offers a way towards restorative justice.

It favors:

- Subverting firm-centric definitions of value and expertise (Penaloza, 1994).

- Restore trust in traditionally victimized communities (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995).

- Re-center marginalized voices in meaning-making (Fraser, 2008).

### c. Strategic Justifications: Unleashing Innovation and Loyalty

Co-creation isn't just ethical,it's strategically powerful. Marginalized consumers are more likely to demonstrate:

- Creative resilience, innovative coping and consumption strategies under constraint (Hill, 2001).

- Cultural capital, insights that subvert mainstream market conventions (Visconti et al., 2010).

- Networked influence, ability to generate trust and traction among underrepresented communities (Askegaard et al., 2005).

Those brands who truly co-create with such customers are bound to realize authenticity, differentiation and loyalty (Frow et al., 2011).

### d. Epistemological Justifications: Broadening the Value Concept

Common marketing metrics (e.g., satisfaction, intention to purchase) miss what is important to marginalized groups. Value for these customers can be:

- Relational, valuing each other and community welfare (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

- Symbolic, tied to identity affirmation and visibility (Banet-Weiser, 2012).

- Traansformative, associated with empowerment and system change (Ozanne et al., 2015).

Co-creation inclusive turns the focus from firm-defined KPIs to culture-centric and justice-driven metrics (Fraser, 2008).

### e. Risks and Responsibilities in Co-Creation

Unless proper safeguards are in place, co-creation may be extractive or tokenistic. Potential risks include:

- Tokenism: collecting community input without implementing change (Ahmed, 2012).

- Exploitation: using community ideas without equitable compensation (Banet-Weiser, 2012).

- Burnout: overwhelming community collaborators with no follow-up support (Daykin, 2022).

Ethical co-creation involves:

- Open goal-setting and mutual expectations (Ind & Coates, 2013).

- Just attribution and compensation (Christens, 2012).

- Co-governance structures and feedback mechanisms (Figueroa et al., 2002).

### Conclusion

Co-creation with marginalized groups is not a design ethos or brand strategy,instead, it's an ethical, strategic and epistemological imperative. Lived humbly and ethically, it:

- Subverts extractive market logics.

- Redistributes voice and value.

- Reimagines marketing as a platform for transformation and inclusion.

It's not just about producing better products,it's about producing a more level playing field.



*Figure 1.4: The Case for Co-Creation with Marginalized Communities*

*A visual framework outlining the ethical, strategic and epistemological imperatives for participatory marketing grounded in justice, agency and reciprocity.*

## 1.6 Toward a Human-Centered Marketing Logic

With the failures of the conventional paradigms paramount and most notably in how they have approached marginalized groups, an increasing imperative exists to re-imagine marketing on a people-first platform. This involves a turn away from behavior and exchange toward experience, dignity and systems justice (Anderson et al., 2013; Mick et al., 2012).

### a. From Customer-Centricity to Human-Centricity

Since several decades, "customer-centricity" has influenced marketing practice in fostering loyalty and satisfaction (Shah et al., 2006). Nevertheless, it remains interest-driven at managerial levels as it tries to maximize consumer value for the sake of firm profitability maximization.

Human-centricity, on the other hand, considers:

- Humans as relational, complex human persons,not transactional actors (Norman, 2013).

- Their socio-cultural context, feelings and vulnerabilities (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

- The systemic issues they face,such as racism, poverty and ableism (Hill, 2001; Noble, 2018).

This shift aligns with human-centered design streams, service development and participatory development (Brown, 2009; Chambers, 1994).

### b. Marketing That Sees, Listens and Reflects

Marketing, in the human-centered perspective, is not persuasion,but responsiveness and empathy (Tronto, 1993; Gilligan, 1982). It requires systems that:

- See exclusion and inequality (Penaloza & Mish, 2011).

- Hear the voices of stakeholders and communities (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008).

- Reveal real lives,not constructed selves,through platforms, products and messages (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2005).

Marketing practices need to extend beyond surface-level segmentation and towards intersectional awareness (Crenshaw, 1989; Sender, 2012).

### c. The Ethics of Care in Marketing

The care ethics, derived from feminist philosophy, emphasizes relational responsibility, interdependence and context responsiveness (Gilligan, 1982; Tronto, 1993). Translated into marketing, it requires:

- Building respectful and cooperative relationships between brands and consumers (Mick et al., 2012).

- Averting manipulation and exploitation of the emotional (Banet-Weiser, 2012).

- Eliminating exploitation, repair and relational accountability (Fraser, 2008).

Care-based marketing co-evolves with co-creative voice- and vulnerability-sensitive practices.

### d. Designing for Well-Being

Human-centered marketing is consistent with Transformative Service Research (TSR) and macromarketing, both consistent with systems that promote well-being at the individual and social level (Anderson et al., 2013; Fisk et al., 2018).

This includes:

- Looking beyond KPIs for assessing sustainable effect on inclusion, health and empowerment (Ozanne & Phipps, 2009).

- Reflecting on inclusive co-creation as not just a strategy, but an entrance to social influence (Ozanne et al., 2015).

- Getting to know consumers as meaning-makers, rather than buying behavior (Daykin, 2022).

Markets moving in this direction are guardians of dignity and co-designers of structural change.

### e. A New Normative Vision for Marketing

Human marketing isn't a fad,this is an ethical vision for a fairer, more ethical approach. It requires that every marketing effort bring human lives, cultural values and economic possibility (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Crockett, 2008) into being.

For minority communities most especially, this entails (Frow et al., 2011; Hill, 2001):

- Making people the priority in co-creating brands.

- Designing to do no harm by message, form and design.

- Creating spaces in which all needs and identities are respected.

### Conclusion

An economics of human reason to marketing is an entrée to ethical sensitivity, structural caring and creative partnership. It places marketing as engagement and not manipulation; as relationship-building and not information gathering.

This new paradigm opens the door to universal marketing, justice and mutual flourishing based on co-creation.

*Figure 1.5: Toward a Human-Centered Marketing Logic*

*A transition from transactional marketing logic to human-centered frameworks emphasizing empathy, ethics, co-creation and community well-being.*

## 1.7 Conclusion

This initial chapter has laid the intellectual and ethical groundwork for a new marketing era that is inclusive, participatory and equitable. Through critically questioning the shift from transaction to relational and co-creative paradigms, we mapped the evolving consciousness that value creation in marketing is not only done on behalf of consumers but also increasingly with them. Such co-creation, though, will need to move beyond rhetoric and convenience to be truly inclusive,particularly in the case of addressing historically marginalized groups.

Criticism of mainstream marketing blind spots,data bias, representational tokenism, structural naiveté, cultural universalism and complicity with inequality,demonstrates that earlier mindsets are no longer sufficient for today's socio-political and cultural environments. Classical marketing has far too often neglected to see beyond profitability measures, ignoring the experienced reality, creative potential and systemic obstacles of marginalized groups. Moving forward, marketing must do more than recognize these gaps but also actively work towards redesigning from the margins.

The people-centered and inclusive marketing segments look towards a compelling alternative: a paradigm grounded in dignity-, empathy- and power-sharing. Inclusive marketing inquires as to who should be permitted to produce meaning within the market and requires a move from symbolic action towards structural transformation. Redistribution of narrative power, representational space and decision-making power is required. Human-centered marketing, in turn, urges marketers to design for well-being, to adopt an ethic of care and to view consumers not as targets but as people embedded in histories, communities and systems.

Interwoven, they are the strands that come together into one proposition: that marketing can and should be refigured from an activity of persuasion to a site of mutual meaning-making and equity. Co-creation, in its full implementation, can be the driving force toward such refiguring. It is in co-participation,and not extractive action,that brands, researchers and institutions might start building trust, salience and legitimacy with marginalized publics.

Moreover, this reframing is not a moral obligation alone,it is strategic. In a demographically altered, culturally diverse, socially aware and accountability-driven world, inclusive co-creation is a leading-edge model for sustainable innovation and brand strength. Companies that listen authentically to muted voices will not only do less harm; they will tap into new sources of creativity, dedication and lasting value.

In short, this chapter heralds a shift,a transition from exclusion to inclusion, from messaging down to dialogue as collaboration and from the logic of transactions to co-transformation. Marketing can no longer be deaf to its effect or speechless in regard to its function. It has to become a place for listening, looking in the rearview mirror and co-authorship,where every voice counts and every narrative is co-authored.

# Understanding Marginalization in a Market Context

## 2.1 Introduction

In an effort to prudently practice co-creative and inclusive marketing, it is first and foremost necessary to understand marginalization,not as a fixed descriptor or demographic category, but as systematized inequality based on historical, political, economic and cultural difference. Marginalization refers to the dynamic push-out of individuals and groups from equal access to and participation in the resources, stories, decision-making bodies and value-generating systems of society (Crockett, 2008; Visconti et al., 2010). In marketing, this exclusion is commonly implicit but pervasive and becomes articulated in product development, pricing decisions, distribution channels, advertising imagery, data gathering and algorithmic reasoning.

While traditional marketing theory leans towards universality and segmentation, it generally ignores the structural obstacles that limit equal access to and presence within the market. These models are more likely to premise the marketplace as a leveled playing field and the consumer as an autonomous decision-maker and therefore fail to take into consideration how power, privilege and systemic oppression shape consumption experiences (Penaloza, 1994; Sandikci & Ger, 2010). As such, those outside of dominant market norms,according to race, class, gender, disability, age, status of citizenship or geography,are frequently invisibilized, misrepresented or pathologized within dominant marketing ideas and action.

Inclusive marketing starts with seeing: seeing the excluded, seeing the ways they are excluded and seeing why they remain excluded. It requires a shift

away from superficial marketing analysis along lines of demographic exclusion towards an understanding of systemic inequality and its reproduction by the marketing system. This requires researchers and marketers to focus on both the macro-level forces (e.g., neoliberal policy, urban planning, colonial histories) and micro-level experiences (e.g., service denial, algorithmic bias, stereotype threat) composing marketplace marginality.

Additionally, the chapter eliminates the myth of building marginalized consumers as merely "underserved" or "hard to reach." Rather, it foregrounds their agency, power and creative mobilization in confronting, resisting and reimagining the market (Hill, 2001; Baker et al., 2005). From grassroots entrepreneurship and informal economies to cultural remixing and digital activism, marginalized consumers do not just actively engage in co-producing market dynamics but also in terms that challenge hegemonic narratives and enhance inclusive innovation.

These arguments will erode conventional values of value, visibility and segmenting consumers by injecting discourse on critical marketing, feminist economics, decolonial theory and transformative consumer research (TCR) (Mick et al., 2012; Fraser, 2008; Escobar, 2018).

Finally, this chapter confirms that marginalization is not merely a theoretical prerequisite for inclusive marketing,it is a political and ethical obligation as well. Marketers can no longer envision themselves as being inclusive without first taking on board how their practices can reinstate damage, neglect difference or appropriate value non-reciprocally. Because of this, this chapter begins a process of reflexive analysis and structure awareness, which will be fleshed out in subsequent chapters.

## 2.2 Who Are the Marginalized in Consumer Markets?

Consumer marginalization of the market refers to the systematic exclusion or disenfranchisement of certain groups from deriving the advantages, resources and images offered by way of market institutions. Exclusions can be economic, cultural, spatial, technological or symbolic in nature (Crockett, 2008; Visconti et al., 2010). To create marketing practices that are inclusive, equitable and people-centered, an understanding of who is being marginalized,and why,is vital.

Instead of being static identities, marginalization is created by intersectional inequalities, histories of discrimination and fluid power relations that shift through time, space and sector (Penaloza, 1994; Hill, 2001; Crenshaw, 1989). Below are some of the most applicable consumer

groups that are typically marginalized, with an understanding that these identities can intersect and pile upon each other.

### a. Low-Income Consumers and the Working Poor

Low-income families and consumers,working poor included,are some of the most chronically excluded consumer groups. They tend to be subjected to:

- Reduced access to quality services and products because of price, place or credit infrastructure (Hill, 2002)

- Symbolic representation in media and advertising, typically featured in scarcity narratives (Baker et al., 2005)

- Poor engagement in the creation or building of products and experiences that address their realities (Martin & Murphy, 2017)

Although their coping strategies and purchasing power, poor consumers are generally deemed unprofitable or marginal to mass marketing systems (Viswanathan et al., 2005).

### b. Older Consumers

Older people are stereotyped or marginalized in consumer society consistently. Youth, newness and velocity are frequently the requirements of marketing,values not necessarily common in the experiences of older individuals (Kohlbacher & Herstatt, 2011).

A few typical examples of marginalization are (Yoon et al., 2005):

- Doesntasy or inaccessibility of interfaces (digital exclusion).
- Infantilizing tone of communication and language.
- Product innovation disregard, with few products being made available to cater to needs of aging.

While populations are aging worldwide, it is more important than ever that older consumers become the target of marketers' imagination as diverse and active agents, not burdens or passive consumers.

### c. People with Disabilities

Individuals with physical, sensory, intellectual or psychosocial impairments are structurally and symbolically excluded from consumer markets (Pullin, 2009).

Exclusion may involve (Ellis & Kent, 2011; Haller, 2010):

- Retail and online exclusion barriers.

- Fixed or inaccessible product design.

- Stereotyping or invisibility of brand images.

Despite greater exposure for inclusive design on the debate table, accessibility in reality continues to be an exception and not a rule. Notably, disabled consumers also have special understanding and creative potential that is not typically activated in mass market marketing.

### d. Ethnic and Indigenous Minorities

Indigenous and ethnic consumers are frequently subject to:

- Exoticized or tokenized representation (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004).

- Cultural appropriation without profiting or crediting (Banerjee & Linstead, 2001).

- Marginalization from infrastructure, such as minority-majority retailing and distribution networks (Penaloza, 1994).

In addition, dominant marketing logics prefer Western aesthetic codes and norms over non-Western consumption forms and community value (Askegaard & Kjeldgaard, 2007).

### e. Refugees, Migrants and Displaced Populations

Displaced populations,like asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants,are subject to consumer exclusion through (Viswanathan et al., 2010):

- Unstable legal status.

- Language and cultural obstacles.

- Restricted access to financial system and the internet.

In either event, migrant and diaspora populations possess a resilient entrepreneurial and adaptive consumption, embodying alternative value sets and exchange (Askegaard et al., 2005).

### f. Rural and Remote Consumers

Rural or remote consumers are subject to marginalization by (Sheth, 2011; Chakravarty et al., 2014):

- Limited access to goods and services (core-periphery divide).

- Heavy transport cost and thin variety.

- Digital exclusion, which bars participation in e-commerce or electronic loyalty programs.

Marketing systems disregard these consumers in segmentation programs, which perpetuates spatial inequalities.

### g. Consumers with Limited Digital Literacy

Technology expertise is a gatekeeper of access and inclusion in today's digital market. Consumers with limited digital literacy,which includes some older citizens, low-education or low-income segments,have (Martin & Murphy, 2017; Noble, 2018):

- Constricted access to online promotions and services.

- Algorithmic exclusion and misnaming.

- Data privacy exposures, normally without proper protection or authorization.

These users are likely to slip through cracks of data marketing systems based on technological proficiency.

### h. Intersectionality and Fluidity of Marginalization

Marginalization is usually multi-dimensional. Most people are members of several excluded categories at the same time with compounding and accumulative disadvantages (Crenshaw, 1989).

For instance:

- A low-income elderly immigrant woman can be excluded on grounds of age, income, language and ethnicity.

- A disabled, queer youth of color can be digitally excluded as well as representationally invisible.

Context also enters into it: a marginalized group within a given industry or region may be empowered elsewhere. So inclusion needs to target intersectionality and fluidity and avoid the one-size-fits-all approach.

### Conclusion

Watching who is being kept out of consumer markets is less a matter of stereotyping vulnerable populations than a call to witness the systemic, intersectional and contextual forces that carry out exclusion. Marginalization is cumulative, liquid and generally imperceptible to mainstream marketing rationality. It is enabled not only by absence of access but by cultural erasure, digital gatekeeping, beauty standards and algorithmic discrimination. To practice inclusive marketing, practitioners need to break free from demographic profiling and instead use a structural and intersectional understanding that draws attention to compounded disadvantage and

enhances diverse lived experiences. It is only by embracing complexity and agency among marginalized consumers that marketing can be a place for equity, recognition and co-created value.



*Figure 2.1: Who Are the Marginalized in Consumer Markets?*

*A layered visual identifying systematically excluded groups in marketing ecosystems,based on race, ethnicity, gender, class, ability, age, migration status and more.*

## 2.3 The Marketplace as a Site of Exclusion and Exploitation

In contrast to the marketplace ideal of a rose-colored, untrammelled, equal and free arena of exchange, critical scholarship increasingly acknowledges that markets generally operate as instruments of exclusion, management and exploitation (Crockett, 2008; Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Markets are not fair playing fields but social constructions that instantiate and reproduce more profound power imbalances,based, for example, on race, gender, class, ability and place (Penaloza, 1994; Sandikci & Ger, 2010).

### a. Markets as Cultural and Political Institutions

Markets are more than economic institutions; they are also cultural institutions that organize meaning, identity and access. They define (Slater & Tonkiss, 2001; Thompson & Hirschman, 1995):

- Who is a "valued" consumer.

- Whose tastes are accounted for in product development and production.

- Whose labor, narratives and cultures are commodified or silenced.

These choices tend not to be neutral. They express dominant ideologies that have a propensity to naturalize inequality and render marginalized identities hypervisible (as exotic or deviant) or invisible (as economically irrelevant) (Carrigan et al., 2005).

### b. Exploitative Labor and Informal Economies

Numerous market economies rely on the labor of marginalized groups,often exploitative or precarious ones. These include:

- Sweatshop labor for cheap fashion (Bartley, 2007).

- Informal recycling economies in urban slums (Medina, 2007).

- Backdoor labor with no benefits or protections (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016).

This type of labor is often low-paid, precarious and obscured, but keeps the value chains of large consumer brands running. Marginal workers hence come into the market not as autonomous subjects, but as mere inputs into the capitalist value extraction (Banerjee & Linstead, 2001).

### c. The Racialization of Market Access

Race dominates market engagement. Scholars have evidenced the institutionalized exclusion of non-white individuals from access to credit, home ownership and retail services (Hill, 2001; Crockett et al., 2003). Racial profiling in selling, discriminatory lending and redlining are all instances of market exclusion or market exploitation of dominated racial groups.

In addition, cultural work and products of communities of color are usually pirated with neither permission nor pay, furthering colonial erasure and extraction practices (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009; Banet-Weiser, 2012).

### d. Extractive Data Economies

With the digital era, exploitation is in new guise with the harvesting of consumer information, in this case especially of poor, racialized or otherwise marginalized populations. This information is utilized to power advertisement algorithms, credit scores, predictive policing, etc.,without opt-in permission (Noble, 2018; Zuboff, 2019).

These practices engender "surveillance markets" where marginalized users are profiled, targeted and sorted in order to reinforce present inequalities. The market then becomes a space of algorithmic harm,where information concerning individuals gets commodified and privacy is a privilege (Eubanks, 2018).

### e. Marketing as a Gatekeeper of Visibility

The marketing systems determine who is to be seen and how one must be seen in brand communication and campaigns as well as customer experiences. Representation of marginal groups incompletely or stereotypically denies them symbolic access to cultural citizenship (Kates, 2002; Sender, 2012).

Such symbolic violence creates internalized oppression, misrecognition and market non-belonging. Here, representation is political, not cosmetic (Ahmed, 2012; Fraser, 2008).

### Conclusion

By no means is the marketplace a neutral or altruistic space where inequities are reproduced, legitimized and commodified. The attentiveness to this fact is required for development towards inclusive and transformatory marketing systems. It is about subverting the traditional, cultural and structural modes of exclusion and exploitation,and imagining alternative models of engagement through justice, reciprocity and accountability.

*Figure 2.2: The Marketplace as a Site of Exclusion and Exploitation*

*A visual hierarchy showing how marginalized consumers experience systemic exclusion, stereotyping and economic harm across multiple layers of the marketplace, from production to representation.*

## 2.4 Marketing Representation and the Politics of Visibility

Marketing representation is not merely appearance or branding, it's an act of power creating cultural meaning, consumer identity and social belonging. Brands' decisions regarding how they represent whom they do, how they represent them and whom they don't represent at all betray hidden assumptions of value, legitimacy and social hierarchy (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2005; Gill, 2007).

### a. The Constructed Nature of Visibility

Advertising and media representation are never neutral. They are the result of wider ideological constructions of what bodies, voices and lifestyles are desirable and which are pathologized, exoticized or erased (Hall, 1997). They help to socially construct "normalcy" and reinforce additional hegemonic identities around whiteness, heterosexuality, youth and affluence (Sender, 2012).

Interestingly, visibility is not necessarily power. Marginal groups can become hypervisible in stereotypical, sexualized or decontextualized portrayals that reduce their complexity and instrumentalize them (Banet-

Weiser, 2018). Invisibility and misrepresentation are therefore two ways through which symbolic exclusion is enacted.

### b. The Commodification of Diversity

In recent times, brands have heeded demands for inclusivity by increasing the diversity of those featured in campaigns. Such representation is not, however, profound but superficial and rather more a response to market demand than to actual engagement with disempowered communities (Nakamura, 2007; Tounsel, 2022). This trend,which has at times been referred to as "woke-washing" or "rainbow capitalism",employing the tropes of social justice for financial gain without shifting power or engaging with structural inequality (Gill & Orgad, 2018a).

This form of "performative inclusion" performs the kind of diversity as marketing strategy instead of an assurance of systemic change and will often fail to include the represented communities in reality. Thus, it can reproduce the same harms which it claims to correct (Han, 2021).

### c. Market Norms and Aesthetic Exclusions

Marketing is heavily influenced by aesthetic regimes that favor some kinds of looks, bodies and styles as more "sellable" or "relatable." These are racialized, gendered, ableist and classed: thin, light-skinned, able-bodied, cisgender bodies are valued more than others (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004).

Examples:

- Plus-sized bodies are limitedly tokenized or unrepresented.
- Dark-skinned models are photographed in a manner that minimizes their skin color.
- Disabled bodies are shown as "inspirational," not typical.
- Queer representation centers on white, upper-class gay men and erases queer experiences toward others.

Omissions have real effects that impact consumer self-esteem, aspirational conduct and marketplace involvement (Frith & Mueller, 2010).

### d. Cultural Stereotyping and Misrecognition

When marginalized groups do appear in ads at all, they are more likely to appear in flattened or stereotypic tropes,the wise elder, the sultry Latina, the Oriental Asian, the hypermasculine Black man. These reductionist representations don't capture the diversity of communities and reinforce constraining scripts of identity (Alcoff, 2005; Scott, 1994).

Such misrecognition denies individuals the right to gaze back and find themselves reflected with dignity, complexity and agency in the cultural landscape. It also directs how majority groups perceive and engage the minority group (Fraser, 2008).

### e. Resistance and Reclamation

Even in exclusion, marginalized consumers behave to resist and reimagine their representations. Underrepresented groups are retelling the mainstream visual stories and creating counterspaces of visibility (Milan, 2013; Jenkins et al., 2016a) by engaging in social media, influencer networks, user-generated content and community-based branding.

These acts of representational sovereignty affirm that inclusion must do more than "being seen",participation, authorship and control of narratives (Banet-Weiser, 2012).

### Conclusion

Marketing representation can never be objective; it plays a significant role in determining whose stories are viewed, whose selves are validated and whose existences are made invisible. The politics of visibility, therefore, need to become central to the concerns of inclusive marketing. Transcending tokenism involves guaranteeing a commitment towards gritty, multi-dimensional and engagement-based representation of the excluded groups,not just in advertisement, but within the entire branding ecosystem. If marketers interrogate existing representational practices in a critical manner and co-create narrative, they can subvert dominant cultural narratives and forge more equitable modes of marketplace visibility. That means not just simple inclusion but recognition, dignity and justice.

**Marketing Representation and the Politics of Visibility**

**ERASURE**

**TOKENISM**

**STIGMATIZATION**
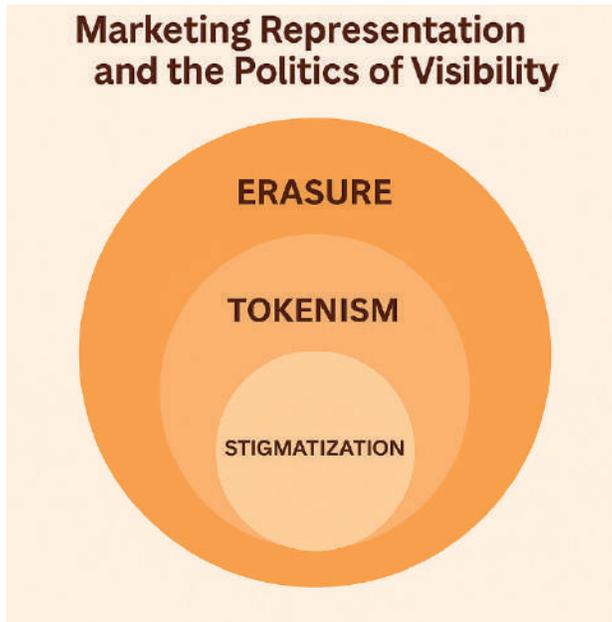
*Figure 2.3: Marketing Representation and the Politics of Visibility*

*A comparative visual of representation tiers,from erasure and tokenism to authentic inclusion,highlighting how visibility alone does not guarantee equity or empowerment.*

### 2.5 Consumption as Resistance and Identity Expression

Consumption is usually characterized as a passive process of satisfying desires that have been instigated by marketers. Yet, critical consumption studies have shown that consumption may also be a location of resistance, identity negotiation and meaning creation (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Holt, 2002). For marginalized consumers especially, market engagement is seldom merely economic,it is profoundly cultural and political.

### a. Subversive and Alternative Consumption Practices

Marginalized groups have long employed consumption as a means of resistance to mainstream cultural discourse and exclusionary market norms. Some examples include:

- DIY and upcycling movements that confront mass-market aesthetics and capitalist waste (Sandlin & Milam, 2008).

- Black hair and beauty activism confronting Eurocentric standards of beauty (Rooks, 1996; Banks, 2006).

- Veganism and food justice in communities of color as a confrontation with environmental racism and health disparities (Crenshaw, 1991).

They are not merely niche trends, however, but rather a refusal to be dictated to by prevailing market logics and a re-assertion of agency in the construction of one's identity and space.

### b. Identity Performance through Consumption

For most consumers, particularly those whose identities are stigmatized or marginalized, consumption is an effective way of self-expression and visibility. As people create identities through fashion, music, food and electronic media, identity is articulated in terms of not just individual taste but also political stance (Thompson & Haytko, 1997).

This involves:

- Queer consumers who utilize fashion and nightlife for reclaiming space within heteronormative cultures (Kates, 2002).

- Indigenous artists marketing their own handmade crafts to authenticate cultural heritage and challenge cultural commodification (Sandlin et al., 2011).

- Muslim consumers creating halal lifestyle brands to negotiate hybrid identities between modernity and tradition (Sandikci & Ger, 2010).

These identity projects are usually highly reflexive, with consumers negotiating structural constraints in order to perform authenticity.

### c. Resistance to Stereotypical Market Representations

As a reaction to ongoing misrepresentation or erasure, marginalized consumers can take part in practices that resist, subvert or criticize dominant marketing discourses. This can be achieved through:

- Culture jamming and brand parodies (Klein, 2000).

- Social media callouts and boycotts (Crockett, 2008).

- Ethical consumer movements, i.e., Black-owned business directories or fair-trade marketplaces, that attempt to divert economic value to more equitable systems (Shaw et al., 2006).

These actions are testaments to both market skepticism and the imperative of forging spaces whereby consumption is more attuned to lived values and justice.

### d. Marketplace as a Space of Cultural Resistance

Even under constrained or exclusionary circumstances, marginalized consumers will establish alternative market spaces,physical and virtual,where reciprocal, communal and culturally affirming exchanges can be pursued (Visconti et al., 2010). These consist of informal economies, diasporic markets and pop-up events convened around collective identity and resistance.

These practices confirm that consumption is less a matter of integration into mainstream markets than one of establishing autonomous spaces of belonging, survival and celebration.

### Conclusion

Consumption is not merely an economic act,it is also a site where individuals and groups make claims to identity, resist oppressive ideologies and contest exclusionary norms. For marginalized consumers, daily consumption can be a source of cultural affirmation, political protest and social empowerment. Such dynamics reposition marketing as a dialogical and contested space, rather than a top-down process, in which meaning is collaboratively produced in moments of rejection, selection, adaptation and re-signification. Meaningfully engaging these consumers requires marketers to cherish and honor the underlying socio-cultural and political axes of consumption as a privileged site of agency, identity and transformation.
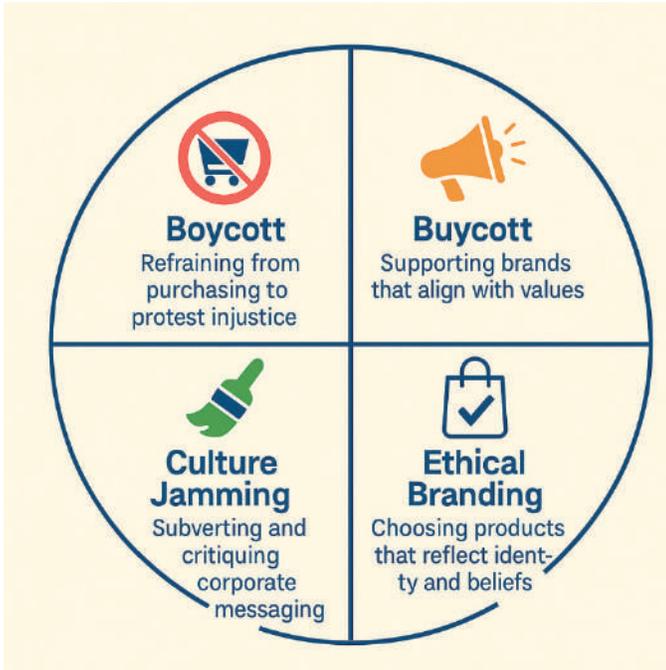
*Figure 2.4: Consumption as Resistance and Identity Expression*

*A layered infographic showing how consumer practices,such as ethical purchasing, boycott, cultural appropriation resistance and identity branding,serve as acts of resistance and self-definition for marginalized groups.*

## 2.6 The Intersectionality of Market Marginalization

Marginalization in consumer markets is not experienced along one axis of identity. Rather, it is lived through intersecting and compounding power structures,i.e., race, gender, class, disability, sexuality, age, religion and citizenship status. Intersectionality theory, developed by legal theorist Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), is a key framework for explaining how a person can be privileged and oppressed simultaneously along various dimensions of their identity.

Intersectionality pushes marketers to go beyond reductionist conceptions of "target segments" and, instead, account for the multifaceted, intersecting social locations that influence how individuals interact with,and are shut out from,market systems (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Bowleg, 2008).

### a. Structural Compounding of Exclusion

Intersectional marginalization creates compounded disadvantages that intensify exclusion from economic participation, brand representation and customer service. For instance:

- Low-income migrant women might not have access to financial services because of language, documentation and gender norms (Sengupta & Sahay, 2018).

- Women of color with disabilities experience multiple and compounding sources of discrimination at the intersection of ableism, sexism and racism (Garland-Thomson, 2002).

These dynamics are synergistic, creating unique and often more profound manifestations of market exclusion than would be felt through any one category in isolation.

### b. The Failure of "One-Size-Fits-All" Inclusion

Campaigns based on single-axis measures of diversity,race or gender, for example,fail to capture the complexity of lived experience. A campaign might feature Black people but not Afro-Latinx people; represent queer couples but not trans and nonbinary people; speak to women but not to how class or religion constrains agency (Cho et al., 2013).

Absent intersectionality, diversity efforts are reduced to tokenism, with no capacity to deal with the complexity of consumer identities and resulting in inadvertent exclusion (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

### c. Intersectionality as a Design Principle

Adopting an intersectional approach involves using equity-minded thinking in every stage of the marketing process,from product and price to message and customer service. It is asking:

- Who is being represented and who is not?

- How are lived experiences informing the message?

- What norms are governing segmentation and categorization?

This involves querying how market categories themselves are informed by hegemonic norms,for example, characterizing "youth," "middle class," or "consumer desires" via Western, urban, able-bodied viewpoints (Littler, 2009).

### d. Data, Analytics and Algorithmic Blindness

The majority of market research instruments and online ad algorithms are not set up to record intersectional complexity, reducing identity to binary variables (e.g., male/female, white/non-white). This can lead to biased data sets, skewed insights and discriminatory outputs (Benjamin, 2019; Noble, 2018).

For instance, predictive analytics can deny credit services to undocumented immigrants or misrepresent trans individuals in wellness apps because of inflexible gender assumptions. Such algorithmic harm exacerbates the marginalization of already vulnerable groups (Eubanks, 2018).

### Conclusion

Intersectionality is a theoretical basis for examining the compounding exclusion that numerous consumers experience in the market. It challenges marketing practitioners to consider how systems of oppression,racism, sexism, classism, ableism and others,intersect to create inequitable outcomes. In embracing intersectionality, marketers can extend beyond superficial inclusion to forge equitable, dignified and justice-driven market institutions that genuinely mirror the richness of consumer diversity.
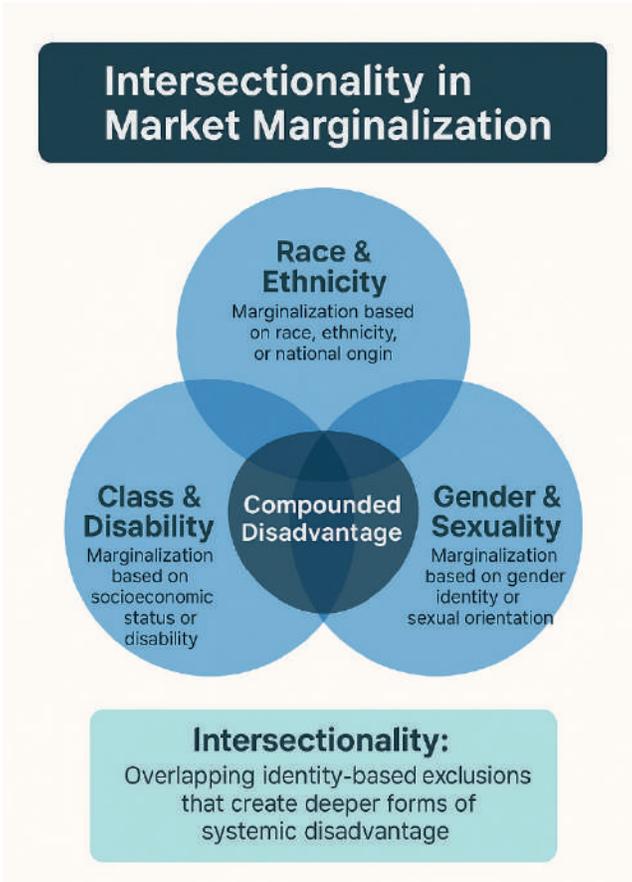
*Figure 2.5: Intersectionality in Market Marginalization*

*A layered infographic illustrating the compound effects of overlapping social identities that result in systemic exclusion and invisibility in consumer markets.*

## 2.7 Reframing Marginalized Consumers as Innovation Partners

Instead of looking at marginalized consumers as the focus of social marketing or outside of the mainstream economy, increased research and practice have come to see these individuals and communities as sources of innovation. Exclusion, in this sense, is not only a locus of harm, but also of creativity, resilience and ingenuity (Prahalad, 2004; Viswanathan et al., 2012).

### a. Bottom-up Innovation and Resourcefulness

Marginalized consumers typically confront radical structural constraints,constrained income, infrastructure, access or institutional

support. It is precisely these constraints, however, that spawn creative coping mechanisms, workarounds and community-based solutions that are contextually appropriate and sustainable (Pitta et al., 2008). For example (Gupta, 2011; Simanis & Hart, 2009).

- Informal economies in2 urban Africa and Latin America are exemplars of adaptive retailing systems.

- Poor communities practice product repurposing, repair cultures and circular economies.

- Community health workers in poor areas create education campaigns based on local beliefs and literacy levels.

These practices reverse top-down views of innovation and instead illustrate "bottom-up ingenuity" based on need and embedded knowledge.

### b. Co-Creation and Participatory Design

Instead of pulling knowledge from marginalized groups using surveys or ethnography alone, inclusive marketing requires co-creation,where consumers are put on an equal footing as partners in the design of product and service offerings (Ind & Coates, 2013). Participatory design facilitates (Brown & Wyatt, 2010):

- Product development that mirrors the aspirations and realities of underserved consumers.

- Empowerment through voice and agency in market representation.

- Increased trust, adoption and relevance of market offerings.

Such strategies shift from designing for poor consumers to designing with them, thereby redressing innovation power and elitist knowledge hierarchies.

### c. Inclusive Innovation Ecosystems

Reframing poor consumers as innovation partners also demands institutional support systems that scale up their contributions. These include:

- Micro-entrepreneurship platforms and social enterprises that incubate community-developed business ideas (London & Hart, 2011).

- Open innovation networks through which businesses co-create with grassroots innovators (George et al., 2012).

- Ethical market arrangements that offer fair prices, capacity-building and visibility to local producers (Kolk et al., 2014).

These arrangements facilitate the scaling up of bottom-up innovations while their values accruing from being embedded in communities are maintained.

### d. Rethinking Value Creation

Last, this reframing pushes marketers and companies to rethink what is "value" and who decides. In prevailing models, innovation tends to be equated with technological newness or profitability in the market. Yet, marginalized consumers might value durability, flexibility, cultural significance or shared use, types of value not typically factored into mainstream innovation measures (Viswanathan et al., 2010).

This identification is necessary to develop inclusive and sustainable innovation systems that cater to heterogeneous publics, not elite market niches.

### Conclusion

Reframing marginalised consumers as innovation partners reverses traditional wisdom that locks expertise and creativity within the firm. By embracing the distinctive perspectives, life experiences and problem-solving methods of underserved communities, marketers are able to tap into new sources of value that are both socially desirable and commercially viable. Not only does this democratize innovation, but it also reverses exploitative models of engagement, forging greater trust and long-term collaboration. Finally, placing marginalized consumers as co-creators is not charity, it is a strategic necessity that places inclusive marketing at the nexus of resilience, relevance and moral obligation in a fast-changing marketplace.

## Innovation at the Margins
Reframing marginalized consumers as
co-creators and innovation partners

### Resourcefulness in Adversity
Marginalization often fosters creative adaptations and alternative practices

### Consumer-Driven Creativity
Communities at the margins repurpose and remix brand meanings

### Epistemic Shift
Recognizing marginalized communities as experts of their own experiences

### Inclusive Innovation Strategy
Engaging marginalized consumers in co-design and R&D processes

*Figure 2.6: Innovation at the Margins*

*A visual framework highlighting how marginalized consumers contribute to inclusive innovation through creative resilience, participatory design and systemic co-creation.*

## 2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated that marginalization of consumer markets is not accidental,but systematic, entwined with historical injustices and reproduced in mundane marketing action. From being excluded from representation and exploitative targeting through to product design exclusion and decision-making exclusion, the marketplace is increasingly encountered by marginalized consumers as very much less a place of belonging and more a terrain of conflict.

But the same landscape also imposes the risk of resistance, reinvention and redefinition. Not only do excluded consumers negotiate exclusion,indeed, they resist, subvert and redefine the marketplace in ways that are both

economically productive and culturally inventive. Consumption practices of excluded consumers serve as acts of identity formation, political resistance and community making.

To move from superficial inclusion to transformational change, marketers need to:

- USF Reclaim power and voice, seeing marginalized groups as holders of knowledge and co-creators, not passive recipients of outreach.

- Value intersectionality and see how consumer exclusion is compounded by multiple, overlapping systems of oppression like racism, ableism, classism and heteronormativity.

- Design for equity, infusing inclusive values into brand strategy, product development, representation and stakeholder engagement,not only external communications.

- Co-create with, not for, investing in participatory processes honoring long-term relationship and co-created value.

Finally, this chapter redoes inclusive marketing as an afterthought to CSR and rather as a strategic requirement and a moral imperative. To turn away from the systemic failures that define the marketplace is to do nothing more than perpetuate the status quo. To go up against them with humility, wit and responsibility is to be part of creating a marketplace that is not only more diverse,but more just.

# Theories of Co-Creation and Empowerment

## 3.1 Introduction

Co-creation has been a revolutionary idea in marketing, especially in environments where conventional top-down strategies have failed to provide engagement or value in a significant way. Based on a belief that value is not only provided by companies but co-created with customers and communities, co-creation compels marketers to question the very bases of participation, agency and innovation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Whereas co-creation is generally addressed in the context of product development or service design, its use in the context of marginalized groups can add a powerful normative aspect. Here, co-creation is not just a means of differentiation strategy,it is also an empowerment, representation and justice mechanism.

To enact co-creation ethically and successfully, marketers need to base their practice on sound theoretical foundations that grapple not just with the mechanics of collaboration, but with dynamics of power, identity and systemic exclusion. Without these foundations, co-creation stands in danger of being a buzzword,deployed to polish brand reputation without ceding voice or redressing structural inequalities (Ind & Coates, 2013).

This chapter introduces four interrelated theoretical domains that form the foundation for inclusive co-creation in marketing: Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logic), Empowerment Theory, Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) and Participatory Development. Each contributes a unique lens for understanding how marketing can evolve from a vehicle of transactional exchange to a platform for social change.

Service-Dominant Logic, as articulated by Vargo and Lusch (2004, 2008), prioritizes value as co-created by stakeholders in service ecosystems through interactions. It redirects attention away from products and toward relationships and away from firms and toward networks of collaboration. The logic has specific applicability to marginalized contexts, where lived experience and contextual knowledge are at the heart of what value entails.

Empowerment Theory, which was developed in community psychology and political science, redirects attention from access to agency. It is interested in how individuals and communities gain control of decisions, resources and discourses that affect their lives (Zimmerman, 2000; Rappaport, 1987). In marketing, the theory assists marketers in going beyond inclusion as representation to participation as power.

Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) creates an ethical and methodological framework for marketing that is well-being enhancing with a specific focus on vulnerable populations (Mick et al., 2012). It calls scholars and practitioners to undertake research and actions that are not just rigorous but also relevant, participatory and restorative in nature.

Participatory Development, taking a cue from practice in global development, enables principles and practices for involving communities as co-designers of interventions. It is a strategy that focuses on local ownership, cultural appropriateness and long-term sustainability in market engagement (Chambers, 1994; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995).

Collectively, these frameworks provide an overarching basis for the development of marketing systems that are inclusive, equitable and transformative. By synthesizing these theoretical perspectives, marketers can operationalize co-creation not as a discrete event, but rather an ongoing process of relationship development, learning and mutual value creation.

As this chapter will contend, co-creation with marginalized communities demands a basic reorientation: from controlling consumers to collaborating with human beings; from mining insights to reallocating voice; and from pushing products to co-writing meaning. This conceptual pivot provides a foundation for a more human, collaborative and justice-oriented marketing paradigm.

## 3.2 Service-Dominant Logic: Marketing as Collaborative Value Creation

The Service-Dominant (S-D) Logic is a new marketing philosophy that focuses on value co-creation rather than value exchange and services

rather than products. It was proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2004) as a reconceptualization of marketing as a system where firms, customers and other allies co-create value rather than as a delivery of standardized value to passive customers.

This perspective has faulted classical Goods-Dominant (G-D) Logic, which considered products the focal object of economic exchange and consumers as terminal beneficiaries of firm-created value. Instead, S-D Logic holds that service,the utilization of competencies for the benefit of another,is the essence of exchange (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Products are only vehicles through which provision of service is transferred and are not themselves ends.

### a. Fundamental Assumptions of S-D Logic

S-D Logic is founded on a set of axiomatic presumptions (FPs) that go beyond mainstream marketing thought. The major presumptions include:

- Service is the minimum building block of exchange.

- The customer is always a value co-creator.

- All economic and social actors are resource integrators.

- Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Lusch & Vargo, 2014).

These points focus on the idea that value is not trapped in outputs but rather co-created through interaction and context.

### b. Implications for Marketing Practice

The S-D Logic approach has important consequences for how companies approach marketing. It sets organizations to change their focus away from transactions towards relationships, away from control towards partnership and away from efficiency towards flexibility (Chandler & Vargo, 2011). It also sets marketers to know more deeply about consumer contexts, capabilities and sense-making processes.

Service ecosystems,highly interdependent systems of actors, resources and institutions,become the new focus for analysis and marketers have to learn to function within such changing systems in a manner that promotes value creation (Lusch, Vargo, & Tanniru, 2010).

### c. Relevance for Inclusive and Participatory Marketing

S-D Logic's focus on co-creation and value-in-context readily affirms inclusive and participatory marketing strategies. It creates space for less

affluent consumers to be viewed not just as recipients of social welfare but also as players in creating value (Frow et al., 2011).

For instance, inclusive brand practices co-creating with disabled, Indigenous exemplify this change from firm-centered to co-creative value systems. S-D Logic therefore offers a conceptual stage off which to explain the positioning of inclusive marketing practices in producing shared value in heterogeneous and unequal stakeholder networks.

**Conclusion**

Service-Dominant Logic fundamentally shifts marketing from product exchange to collaborative value co-creation. This view strongly resonates with the inclusive marketing philosophy in its focus on dialogue, co-input and situated service experience. Instead of placing consumers as passive recipients of value chains, SDL envisions consumers as active integrators of resources and co-creators of offerings and results. Especially for marginalized people, this view presents the promise of genuine participation, cultural relatedness and co-innovation. Adopting SDL enables marketers to create more responsive, fair and sustainable relations that go beyond the traditional transactional limits.



*Figure 3.1: Service-Dominant Logic in Inclusive Marketing*

*A co-creative framework where value emerges through interactions, stakeholder integration and service ecosystems,replacing transactional logic with participatory exchange.*

### 3.3 Empowerment Theory: Beyond Inclusion Toward Agency

While much of inclusive marketing has directed attention towards representational inclusion,using diversified faces in marketing or advertising to under-served communities,empowerment theory encourages us to think beyond that which might be considered superficial representation and towards more substantively grounded forms of individual and collective agency (Zimmerman, 2000).

Empowerment is not just a question of access, however; it is creating people and communities' capacity to effect change, assert rights and transform systems that define their lives (Rappaport, 1987). For marketing, the implication is that brands must not only discover excluded consumers but together create spaces in which excluded consumers might find voice, self-determination and control over market stories and products (Cornwall & Brock, 2005).

#### a. Psychological organizational and Community Empowerment

Empowerment at various levels:

- Psychological empowerment consists of self-efficacy, control and critical awareness (Zimmerman, 1995).

- Organizational empowerment comprises decision-making participation choices, leadership and shared governance.

- Community empowerment includes collective action, mobilization of resources and the power to affect sociopolitical institutions (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

For marketing to be empowering, it should encompass all three dimensions,enabling consumer self-esteem, inducing participatory design practices and enabling structural transformation in market access and power (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004).

#### b. From Tokenism to Transformative Participation

Most diversity and inclusion initiatives are tokenistic or symbolic presence without true alteration of consumer participation. Empowerment theory summons marketing to transformational engagement, wherein previously marginalized consumers are co-designers, co-owners and champions (Arnstein, 1969; White, 1996).

For instance, consumer cooperatives or community-based branding efforts allow consumers not only to be heard but to redefine the market's

rules in a manner that reflects their values, needs and everyday realities (Murray & Ozanne, 2009).

### c. Empowerment Through Narrative and Counter-Storytelling

The most compelling empowerment tool is narrative,the power to define and tell one's own story and not be spoken for by hegemonic discourses. Empowered campaigns bolster counter-narratives as counterplots against stereotypes and commemorate resistance, survival and pleasure (Delgado, 1989; hooks, 1990).

These stories not only humanize marginalized consumers,but also reframe power disparities, shift cultural values and produce emotional solidarity among groups and brands (Thompson & Üstüner, 2015).

### d. Structural Conditions for Empowerment

Empowerment is ultimately not a marketing tactic. It calls for enabling conditions like:

- Economic agency (e.g., equitable wages, access to proprietorship)
- Institutional support (e.g., multicultural hiring, vendor policies)
- Policy advocacy (e.g., anti-discrimination policy, access to healthcare and credit)

Absent these conditions, empowerment can be performative,a brand aesthetic to which there is no structural answer (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Genuine empowerment demands continuing work, power redistribution and alignment with wider movements for justice.

### Conclusion

Empowerment Theory provides a critical redemption of superficial forms of inclusion by foregrounding concepts of agency, voice and structural change. It removes marketing from symbolic behavior and into practices that make marginalized groups and individuals the power behind the systems that govern their lives. Inclusive marketing empowerment is not merely to be heard or visible, but to have capacity and access to co-define goals, processes and outcomes. By embracing this vision, marketers can make more participatory and just markets,those in which power is not merely re-distributed, but shared. This move from representation to agency is essential in order to realize authentic, justice-based co-creation.

*Figure 3.2: Empowerment Theory in Inclusive Marketing*

*A conceptual illustration showing the shift from passive inclusion to active agency,through voice, participation, autonomy and structural change.*

### 3.4 Transformative Consumer Research (TCR): A Moral Turn in Marketing

Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) is an important trajectory in marketing scholarship,a trajectory that places human well-being, social justice and systemic change at its core. Developed in the early 2000s, TCR was codified as a reaction to a criticism that marketing and consumer research had served managerial agendas over societal concerns, with the consequence of supporting inequalities instead of reducing them (Mick et al., 2012).

TCR is an ethical and activist orientation to marketing research, one that aims to decipher and enhance the well-being of individuals and communities,particularly those oppressed or exploited by current market arrangements (Davis et al., 2016).

### a. TCR Core Principles

Transformative Consumer Research is led by a number of core principles:

- Well-being as a central objective, instead of consumption or profitability.

- An issue-driven agenda that addresses problems of poverty, health inequity, discrimination and environmental degradation.

- A commitment to stakeholder engagement and interdisciplinary collaboration (Mick, 2006).

- A normative position that research do no harm,and ideally, make things better.

These axioms signal a "moral turn" in marketing scholarship,a belief that researchers and practitioners have an ethical obligation to the individuals and publics that they study and serve (Brennan, Binney, & Parker, 2014).

### b. Participatory and Action-Oriented Approaches

TCR also promotes collaborative, participatory research approaches that involve communities as co-researchers and co-designers of solutions, rather than solely as sources of data (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008). Typical approaches involve ethnography, participatory action research (PAR) and community-based participatory research (CBPR), with a focus on reciprocity, empowerment and trust.

For instance, research in food insecurity has entailed collaboration with impoverished households to co-create nutrition solutions, whereas research in financial inclusion has entailed collaboration with micro-entrepreneurs to build locally appropriate financial instruments (Blocker et al., 2013; Viswanathan et al., 2010).

### c. Confronting Market Malfeasance and Structural Injustice

TCR also critiques how traditional marketing practices reinforce market-based injustices, for example, by marketing unhealthy commodities to vulnerable groups, exploitation of labor or stereotyping in branding (Davis et al., 2016). Instead of presupposing market formations as benign, TCR demands critical examination of power structures,including racism, patriarchy and neoliberal capitalism.

In this, TCR joins critical marketing, macromarketing and social marketing, with a particular focus on transformational consumer and community outcomes (Brennan & Binney, 2014).

### d. Reshaping the Marketing Scholar's Role and Identity

Most ambitious, perhaps, TCR reshapes the role and identity of the marketing scholar. TCR challenges scholars to:

- Act in solidarity with marginalized communities.

- Create research that guides public policy and advocacy.

- Disseminate knowledge in actionable forms outside of academic journals (Mick et al., 2012).

This change is not merely theoretical,it is evident in the creation of special TCR tracks in premier conferences, special issues of flagship journals and communities of scholar-activists devoted to research for the social good.

**Conclusion**

Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) is an essential ethical and academic turn in marketing that puts human welfare, social justice and systemic equity at the center of research and practice. By bringing to the fore the life worlds of marginalized consumers and putting research towards positive change at the center, TCR calls marketers and scholars to question their own positions,not as detached onlookers, but as active participants in a more equitable and humane marketplace. As a prescriptive theory, TCR demands critical reflexivity, interdisciplinary collaboration and community collaboration and it is thus a vital foundation for marketing that aims to ennoble consumers, not just to comprehend them.



*Figure 3.3: Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) in Inclusive Marketing*

*A moral shift from consumer exploitation to consumer well-being,highlighting research agendas focused on equity, empowerment and systemic change.*

### 3.5 Participatory Development and Co-Design

Participatory development and co-development are core tenets of inclusive innovation and marketing that demand collaborative processes to engage marginalized communities as active stakeholders in problem definition, solution formulation and outcome shaping. These paradigms emerged in development studies and design theory as responses to top-down, expert-led frameworks that ignored local knowledge and did not deal with power imbalances (Chambers, 1994; Cooke & Kothari, 2001).

### a. Beyond Consultation: Toward Shared Ownership

Conventional methods of community participation go as far as consultation, where local voices are listened to but not meaningfully represented in decision-making. By comparison, participatory approaches to development encourage shared ownership, co-learning and redistribution of power (Hickey & Mohan, 2004).

In marketing, the implication is a shift away from consumer-centered design and in the direction of consumer-led co-creation, where communities take an active role in brand values, narratives, product features and visual aesthetics definition (Sanders & Stappers, 2008).

### b. Co-Design as Process and Ethos

Co-design (also called participatory design or collaborative design) is both an ethical position and a methodological process. It is an acknowledgment that the people to be impacted by design decisions must be equal partners in the design process. This is particularly crucial when working with historically marginalized communities, where trust, reciprocity and long-term relationship-building are paramount (Manzini & Rizzo, 2011).

Co-design prioritizes:

- Empathic research and immersion.
- Iterative prototyping with community feedback.
- Capacity building, not just extractive data gathering.
- Reflexivity, ensuring that power asymmetries are acknowledged and addressed (Spinuzzi, 2005).

### c. Participatory Branding and Product Innovation

Contemporary marketing scholarship has adopted co-design as a process of inclusive branding and social innovation. Brands collaborating with refugee groups to co-design culturally responsive packaging, for instance

or with Indigenous artisans to co-create ethically sourced product lines, are some of the potentialities of co-design for marketplace empowerment and justice (Tunstall, 2013; Björgvinsson, Ehn, & Hillgren, 2012).

In such instances, co-design is more than customization or personalization but handing over authorship and value creation to the community. Not only does this create relevance and authenticity, it creates brand equity by way of trust, equity and shared meaning.

### d. Limitations and Ethical Tensions

In spite of promise, participatory development and co-design are confronted by the following limitations:

- Tokenism: Projects may involve community feedback without ceding actual power.

- Time and resource intensity: Authentic co-design processes call for long timelines, trust-building and compensation.

- Structural constraints: Organizational or market pressures can restrict the extent of inclusion (Cooke & Kothari, 2001).

Thus, participatory marketing needs to be rooted in institutional commitments to inclusion and justice, rather than as an ad hoc strategy or fad.

### Conclusion

Participatory development and co-design alter the center of gravity in innovation and marketing, away from top-down strategies and in the direction of collaborative, inclusive processes founded upon lived experience. In involving marginalized populations as equal collaborators, co-design not only creates more contextually appropriate solutions, but it also transfers power and achieves mutual respect. By acknowledging that the most excluded in marketplaces are also the ones best placed to inform and reshape it, this strategy involves them. By doing so, participatory approaches are not merely tactics, they are ethical commitments to equity, accountability and collective authorship that align inclusive marketing with democratic practice on principled grounds.
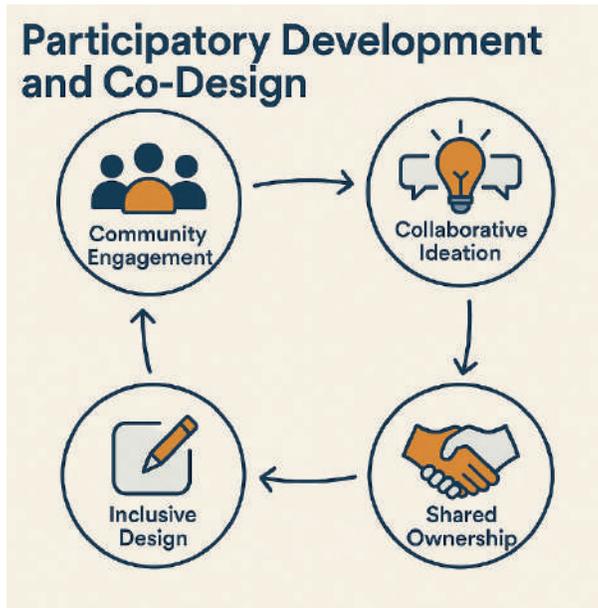
*Figure 3.4: Participatory Development and Co-Design*

*A visual framework illustrating inclusive design processes,where communities ideate, prototype and evaluate solutions collaboratively with brands, ensuring relevance, equity and mutual value.*

### 3.6 The Ethics of Co-Creation: Power, Voice and Reciprocity

As co-creation shifts further towards the heart of marketing practice and strategy, ethical concerns regarding power asymmetries, voice and reciprocity become more prominent. Co-creation can empower marginalized groups, yet in the absence of rigorous ethical foundations, it may perpetuate the very hierarchies that it is trying to dismantle (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005; Arnstein, 1969).

### a. Power and the Politics of Participation

Not all participatory projects are equal. Researchers have noted that participation can be tokenistic or manipulative, with the aim of fulfilling institutional agendas instead of community agendas (Arnstein, 1969). Ethical co-creation needs to be responsive to who is setting the agenda, who is making decisions and how the benefits are shared (Cooke & Kothari, 2001).

Even in benign marketing projects, marginal groups can be nominally included, their ideas co-opted without commitment to the long-term and to

structural transformation (Spivak, 1988). Co-creation, therefore, requires critical reflexivity on the firm's and researchers' part,acknowledging the power they possess and attempting to redress it in practice.

### b. Privileging Voice and Lived Experience

Ethical co-creation puts the voice and everyday life of traditionally under-represented people at the center of marketplace representation. It resists master narratives and welcomes counter-narratives that challenge hegemonic branding, media representation and product development (Couldry, 2010).

This includes not just accepting contributions, but honoring other kinds of knowledge,included in this are oral histories, lived experience knowledge and collective memory (Escobar, 2018). It also involves attentive facilitation, to ensure everyone involved is in a place to contribute on an equal footing, especially in multilingual, cross-cultural or trauma-informed spaces (Tuck & Yang, 2014).

### c. Reciprocity and Long-Term Engagement

One of the central ethical issues in co-creation is reciprocity,making sure that communities are not merely exploited as resources of insight or authenticity, but that they gain in some significant manner from their participation (Banks et al., 2013). This may manifest as:

- Fair payment.
- Joint ownership or authorship.
- Sustained investment in community interests.
- Open communication and consent.

### d. Toward Ethical Frameworks for Marketing Co-Creation

Emergent ethical frameworks promote justice-based values for participatory marketing, such as:

- Transparency and informed consent.
- Equity in representation and decision-making.
- Long-term commitment to relationships over one-off projects.
- Acknowledgment of power and privilege, with deliberate redistributi-on strategies (Brennan & Binney, 2010).

Without reciprocity, co-creation is a new form of extractivism, inclusive rhetoric masking exploitative relations (Sandwick et al., 2018).

They are in alignment with wider currents in critical design, decolonial theory and community-based research that indicate that ethical co-creation is not a method, but a political position.

## Conclusion

Co-creation ethics require more than inclusion,they require critical scrutiny of how power is distributed, whose voices are amplified and what is practiced in reciprocity. Absent ethical foundations, co-creation threatens to replicate the very exclusions it is intended to overcome, disguising exploitation in the rhetoric of participation. Ethical co-creation is founded on transparency, accountability and mutuality, in which communities are not only listened to but also empowered. By infusing ethical reflection in each stage of co-creative practice, marketers can assist in creating trust, advancing justice and working toward more equitable and transformative market relations.



*Figure 3.5: The Ethics of Co-Creation*

*A visual model emphasizing equitable participation, shared authorship and accountability in co-creation,centering community voice and resisting extractive practices.*

### 3.7 Integrating Theories into Practice

Critical to closing the theory-practice gap is converting inclusive marketing principles into effective, lasting action. Conceptual foundations exist within models such as Service-Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), Empowerment Theory (Zimmerman, 1995) and Transformative Consumer Research (Mick et al., 2012), but real implementation depends on strategic intention organizational commitment and co-leadership with communities.

#### a. Theory-Informed Design

Practitioners can also turn to Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) for value co-creation prior to transactional strategies. SDL repositions customers as non-passive recipients but more co-working integrators of resources whose voice is invaluable in innovation and branding (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Such logic enables marketing systems to be more dialogic, contextual and dynamic (Lusch & Vargo, 2014).

So too, Empowerment Theory offers a method of measuring whether marketing efforts maximize or minimize agency,whether they merely comprise or indeed alter power (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). It calls for approaches beyond access to opportunity,toward structuring capacity and altering structure.

#### b. Reflexive Practice and Ethics

Transformatory Consumer Research (TCR) foresees that marketing both as a business science and as a cause of well-being and social transformation. It invites scholars and firms to disrupt harm, build for inclusion and consider impact over ROI (Mick, 2006). TCR's stakeholder well-being emphasis fits within wider calls for responsibility- and justice-oriented marketing ethics (Wilkie & Moore, 2012).

#### c. Operationalizing Participation

Translation from theory to practice involves reconceptualizing procedures in institutions. Participatory methods like co-design (Sanders & Stappers, 2008), human-centered design (Brown & Wyatt, 2010) and community-based participatory research (Israel et al., 2005) offer hands-on procedures. These methods offer tools for:

- Agenda setting with communities.
- Power-conscious facilitation.
- Arrangements for reciprocity (e.g., joint authorship, compensation).

- Iterative prototyping from everyday life.

### d. Institutional Commitment and Accountability

Finally, theory-informed practice is built on will at the organizational level. Companies need to embed inclusive values in branding, recruitment, product creation and performance measurement. DEI policy institutionalization, rewarding community liaisons and reframing success metrics to encompass community value, equity and ethical congruence are implicated (Shore et al., 2018).

Lacking institutionalization, theory can be rhetoric without change.

### Conclusion

Implemented inclusive marketing theories are not unidirectional but reflexive, cyclical and dynamic in nature and need reflexivity, institutional commitment and community action. Paradigms such as Service-Dominant Logic, Empowerment Theory and Transformative Consumer Research provide robust conceptual frameworks,but their real power is the way they are used to inform actual-world strategies that respect agency, equity and co-creation. Merging practice and theory means injecting inclusion into every stage of marketing,whether research design, story of the brand or value delivery. Used thoughtfully, these theories have the power to shape more just, participatory and human-sized marketplaces.

*Figure 3.6. A Theoretical Framework for Inclusive Marketing Practice*

The diagram illustrates how five theoretical approaches,Service-Dominant Logic, Empowerment Theory, Transformative Consumer Research, Participatory Development & Co-Design and The Ethics of Co-Creation,converge to shape inclusive marketing. Each contributes a unique focus area to guide practical applications in collaboration, equity and value co-creation.

# Participatory Methods in Marketing Research

## 4.1 Introduction

Following on from the theory foundations established in Chapter 3, this chapter is focused on the practical applications of inclusive marketing practice with marginalized groups. Theory provides rules of action, but it is in practice that those rules are tried out, tested and honed. Bringing participatory, empowering and justice-based marketing models to practice involves both high hopes and hard realities. The focus of this chapter is on how this integration takes place in heterogeneous community-based contexts with attention devoted to operationalizing co-creation, value sharing and ethical engagement.

Marketing needs to be inclusive, basing itself on the collective wisdom of Service-Dominant Logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2008), Empowerment Theory (Zimmerman, 2000), Transformative Consumer Research (Mick et al., 2012) and Participatory Co-Design (Sanders & Stappers, 2008) to shift away from extractive and top-down forms of marketing. Rather, it entails active listening, equal partnership and sustained investment in the well-being of individuals and communities. It implies a reexamination of marketing practice's own bedrock,namely, who is a "consumer," what value is known and what a good outcome looks like.

To clarify how these theories operate in the field, the chapter contains rich case examples of marketing campaigns based on community-based marketing and fieldwork observations rooted in inclusive branding, grassroots innovation and participatory product development. Each case explores how marginalized agents construct,and reconstruct,the meaning

and production of marketing. Special attention is paid to how power, culture, history and structure frame the co-creation process.

Also, Chapter 4 does not romanticize co-creation. Instead, it critically assesses the tensions, boundaries and unexpected consequences that may arise by the application of inclusive marketing lacking sufficient reflexivity and institutional backing. Ethical challenges,of voice, representation and benefits sharing,are met head-on, with a hope of developing practical wisdom (phronesis) among marketing practitioners and academics.

In the process, Chapter 4 attempts to provide answers to a chain of practical questions:

- How are marketers able to collaborate with marginalized groups in a genuine manner without perpetuating systems of control or extraction?

- What does inclusive co-creation in practice look like?

- How are participatory approaches, including community mapping, photovoice and narrative gathering, translated across various cultural and socioeconomic contexts?

- What structures and mindsets do they need in order to maintain ethical, empowering relationships over the campaign cycle?

Results from this chapter are not meant to be read by researchers and academicians alone but also by practitioners, nonprofit managers, brand managers and community activists who want their marketing done with fairness, justice and shared value.

By documenting both best practices and lessons learned, this chapter is a bridge from conceptualized ideals to on-the-ground realities,illustrating that inclusive marketing is not just possible, but necessary, in today's pluralistic, indeed polarized, market contexts.

## 4.2 Principles of Participatory Research

Participatory research is based on a commitment to social justice, co-creation and the democratization of knowledge. Instead of considering participants as subjects, it sees them as co-researchers with valuable lived experience (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Bergold & Thomas, 2012). It is based on five key principles:

1. Democratization of Power and Knowledge: Participatory research contests conventional hierarchies in knowledge production. It legitimates the knowledge of marginal groups and seeks to transfer epistemic authority

from academic elites to those who are most impacted by the research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Cargo & Mercer, 2008).

2. Mutual Learning and Reflexivity: Central to participatory research is a dialogical process where researchers and community members learn together. This reflexive iteration develops mutual understanding and adaptive problem-solving (Freery, 1970; Bradbury-Huang, 2010).

3. Equity and Inclusion: This tenet guarantees that the research process itself actively involves diverse voices, particularly those historically marginalized or underrepresented. Inclusive participation leads to more equitable and context-sensitive outcomes (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008; Israel et al., 1998).

4. Action and Change: Participatory research aims not just to generate knowledge but to generate actionable results that bring about positive transformation in the lives of the participants. The process is interventionist and empowerment-focused (Park, 1993; Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007).

5. Accountability and long-term relationships: Long-term partnership, founded on trust, openness and shared responsibility, is critical. Such an ethic of relationship guarantees that communities are used and that benefits from research are reciprocated (Bergold & Thomas, 2012; Israel et al., 1998).

In upholding these ideals, participatory research is a transformational force for inclusive marketing,one that not only creates knowledge but also empowers communities to inform the stories, solutions and futures that impact them.

**Conclusion**

Overall, participatory research presents an attractive alternative to dominant research paradigms in its emphasis on ethics, inclusivity and coproduction of knowledge. Its fundamental tenets guide more balanced relationships between researchers and participants, with room for marginalized voices to inform both research process and output. As marketing is increasingly confronted with matters of representation and justice, embracing participatory research approaches can close divides between corporate intention and community effect, making inclusion not an aspiration but a way of life.

*Figure 4.1: Principles of Participatory Research*

*A framework illustrating core values of participatory research,such as mutual respect, shared authority, capacity building, reflexivity and community benefit.*

## 4.3 Ethnographic Immersion and Contextual Understanding

Ethnographic immersion is a qualitative research method that seeks to comprehend individuals in their natural habitats through participatory observation and long-term involvement (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Spradley, 1979). Ethnographic immersion is an essential method of inclusive marketing since it untangles consumer behavior's cultural, emotional and historical facets not evident in conventional data gathering methods (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994).

By situating themselves within the social worlds of marginalized communities, marketers are able to gain an intimate, empathetic understanding of how such communities make sense of, adapt to and resist market forces (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It is through such situated knowledges that initiatives can be co-developed as being integral to, rather than imposed upon, authentic voices and lived experiences of brand scripts (Madison, 2011).

Also, ethnographic methods are in resonance with decolonial and participatory paradigms in honoring the participants' agency and the plurality of their meanings (Escobar, 1995). It requires marketers to be

critically reflexive regarding their power and positionality in building trust-based relationships with the communities they want to work with.

### Conclusion

Ethnographic immersion does not simply provide descriptive knowledge, it generates deep transformation in the way marketers acquire knowledge, interact and work with marginalized communities. Through experiencing the actual worlds of consumers, marketers can identify thick meanings, cultural practices and structural impediments that aren't captured in mainstream studies. Contextual knowledge is not merely a methodological advantage; it is an ethical imperative in inclusive marketing. It guarantees that tactics are based on hard realities, design is a reflection of lived lives and consumer-brand relationships are based on empathy and trust. Finally, ethnographic methods allow marketers to transcend categories and stereotypes to deeper, human-based interactions respecting dignity, diversity and co-authorship.
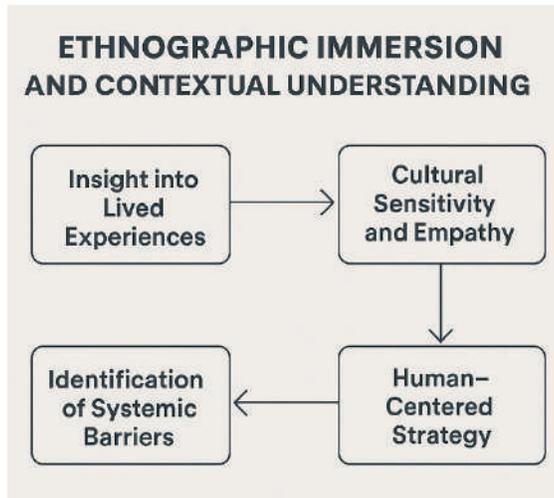


*Figure 4.2: Ethnographic Immersion and Contextual Understanding*

*A flowchart illustrating the key contributions of ethnographic research to inclusive marketing, moving from insight into lived experiences to the development of human-centered strategies.*

### 4.4 Storytelling and Narrative Methods

Storytelling is an effective means of promoting inclusivity and empathy in marketing research. In studying marginalized groups, humanity is presented with a means of validating lived experiences, providing voice for

muted voices and challenging hegemonic ideologies (Boje, 2001; Gabriel, 2000). Stories do not simply mirror reality,rather, they are meaning-making mechanisms that form identities, norms and relationships (Riessman, 2008).

In participatory research, narrative approaches yield epistemological and methodological advantages. Narratives enable participants to express their values, aspirations and struggles in their own words and on their own terms. Instead of boiling participants down to data points or variables, storytelling humanizes the research by foregrounding subjectivity, complexity and context (Frank, 2010; Chase, 2011). These stories may assume numerous forms, ranging from oral history and personal testimony to digital storytelling, photo-elicitation and community-generated documentaries (Cohen et al., 2012).

Significantly,narrative inquiry is also congruent with decolonial and feminist epistemologies that resist extractive and objectifying research modalities. It privileges co-authorship, reflexivity and emotional resonance,cornerstones of ethical research with marginalized communities (Kovach, 2009; Thomas, 2017). For example, Indigenous storytelling practices tend to prioritize collective memory, spirituality and intergenerational knowledge, providing alternative ontologies to linear Western frameworks (Archibald, 2008).

In consumer research, narrative approaches have been employed to investigate consumer identity, brand meaning and cultural resistance. Research has demonstrated that marginalized consumers utilize storytelling as a vehicle for resisting marketplace misrepresentation, recovering cultural heritage and exercising symbolic agency (Thompson & Üstüner, 2015; Grier & Brumbaugh, 1999). Such stories have the potential to inform more inclusive brand stories, product development and communication initiatives that resonate with authentic voices in the community.

However, storytelling has to be done cautiously. Researchers have to be attentive to narrative ownership, consent and retraumatization issues. The storytellers have to control the flow of stories and the process of storytelling has to leave space for healing, celebration and reflection (Couldry, 2010; Luttrell, 2010). In addition, narrative products,whether they are visual, textual or auditory,have to be based on shared authorship and ethical practices of dissemination.

Storytelling is not a technique,it is a relational practice that has the potential to build solidarity, understanding and transformation. In participatory marketing research, it can allow us to move from data extraction to meaning co-creation, from objectifying analysis to dialogical engagement and from invisibility to narrative justice.

### Conclusion

Narrative in inclusive marketing is not only a tool of communication,it is a tool of recognition, empowerment and justice. When marketers practice narrative tactics ethically and collaboratively, they bring back rights of ownership to the narratives and identity of marginalized groups. Instead of talking about people, narrative is capable of talking with and about them, from deficit to dignity. Inclusive narrative practice necessitates deep listening, co-creation and willingness to break dominant scripts. Doing so, marketers can contribute to making markets where everyone's voice gets to count, all stories are valued and representation works with experience,not stereotype or spectacle. Storytelling is a strategic and ethical foundation for inclusive co-creation.
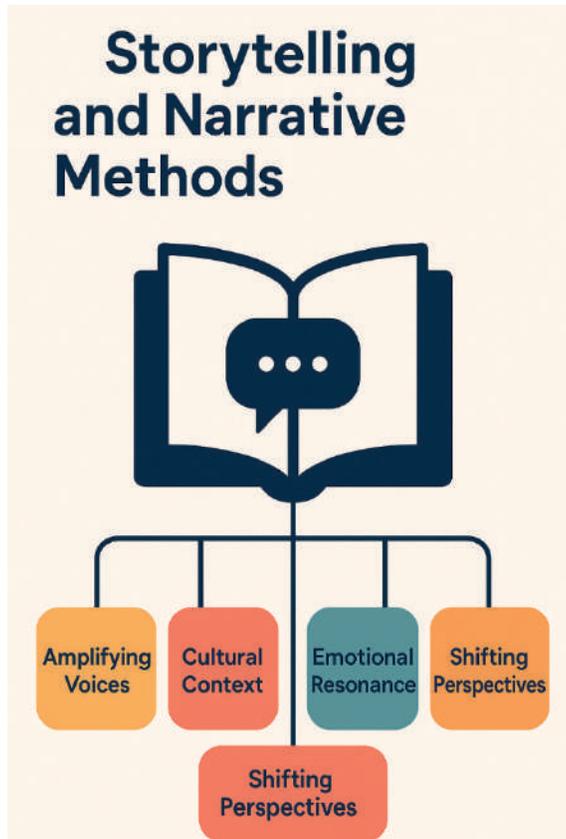


*Figure 4.3: Storytelling and Narrative Methods*

*A visual summary of narrative-based research tools,emphasizing lived experience, co-authorship, cultural context and the power of story in shaping inclusive marketing insights.*

### 4.5 Participatory Design (Co-Design)

Participatory design (PD) or co-design is an iterative approach that is rooted in the premise that individuals who are to be subjected to design results must play a central part in determining them. Initiated in the first instance among Scandinavian workers' movements for bringing technology into the shop floor for democratic purposes, PD has since been employed in areas including design, education, health and marketing to enable co-authorship and shared innovation (Bjerknes, Ehn, & Kyng, 1987; Sanders & Stappers, 2008).

Basically, participatory design attempts to flip conventional knowledge hierarchies on their head by considering users,particularly those previously excluded from decision-making,are co-equal co-designers of the design process (Simonsen & Robertson, 2013). In inclusive marketing, co-design can enable marginalized consumers to co-design products, services and stories that resonate with their needs, values and identities (Visser, 2005).

In contrast to researching into or about communities, PD is focused on designing with them. This involves co-formulating problems, idea generation using creative means (e.g., prototyping, storyboarding, role-playing) and iterative testing in use (Sleeswijk Visser et al., 2005; Steen, 2011). Through such collaborative engagement, tacit knowledge may be exposed, power assumptions bridged and mutual learning facilitated.

To marginalized communities, co-design is not so much about the usability gain,it is a tool of empowerment, platform of narrative justice and means of cultural legitimation (DiSalvo et al., 2013; Tunstall, 2013). Some examples are co-design initiatives from civil society that created communication devices for the disabled, suitable motherhood care mobile apps for Indigenous women and accessible branding models for informal workers.

However, participatory design is not problem-free. Power differences, tokenism and extractive strategies can undermine genuine participation if not treated with critical care (Bratteteig & Wagner, 2016). Effective PD needs time, building trust, facilitation skills and ethical reflexivity to guarantee participation is significant, sustainable and reciprocal.

In addition, co-design will also need to overcome institutional barriers. Organizations may resist ceding control to digital consumers or co-opt participation language without changing their internal operations. Thus, in order for PD to become revolutionary marketing, it will have

to be accompanied by broader commitments to equity, inclusion and co-governance (Manzini & Rizzo, 2011).

**Conclusion**

Participatory design shifts the design process from being top-down to horizontal and co-experiential. Applied to inclusive marketing, co-design enables marginalized groups to co-author brand stories, product offerings and service experiences on their own terms. Embedding co-design within the practice culture of marketing enables businesses to transcend symbolic inclusion to structural transformation,building deeper relevance, trust and long-term value.
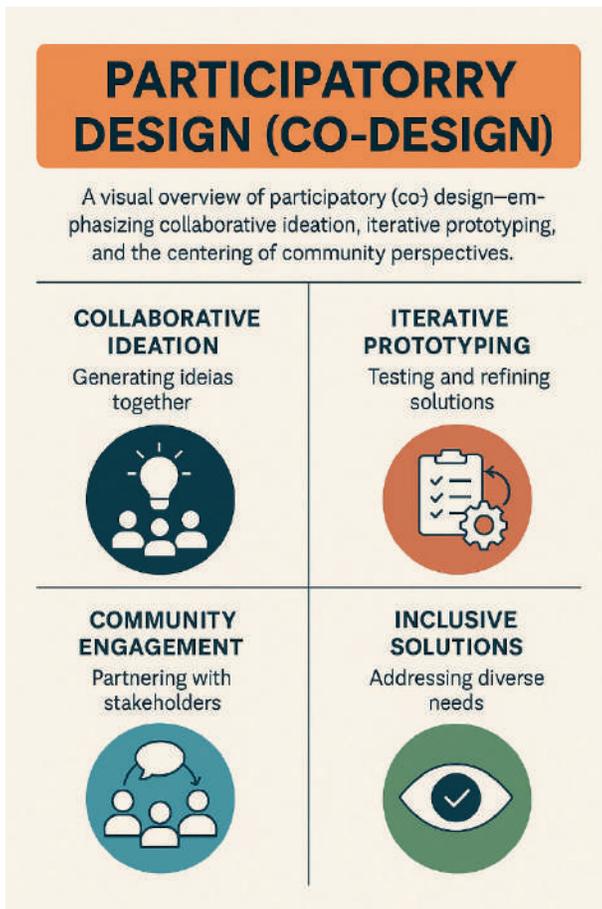


*Figure 4.4: Participatory Design (Co-Design)*

*A visual model showing inclusive co-design principles,centered on empathy, iteration, community ownership and power-sharing in solution development.*

### 4.6 Participatory Mapping and Asset Identification

ParParticipatory mapping is a mapping and participatory process whereby local individuals are able to record, understand and represent spatial information regarding their region. In contrast to conventional top-down mapping, which can marginalize marginal areas or place them in the incorrect position, participatory mapping allows local individuals to articulate what is important, where it is and why (Chambers, 2006; Corbett & Rambaldi, 2009). Sketch maps, GIS software, story maps and community asset lists could be integrated into the process.

Participatory mapping in the context of inclusive market research is a tool of contextual insight. It illustrates how geography, infrastructure, access and socio-spatial processes condition consumer choice-making, resource access and exclusion experiences (McCall & Minang, 2005). Charting retail deserts, transport barriers or culturally important assembly places is just one example, which can be used to inform equitable service design, distribution policies and community-led marketing interventions.

Inextricably linked with mapping is the identification of assets,finding out the capacity, strength and networks already present within a community. This focus directs attention away from needs or deficits to local knowledge, relationships and cultural capacities to be harnessed for co-creation and empowerment (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), a leading participatory development approach, engages researchers and marketers to work with what is available in communities instead of inserting solutions from the outside (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Through observation of both material and symbolic assets,i.e., informal enterprises, sacred places, food networks or cultural practices,researchers can collectively build marketing interventions that are locally grounded and culturally appropriate (Craig et al., 2017). Participatory asset mapping also leads to recognition: it affirms the usually forgotten contributions of excluded groups and reclaims dignity by bringing them into visibility.

Furthermore, co-constructing maps and inventories is a value-enabling process in itself. It necessitates collective thinking, builds conversation between stakeholders and creates collective investment in conclusions (Ghose, 2001; Elwood, 2006). Integrating it into inclusive marketing ensures that campaigns, services or retailing strategies discover harmony with experienced geographies and desires of participating communities.

Ethical considerations are in the foreground. Since participatory maps can make sensitive information visible (e.g., about informal economies, illegal migrants or stigmatized practices), matters of data ownership, confidentiality and representational truthfulness must be addressed with special concern (Rambaldi et al., 2006).

**Conclusion**

Participatory mapping and asset identification provide profound leverage for situating inclusive marketing in the local situation and the people's power. Through the focus on spatial justice, cultural visibility and community-defined value, they overcome removal segmentation and move people to where they are,symbolically and literally. Employed ethically, they stimulate reciprocity, relevance and collective authorship in research and market design.
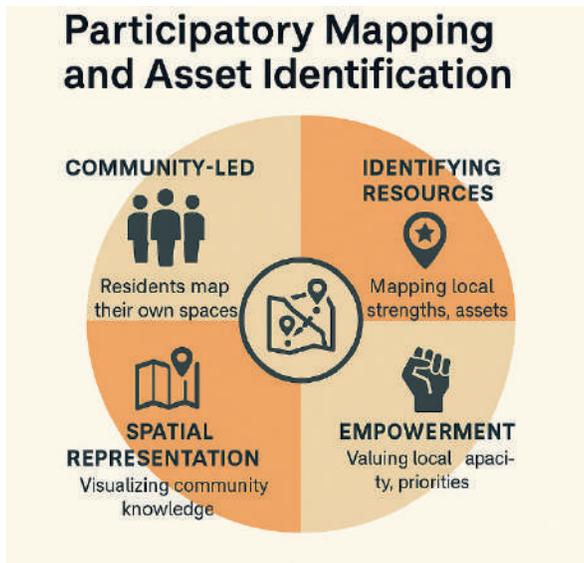


*Figure 4.5: Participatory Mapping and Asset Identification*

*A graphic representation of collaborative spatial tools used to identify community strengths, lived geographies and local knowledge systems for inclusive marketing and design strategies.*

### 4.7 Digital Participation and Online Co-Creation

Digital media have reconfigured the promise of engaged marketing participation. Co-creation in virtual space allows consumers,not just as

purchasers but as sense-makers, experimenters, content generators and co-creators,to co-create brand stories, product shape and social meaning in real time (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Ind, Iglesias, & Schultz, 2013). For marginal communities, digital resources offer new opportunities for visibility, voice and value,particularly when physical environments are marked by exclusion.

But online participation isn't always inclusive. Access to the digital infrastructure, literacies and cultural fluencies is uneven, particularly along income, age, geographical and ability lines (Noble, 2018; Eubanks, 2018). Inclusive online co-creation thus demands conscious design that minimizes entry points to participation, supports varied modalities (e.g., audio, visual, multilingual) and counters algorithmic bias (Benjamin, 2019).

### Types of Digital Co-Creation

Online co-creation takes place across a broad array of platforms and practices:

- User-generated content (UGC): Consumers re-create meaning through reviews, testimonials, memes and social media messages that reframe brand meaning (Christodoulides, Jevons, & Bonhomme, 2012).

- Digital storytelling platforms: The margin employ blogs, vlogs, podcasts and forums to share personal stories and resist mainstream media representation (Couldry, 2010).

- Collaborative design portals: Brands involve users through crowdsourced ideas, co-creation of products or design voting (Fuller, Hutter, & Faullant, 2011).

- Cause branding and hashtag activism: Online mobilization by communities (#DisabledAndCute, #BlackLivesMatter) has forced brands to become increasingly responsive, resulting in experience-based co-created campaigns (Jackson, Bailey, & Welles, 2020).

### Affordances and Risks

Whereas digital co-creation has the potential to decentralize power, it can also be hijacked. Corporations usually overtake community language or movements without resource redistribution or decision-making authority,giving rise to critics referring to it as "hashtag hijacking" or "platform capitalism" (Srnicek, 2016; Banet-Weiser, 2018). Additionally, content moderation policies and platform algorithms silence or sideline disproportionate the voices of communities of color and activists (Gillespie, 2018; Noble, 2018).

Ethical digital participation therefore entails

- Open management of online communities (van Dijck, Poell, & de Waal, 2018)

- Participation of marginalized users in platform policy-making and design (Costanza-Chock, 2020)

- Paying back to the community, particularly when they create brand value or data value (Nakamura, 2007)

**Inclusive Digital Co-Creation in Practice**

There are some projects that have more democratic practices:

- Co-designed apps by communities and Indigenous communities for language revitalization or literacy on health (Christie, 2011)

- Digital commons and consumer co-ops that reject surveillance capitalism and advocate for collective platform and content ownership (Scholz, 2016)

- Participatory digital ethnography, where co-creation of knowledge using blogs, photo diaries or collaborative maps happens between consumers and researchers (Pink et al., 2016)

**Conclusion**

Digital participation and online co-creation hold enormous possibilities for inclusive marketing,if it is created and governed equally. These practices can potentially amplify marginalized voices, re-frame brand-consumer relationships and democratize innovation. But they also challenge us to be mindful against digital exclusion, tokenism and exploitative data practices. In transitioning from platform behavior to shared value, marketers must re-imagine digital spaces as co-owned, co-governed and co-authored,aligned not merely with creativity and connection, but with justice.
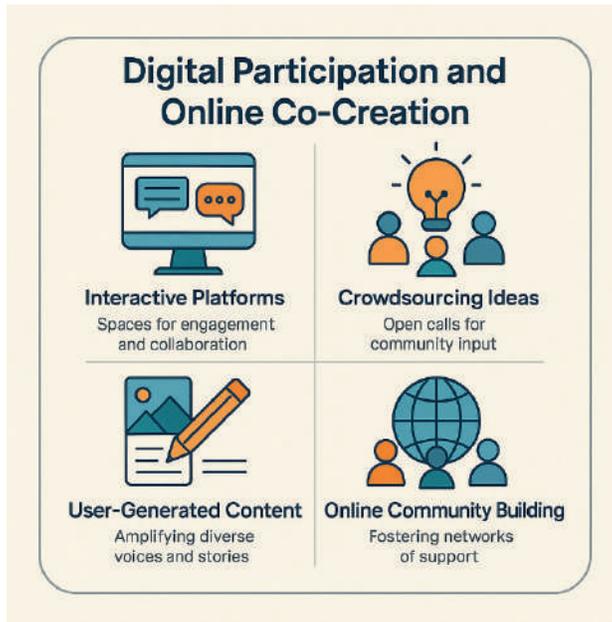
*Figure 4.6: Digital Participation and Online Co-Creation*

*A visualization of inclusive digital co-creation processes,leveraging online platforms, social media and open innovation to engage marginalized voices in real time.*

## 4.8 Ethical Considerations in Participatory Marketing Research

Participatory market research has transformational potential for inclusion, justice and community power. But it also presents firm ethical challenges,above all, conducting research with marginal communities. Ethical participatory research must transcend procedural seriousness (e.g., informed consent forms, institutional review board approval) to accepting relational accountability, structural sensitivity and responsibility co-created (Tracy, 2010; Fine et al., 2004).

### a. Informed Consent and Continuous Negotiation

Tradition models might not measure up in participatory settings, notably because research is being enacted in the moment and things get complicated over time. Ethical practice demands process consent,a dynamic, interactive process in which participants are entitled to shape and opt out of research processes as their understanding, needs or relations of power shift (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Mertens, 2009). It is especially important, for instance,

in cross-cultural or trauma-informed research, where consent is anchored within local histories and norms of distrust.

### b. Representation, Voice and Ownership of Narrative

Participatory marketing is more concerned with co-producing visual, narrative or digital commodities. These pose questions of authorship of the narratives, editing and who profits from their dissemination (Luttrell, 2010). The researchers should be careful not to aestheticize suffering, appropriating stories for brand name interests or silencing opposition in pursuit of glad stories (Chilisa, 2012; hooks, 1990). Ethical storytelling entails collaborative editorial control, explanation of who the narrative is for and social regulation of dissemination.

### c. Benefit-Sharing and Reciprocity

Participatory methods should consider who the research is benefiting. Marginalized groups have historically been treated as sources of information instead of recipients of knowledge production (Smith, 1999). Ethical research should provide material and immaterial benefits like capacity-building, funds, visibility, policy influence or social change (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Banks et al., 2013). This is particularly necessary in long market-oriented situations where consumer knowledge is able to yield corporate advantage.

### d. Power Asymmetries and Reflexivity

Power asymmetries are bound to happen even in the presence of participatory intentions. Researchers maintain control over funding, frame and publication even while sending out invitations to collaborate (Pain & Kindon, 2007). Ethical research necessitates critical reflexivity,continual awareness of one's positionality, privilege and the structural dynamics operating within the research setting (Pillow, 2003; Tuck & Yang, 2014). Role clarity, expectations and boundaries foster trust and accountability.

### e. Data Sovereignty and Confidentiality

Research with vulnerable populations can include sensitive political, economic or cultural information. Ethical research needs to ensure data sovereignty,the ability of communities to decide how their knowledge is being gathered, stored and made available (Kukutai & Taylor, 2016). Participatory researchers need to eschew "open access" assumptions and preserve consented confidentiality practices, particularly when involving Indigenous knowledge, undocumented immigrants or stigmatized populations.

**Conclusion**

Participatory marketing research that is ethical requires more than procedural ethics; it requires a firm commitment to justice, humility and respect for each other. It is co-authorship of not only outcomes but also values, boundaries and results. It is putting voice of the community at the center, reconfiguring control and incorporating ethical deliberation in all aspects of the process to respect the transformative power of participation. Finally, ethical praxis is not a list of tasks, but a dynamic process,one based on trust, openness and respect for the dignity of everyone involved.



*Figure 4.7: Ethical Considerations in Participatory Marketing Research*

*A visual summary of key ethical principles,such as informed consent, power awareness, reciprocity, transparency and protection of vulnerable participants in inclusive research.*

**4.9 Methodological Integration and Flexibility**

Participatory marketing research requires a flexible and integrative methodology,of reverence for the complexity of community contexts and for pluralism in knowledge systems. Rather than isolating a single epistemological tradition, inclusive research requires methodological pluralism, combining qualitative, quantitative and imaginative approaches to capture multiple voices and realities (Greene, 2007; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007).

### a. Blending Methods with Purpose

Participatory studies are particularly well-suited to combined methods research. Through the convergence of qualitative richness and quantitative generalizability, researchers are able to capture both system patterns and story richness (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Methodology combination must be motivated by something greater than technical efficacy, however, yet by the democratic mandate to record marginalized voices in many, true forms (Mertens, 2009).

Participatory studies, for instance, can include:

- Em ethnographic immersion in order to reveal lived experience and cultural practice (Pink, 2009)

- Surveys or GIS mapping to measure spatial or demographic trends (McCall & Minang, 2005)

- Photovoice and arts-based approaches to reveal emotional or symbolic knowledge (Wang & Burris, 1997)

- Focus groups and co-design workshops to create mutual understanding and prototype interventions (Sanders & Stappers, 2008)

### b. Flexibility as Ethical Praxis

Methodological flexibility is not merely a pragmatics concern,it's one of ethics. Blind commitment to pre-set research procedures can re-establish hierarchies and crush emergent understanding (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Participatory research encompasses being able and willing to adapt methods in accordance with community feedback, power relations and context fluctuation (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). This could involve changing timetables, streamlining tools or re-equilibrating roles according to participant feedback.

Here, flexibility as a methodological humility,a situated knowledge that values communities not as sites of research but as co-constructors of knowledge (Chilisa, 2012).

### c. Cultural and Epistemological Adaptation

Participatory research with marginalized communities is often cross-cultural. Local systems of knowledge, values and communicative practices are sometimes incommensurate with standardized measures. Culturally responsive research requires decentering language, concepts or even study purpose to be congruent with community epistemologies (Kovach, 2009;

Smith, 1999). This involves foregrounding oral tradition, Indigenous cartography or relational ethics attached to reciprocity and shared memory.

### d. Emergence, Iteration and Dialogue

Participatory approaches follow nonlinear trajectories. Knowledge is built in dialogue, iteration and mutual reflection,not in separate stages of data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Fine & Torre, 2004). Methodological approaches need to allow for this emergence with space for mutual learning, serendipitous discoveries and adapted outcomes. This is conducive to the ideals of grounded theory, action research and transformative evaluation.

### Conclusion

Methodological integration and adaptability are core pillars of participatory market research. Through them, researchers can address community complexity rigorously yet respectfully. Far from asking communities to conform to scholarly standards, participatory methodologies engage with people as they are, linguistically, culturally and epistemologically. In addition to yielding richer data, by being carefully designed, innovative and humble, combined approaches establish trust, agency and shared ownership of the research process.
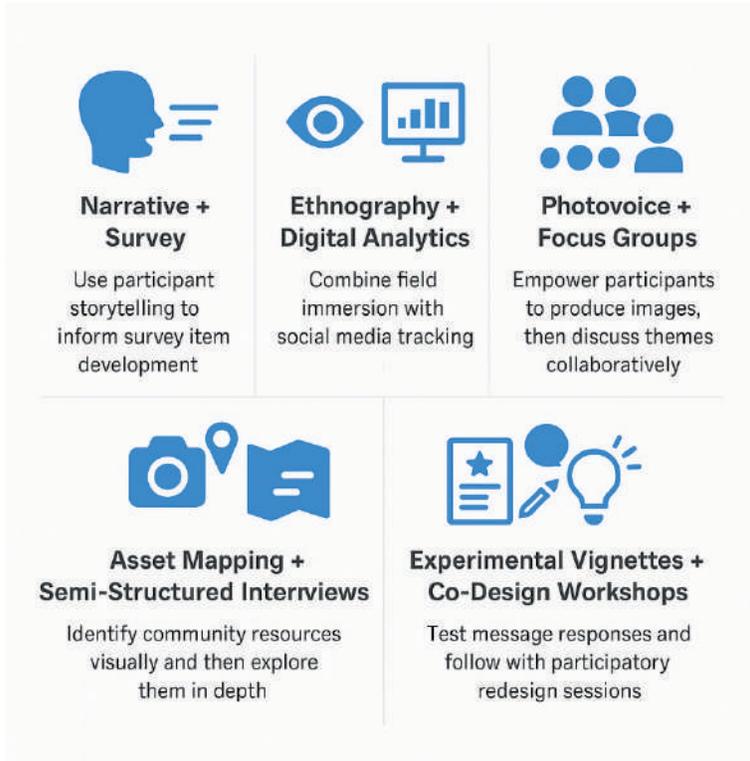
*Figure 4.8. Common Integrated Methods in Inclusive Marketing Research*

This infographic illustrates practical combinations of participatory and mixed-method approaches,such as photovoice with focus groups or ethnography with digital analytics,used to gather deeper, ethically grounded insights in inclusive marketing.

# Case Studies of Grassroots Co-Creation

## 5.1 Introduction

As we arrive at the last chapter of this book, we can see that inclusive marketing is not a toolkit or a series of campaigns,it's a paradigm. It calls marketers out of transactional thinking and into practices that revere participation, repair historical exclusions and create common value amongst various players. In the previous chapters, we've arrived at understanding how inclusive marketing calls us towards bringing theory and practice into sync, ethics and creativity and structure and fluidity.

This chapter tries to synthesize the most meaningful theoretical paradigms, participatory approaches and ethical concerns raised so far. It also describes new horizons and most essential directions for researchers, practitioners and community members who seek to make marketing a force for equity, dignity and inclusion.

On earlier pages, we've pursued marketing's intellectual history,from service-dominant logic to transformative consumer research,and bridged these paradigms to everyday practices, such as co-designing, storytelling, asset mapping and digital co-creation. These practices, based on community voice and power-sharing, demonstrate marketing's ability not only to mirror society but to transform it. This can only happen, however, if we make a commitment to reimagining the purpose, process and politics of marketing itself.

Chapter 5 is organized around two broad purposes:

1. To integrate insights between conceptual and applied chapters in the book, abstracting key principles to define inclusive marketing as a discipline and as a movement.

2. To chart out future directions for research, teaching and practice, signaling gaps, tensions and potential for more radical inclusivity in marketing theory and practice.

This concluding chapter will return to fundamental questions posed in the book's introduction:

• What is marketing to, not simply with, marginalized communities?

• How do we move beyond representation to reciprocity, inclusion to co-ownership?

• And how do we hold ourselves, and our institutions, accountable to the communities we seek to serve?

The responses to these questions are indeterminate. They will change as markets change, as technologies develop and as social movements for justice make new claims. What is left is the moral direction that needs to underlie all inclusive marketing: solidarity, care and shared authorship.

In the pages that follow, we take stock of the key takeaways that have emerged, scan the institutional and cultural challenges that still persist and envision revolutionary but attainable futures for inclusive marketing. This synthesis is not an endpoint, but rather an invitation, to continue listening, building and co-creating a more just marketplace together.

## 5.2 Case 1: Made51 – Branding Refugee Artisan Goods (Global)

MADE51 is an international program launched by UNHCR with the support of local social enterprises to link refugee artisans with global markets. Based in over 20 countries, the program is a model of inclusive co-creation in its ability to make forced people productive producers of cultural and economic worth, not passive recipients of aid (UNHCR, 2021).

The approach is founded on co-producing artisanal products which represent the artisans' history, expertise and narrative. Each product is sold under the MADE51 brand name, introducing global customers to the individual and cultural history of the products. The involving branding strategy places refugees not as receivers of humanitarian branding, but as agents of artistic and economic recovery (Betts et al., 2017).

### Co-Creation and Capacity-Building

Instead of outsourcing labor, MADE51 collaborates with refugee-led or refugee-inclusive artisan collectives. Social enterprises with a local base manage product design, skill building and equitable pay, while UNHCR facilitates certification and international market access. The three-way structure is not only inclusive of markets but also capacity building and community ownership,a fundamental tenet of participatory development (Chambers, 1997; Cornwall, 2008).

Artisans are engaged in product beauty, material choice and narrative design. For instance, Tuareg refugees in Niger craft silver ornaments based on their nomadic heritage, while Syrian refugee women in Jordan co-create embroidered cloth that maintains local patterns. Such practices ensure that cultural intelligence is not hijacked or watered down for market reasons, but appreciated by true co-making (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009; Banet-Weiser, 2012).

### Ethical Branding and Narrative Inclusion

MADE51 likewise employs ethical storytelling, emphasizing artisan agency and imagination ahead of victimhood or trauma. The brand's marketing strategy repositions the refugee identity from crisis to contribution, assisting to counter xenophobic myths and enable refugee-led entrepreneurship (UNHCR, 2020; Landau, 2021).

Nonetheless, artisan privacy is safeguarded, particularly in politically charged situations. Participatory consent procedures are applied where names, faces or narratives are portrayed in brand communications,responsive to the needs of narrative ethics and do-no-harm research (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Fine et al., 2004).

### Market Impact and Systemic Challenges

Although MADE51 products have been retailed by international retailers and online platforms (i.e., IKEA collaborations, World Fair Trade Organization fairs), scaling up the model raises system-level issues. These range from supply chain issues within refugee camps, inconsistent digital infrastructure, to juridical limits on the labor rights of refugees (Crawford et al., 2015). Furthermore, embedding refugee artisans into luxury value chains without reproducing tokenism or aesthetic extraction is a precarious balance to negotiate (Miller & Rose, 2008).

But MADE51 is a thought-provoking example of inclusive brand co-creation that brings market strategy into dialogue with dignity, resilience

and cultural sustainability. It resists charity narratives and provides branding as a path to economic justice and intercultural dialogue.

### 5.3 Case 2: Sama – Inclusive AI Training Data through Digital Work (Kenya & India)

Sama (previously SamaSource) is a social business that enables engaged participation in the global digital economy by outsourcing data annotation tasks to poor nations, including Kenya, India and other poor countries. Sama offers digital jobs,AI training data services,to those who have so far been excluded from economic inclusion, including women, refugees and poor young people (Sama, 2023).

This model is the epitome of inclusive co-creation ethics in the form of entry into the global artificial intelligence value chain by underprivileged workers,not just as aid recipients anymore, but as essential players in high-tech economies. Sama's positioning of marginalized groups in building machine learning systems demonstrates that digital work can be both economically empowering and ethically oriented (Gray & Suri, 2019).

Sama applies a "social impact sourcing" approach that extends beyond conventional outsourcing. It links paid online work to training, access to healthcare and career advancement. This expansive approach harmonizes with empowerment theory by boosting individual agency, skill accumulation and long-term employability (Zimmerman, 2000; Christensen, 2012).

The firm's "impact hiring" program recruits people who are surviving on less than $2/day and trains them at length in digital annotation work,i.e., image bounding, sentiment analysis and audio transcription,that is required to build ethical AI models (Lehdonvirta, 2018). They become co-authors of algorithmic knowledge and this leads to innovations in autonomous cars, natural language processing and content moderation.

### Participation Without Exploitation?

Sama's approach has been lauded for its social purpose and equitable gender hiring (Berg et al., 2018). However, it also raises crucial questions about the politics of engagement with digital capitalism. To the extent that the firm avoids crowdwork platforms like Amazon Mechanical Turk, critiques of digital piecework persist,most notably regarding labor precariousness, algorithmic surveillance and issues of power (Irani, 2015; Graham, Lehdonvirta, et al., 2017).

To resist exploitation, Sama upholds ethical practices such as a living wage, psychosocial support and transparent career ladders. It is a B Corp

that has been certified by B Lab and has adhered to the Global Impact Sourcing Coalition (GISC, 2020) Impact Sourcing Standard.

### Algorithmic Justice and Inclusive Innovation

Diversifying the workforce of AI training data, Sama advances algorithmic justice,a burgeoning topic in machine learning ethics. Bounded by its data, AI has been demonstrated to produce discriminatory outputs in facial recognition, content moderation and predictive policing (Noble, 2018; Benjamin, 2019). Representation on the data labor level is therefore called for not merely for fairness but for the epistemic soundness of AI systems (Crawford, 2021).

Sama's story shows that inclusive innovation is not just a question of product accessibility or user adoption,it's about who builds the digital infrastructure, on whose terms and with whose knowledge. By showcasing ethical sourcing and participation, Sama disrupts the assumption that AI development resides in the exclusive domain of engineers or rich countries.

### Conclusion

Sama is a compelling vision of inclusive digital co-creation,one that brings excluded groups into linkages with global value chains in machine learning and AI. Although structural obstacles and ethical dilemmas continue, Sama's emphasis on social inclusion, skills development and decent work produces a template for constructing more just types of technological innovation. It asks marketers, designers and AI companies to reimagine digital work not as faceless backend labor, but as a space of creativity, dignity and distributive justice.

### 5.4 Case 3: SheFighter – Women's Empowerment through Branding Self-Defense (Jordan)

SheFighter, started in 2012 by Amman-based entrepreneur Lina Khalifeh, is the Middle East's first women's self-defense gym and has evolved into a worldwide brand blending fitness, empowerment and activism. SheFighter is both a social business and a movement brand, as a prime example of inclusive marketing based on women's safety, voice and self-determination,especially in patriarchal or gender-conservative settings (Khalifeh, 2019).

Becoming part of the motto of "Empowered Women Empower Women," SheFighter empowers women with physical skills of self-defense but also employs fashion, media and public spaces to express gender equality. The fashion brand creates a discourse of resistance and resilience

and places women at the center of active agency, which they may utilize to resist violence, stigma and restriction (Gill & Orgad, 2018a).

### Co-Creation of Identity and Representation

SheFighter is coproduced with its educational community of instructors, pupils and survivors. SheFighter is not positioned as a passive recipient of safeguard but as an agent acting in the direction of a growing transnational feminist politics of empowerment (Banet-Weiser, 2012). Multiplying several stories of change and bravery, SheFighter tells testimonial videos and social media messages.

This participatory brand paradigm shares affinity with empowerment theory and transformative consumer research (TCR), since it induces psychological organizational and community-level change amongst women subjected to routine threats of gender-based violence (Mick et al., 2012; Zimmerman, 2000). Lived experiences of women directly shape program design, communication strategy and market positioning,making the brand a site for identity recovery and systemic critique.

### Intersectionality and Local Adaptation

Jordanian SheFight-er traverses several axes of marginalization, heteronormative gender regimes, religion and class. It adjusts its messaging and outreach to conservative cultural standards while maintaining its emphasis on power and autonomy (Abu-Lughod, 2013). This is intersectional marketing strategy where empowerment isn't universalized but instead localized (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins & Bilge, 2016).

For instance, training modules are conducted in Arabic and English; hijabi women athletes are heavily promoted through marketing; and the training sessions take place at refugee centers and schools to impact the underprivileged women and girls (SheFighter, 2022).

### From Local Impact to Global Movement

SheFighter made international waves with speaking tours across the world, TEDx presentations and collaborations with NGOs and women's rights organizations. It has also collaborated with institutions like UN Women and Vital Voices, demonstrating the possibility of leveraging localized grassroots movement through brand activism and cross-industry partnerships (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

The success of the brand demonstrates the potential for marketing to become a driver of movement-making and not solely commercial success. Through the union of purpose, profit and participation, SheFighter defies

gender scripts in Arab and Western markets and opens the door to a more ethical and equitable branding model.

### Conclusion

SheFighter is an example of how participatory ethics and cultural sensitivity-based branding can be a site of social empowerment. By centering women's voices in the creation and spread of its message, SheFighter enables brand value to encompass social change, identity affirmation and system resilience. It provides marketers and social entrepreneurs with an example of how narrative justice, cultural salience and strategic visibility can be combined in working towards gender equality through inclusive branding.

### 5.5 Case 4: Nike FlyEase – Co-Designing Adaptive Footwear (USA)

Nike FlyEase is the brand's signature product series for Nike's adaptive design initiative, addressing the requirements of disabled consumers and athletes. It was launched in 2015 and was created through co-design with end-users like Matthew Walzer, a high school student with cerebral palsy who penned an open letter to Nike asking for accessible sneakers that he could put on by himself (Nike, 2015). The FlyEase system consists of easy-entry closures, hands-free wear and low motor requirements,allowing users with limited mobility or dexterity to don performance-level footwear on their own.

FlyEase is universal design in action: instead of developing a special line for "disabled users," Nike built accessible functionality into its mass-market product platform. A quintessential example of universal design, the premise that accessibility is a universal benefit and not just to the disabled (Imrie, 2012; Steinfeld & Maisel, 2012).

### Participatory Design and Consumer-Centered Innovation

The design of Nike's FlyEase was grounded in co-design, with athletes with disabilities, physical therapists and occupational health professionals participating in the co-design process. Instead of designing for people with disabilities, FlyEase was designed with them,enabling their embodied experience and lived bodies to be recognized as rich design information (Sanders & Stappers, 2008; Bratteteig & Wagner, 2016).

This collaborative strategy also aligns with the larger paradigm of inclusive marketing: it confirms identity, functionality and agency without resorting to pity-based or tokenistic portrayals. Nike's advertising centered on performance, athletic identity and human-oriented design over deficit

narratives, which supports dignity-based branding (Thompson & Malaviya, 2013; Banet-Weiser, 2012).

### Innovation, Authenticity and Brand Equity

FlyEase has allowed Nike to maintain its brand activism credibility, which can allow the company to marry business strategy and social value. Authors also add that authenticity for inclusive innovation does not simply result from narrative but from co-creating real value and responsiveness to stakeholders (Ind, Iglesias, & Schultz, 2013; Vredenburg et al., 2020). FlyEase product appears in Paralympic marketing campaigns and is used by professional athletes both with and without disabilities,blurring lines between mainstream innovation and assistive design even further.

FlyEase's commercial success also defies industry adage that accessibility will be a niche demand. Rather, it is an example of the reality that designing to the edge can yield innovations that appeal to the whole market,what researchers have termed the curb-cut effect (Black & Schorr, 2018).

### Critical Insights and Persistent Gaps

Even with its popularity, FlyEase has been criticized on the lines of elitist early release and high retail marks,showcasing economic accessibility challenges for individuals with disabilities, the majority of whom are disproportionately financially restricted (Hamraie, 2019). Further, while Nike has partnered with disability activists, it is claimed that the company continues to hold centralized design control and can further integrate disabled designers into leadership and decision-making models (Kafer, 2013).

Therefore, although FlyEase is a strong example of empowering co-creation, it also indicates tensions between brand-driven empowerment and the deeper structural commitments behind disability justice in business innovation ecosystems.

### Conclusion

Nike FlyEase demonstrates the way participatory design can reshape performance, accessibility and inclusivity limits in international branding. By making disabled consumers co-producers rather than an afterthought, Nike reset the adaptive product innovation terms. The case confirms that inclusive design is not only ethical,it is inventive, tactical and brand-building. But it also acknowledges needing to move beyond consultation to sustainable equity and representation within brand leadership.

### 5.6 Case 5: Selco India – Energy Solutions for the Poor, by the Poor

SELCO India is a leading social enterprise providing decentralized solar power solutions to poor rural and urban communities in India. The founding father of SELCO, it is 1995, was by Dr. Harish Hande; it was hinged under the mission of promoting access to sustainable energy as it is a rudimentary human right and foundation for economic and social inclusion (Hande, 2011). Its strategy is important to co-create with poor consumers, who help decide on the design, deployment and finance of solar technologies that are appropriate for their everyday lives.

### From Product to Process: Participatory Innovation

SELCO eschews a one-size-fits-all solution for the distribution of solar energy. Rather, it inserts field researchers and local entrepreneurs into villages to discover their wishes, limitations and desires (Abraszek, 2022). Everyone from battery sizing to panel installation is taken into consideration, including repayment conditions. For instance, solar-powered sewing machines were co-developed with women tailors in Karnataka and rickshaw pullers co-designed battery charging points according to their working rhythms.

Such bottom-up innovation is consistent with proper technology and bottom-up design approaches, in which consumers are not passive recipients but technology adaptation innovators (Schumacher, 1973; Bhaduri & Kumar, 2011). SELCO terms this as "energy as an enabler" as opposed to "energy as a product",emphasizing the developmental impact of technology consumption, including enhanced livelihood, education and access to health.

### Inclusive Finance and Ecosystem Building

SELCO also responds to systems exclusion by means of financial inclusion strategies. None of its customers have formal credit records or collateral and are not covered by conventional loans. SELCO fills this gap by approaching neighborhood banks, microfinance institutions and cooperatives, promoting the valuation of energy assets as productive infrastructure (Sovacool & Drupady, 2012). SELCO field staff mediate trust between financial institutions and users, unshrouding technology and de-risking adoption.

This process is the very essence of inclusive ecosystem creation,enabling technology being backed by suitable financing, education and institutional infrastructure (Prahalad, 2005; George et al., 2012). SELCO also makes investments in grassroots innovation centers and energy incubators that give micro-entrepreneurs the capacity to create their own context-specific innovations.

### Decentralization, Dignity and Social Equity

SELCO's belief in "solutions by the poor, for the poor" signifies a paradigm shift towards dignity-focused rather than charity-focused development. It seeks to break the idea that poor people are consumers of innovation and instead makes them co-designers, testers and ultimately owners of solution space (Gupta et al., 2003). It is in line with transformational innovation and inclusive development frameworks that value agency, local knowledge and long-term system change the most (Foster & Heeks, 2013).

The company also resists techno-solutionism by including social workers, anthropologists and community leaders in their innovation teams,i.e., technology implementation is never absent relational trust and cultural fit.

### Conclusion

SELCO India presents a strong example of inclusive co-creation for sustainable energy. Technology design, social justice, financial inclusion and local empowerment united to make SELCO a powerful example of human-centered, versus carbon-centered, energy transition. Its approach illustrates inclusive marketing is less about how things are talked about or how they are promoted, but how they are indeed made, co-created and serviced in concert with the very communities they are meant to serve.

### 5.7 Cross-Case Reflections

The five examples of MADE51, Sama, SheFighter, Nike FlyEase and SELCO India together show how inclusive co-creation can be strategically infused across industries: from digital employment and artisan products to physical empowerment, product development and access to energy. Though varying in context, these projects have some of the same principles and tensions underlying the practice of participatory, justice-oriented marketing.

### 1. Inclusion as Process, Not Just Representation

All five images eschews tokenistic participation for material forms of participation. Instead of simply placing members of marginalized groups in front of advertising messages, they engage them in design, decision-making and narrative construction. This conforms to critical inclusive innovation and transformation consumer research theories, both of which require participatory practices that redistribute power,not merely visibility (Mick et al., 2012; George et al., 2012; Chambers, 1997).

For instance, SELCO collaborates with rural artisans in co-design; Sama trains and hires poor digital laborers in designing AI systems; and Nike

FlyEase involves users with disabilities in its product development. These illustrations depict a transition from market inclusion to market-shaping inclusion, with the capability and interests of the excluded leading the manner of value creation and value delivery (Prahalad, 2005; Fuchs et al., 2013).

### 2. Branding as Narrative Justice

Cross-case, branding is used as a narrative transformation tool, whereby the marginalized get back in control of their identities. Whether refugee makers speak out through MADE51 or women redefine femininity and strength through SheFighter, the shared element that unites is narrative empowerment (Banet-Weiser, 2012; Gill & Orgad, 2018a).

This echoes the narrative justice idea,where selling a product is not merely marketing, but advocating for silenced voices and against deficit approaches to representation (Rebelo et al., 2020). Participatory narrative presents an alternative story compared to conventional humanitarian or exploitative branding frames of agency, creativity and resilience.

### 3. Systemic Barriers and Structural Constraints

Even as innovative models, both examples also face structural impediments,e.g., restricted access to capital, biased legal frameworks, cultural norms and infrastructural inequalities (Sovacool & Drupady, 2012; Graham et al., 2017). For instance:

- Sama's ethical employment model has to function within exploitative global tech value chains.

- SELCO has difficulty expanding its decentralized approach without compromising local tailoring.

- Nike FlyEase, while designed to be inclusive originally restricted availability with exorbitant prices and limited outlets.

These tensions indicate that co-creation inclusive of everyone is not a frictionless exercise. It is a process of ongoing negotiation of ideals and institutional realities,a consideration highlighted in theory on critical design thinking and transformative innovation policy (Heeks et al., 2014; Björgvinsson et al., 2012).

### 4. Co-Creation Beyond the Consumer

Of particular note is that co-creation in such instances transcends customers to involve workers, manufacturers and communities as marketing stakeholders. This is a departure from the conventional value-in-use approach

that is end-user centered with other frameworks calling for value-in-context, where upstream stakeholders also build brand equity and meaning (Vargo & Lusch, 2016; Ind & Coates, 2013).

This expanded vision puts inclusive co-creation at the level of systems intervention,not just as an engagement tactic, but as a lens for reimagining entire supply chains, design processes and institutional partnerships.

### Conclusion

Together, these illustrations make the point that inclusive marketing is not just a moral imperative,it is systemic and strategic innovation. But its potential rests on eradicating structural injustices, sharing authority and taking long-term responsibility. Future research needs to look further at how ecosystems of co-creation might be sustained, scaled and governed in ways that respect the voice and work of historically subaltern groups.

### 5.8 Conclusion

Grassroots co-creation isn't a trend,it's a requirement for inclusive, ethical and sustainable marketing. These case studies demonstrate that when communities are given the power to influence the products, services and narratives that impact them, brands can become forces for good.

As a first step in visually summarizing the main principles covered in this book, the following infographic presents a summary of the main pillars of inclusive marketing,a reflective exercise as much as a practical checklist for future use.

*Figure 5.1. Core Principles of Inclusive Marketing: A Visual Summary*

The next chapter will focus on how to **build inclusive brands**, translating these principles into guidelines for identity development, communication and engagement strategies that center equity and representation.

# CHAPTER 6

# Building Inclusive Brands

## 6.1 Introduction

As we are coming to the last pages of this book, it is important to mention that inclusive marketing is not a point of arrival, nor a solution for structural injustice in the market. It is more a live, dynamic praxis,a process which must be reflexive, accountable and imaginative. This final chapter is not to shut down discussion, but to issue an invitation: to rethink the very basics of how we interact with markets, value and people.

In the course of the previous chapters, we have insisted that marketing,when handled with care, with fairness and in solidarity,can be a salvific force. We have seen how silenced voices, typically tokenized or muted in prevailing marketing discourse, are now central actors in co-creating value, sense-making and future-oriented strategies. From theory to practice, from refugee craft collectives to feminist cooperatives, to social media revolutions, this book has shown how inclusive marketing reshapes success not in terms of dominance but of reciprocity.

But with these observations comes also a challenge of critical humility. Marketing, for too long, has operated as a tool of persuasion, generally directed at reinforcing systemic hierarchies and extractive practices. As global inequality speeds up, ecological crises grow more severe and public trust in institutions erodes, marketers need to look inward and ask themselves: What is our role in crafting the societies we serve? And how do we know that what we do reflects not only the world as it is, but helps create the world as it could be?

This chapter begins that thinking. It does so by looking back at inclusive marketing's core commitments:

- Voice over visibility: From representation on the surface to narrative agency with depth.

- Participation rather than performance: Placing communities at the center of designing and leading campaigns.

- Reciprocity more than reach: Focusing on mutual respect and value over viral reach.

- Justice rather than jargon: Rooting strategy in structural knowledge more than trend report.

We also understand that inclusive marketing needs to be continuously adaptive to new forms of marginalization, new digital infrastructure and the complexities of identity, power and access in a constantly shifting world. So, this chapter provides not just reflection, but orientation: an orientation for future research, teaching and practice towards increased inclusivity.

Above all, this book ends where all work that can expand has to begin, with a vow to hear, know and forget. The voices of those who have historically been excluded from the marketing conversation cannot only be heard but must be respected as co-creators and co-theorists in building moral, creative and sustainable futures.

## 6.2 What Is Inclusive Branding?

Inclusive branding is the strategic and moral business of envisioning, describing and marketing brands in terms that include, validate and empower diverse experiences, communities and identities. It entails the deliberate engagement of historically excluded or marginalized populations, not merely as consumers, but as co-creators, storytellers, employees and parties in the brand ecosystem (Rebelo et al., 2020; Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Relative to market-leading segment-specific traditional branding, inclusive branding broadens the cultural range of brand meaning by embracing alternative viewpoints, values and tastes (Banet-Weiser, 2012). It understands that representation is not only important in imagery used in advertisements, but in product formulation, corporate governance and supply chain management choices (Aaker, 2021; Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Inclusionary brands deliver this by using language, symbols, stories and forms that communicate a sense of belonging and equality.

### From Diversity to Participation

Whereas diversity marketing itself has long been effusive in its praise of message tailoring by demographic segment, inclusive branding goes a step further by involving those segments within the process that constructs the brand itself. That underscores the move from segmentation of the consumer to participation of the consumer,members of disprivileged groups not only addressed but consulted in co-creation (Ind, Iglesias, & Schultz, 2013; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

For instance, inclusion brands use community listening initiatives, partner with grassroots creators and introduce co-branded products that mirror the cultural uniqueness of oppressed groups (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2005). These actions adhere to the principles of transformative branding, which aim not just to extract value from consumers but also to produce social value in branding (Spry, 2021).

### Ethics, Authenticity, Accountability

One of the essential elements of inclusive branding is authenticity,both in message, but also between value and practice. What science indicates is that performative inclusion,i.e., appearance-level representation minus transformative change,can backfire in the form of charges of hypocrisy and decreased brand trust (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Therefore, equitable branding needs to be underpinned by organizational commitments: diversity recruitment for leadership positions, fairness among suppliers and equity-based KPIs grounded in equity embedded in brand strategy (Aaker, 2021). It should also entail reflexivity,constant questioning of whose voices are being heard, what cultural meanings are being evoked and how power is being allocated in the construction of the brand (Brown, 2022).

### Intersectional and Relational Branding

Lastly, inclusive branding develops from intersectional theory in an attempt to understand how different identities,race, gender, disability, class and sexuality,intersect in constructing consumer experiences (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins & Bilge, 2016). It moves beyond the monolithic effort at inclusion to acknowledge the multi-faceted social realities of people and societies.

Instead of conceptualizing inclusion as a point or destination, this vision makes it an ongoing practice: constantly evolving through dialogue, collaboration and situatedness. Inclusive branding is not isolated promotion campaign,instead, it is a continuous, iterative social practice of branding.

## Conclusion

Inclusive branding is not a passing fad nor moral appendix,it is a transformative practice that reimagines the role of brands in society. By placing equity, representation and participation at the center of brand strategy at all levels, inclusive branding rewrites who gets to be seen, heard and valued in the marketplace. It challenges marketers to move past symbolic action to systemic transformation, building real relationships with diverse communities through co-creation, accountability and authenticity. In the end, inclusive branding is a pledge to create brands that not only describe the world as it is, but even make the world as it ought to be.

**KEY ASPECTS OF INCLUSIVE BRANDING**

**REPRESENTATION TO PARTICIPATION**
Involve marginalized groups in brand development and narrative building

Visual inclusion

**ERLATIONAL BRANDING**
Engage in ongoing dialogue and reciprocity with communities

Inclusion-washing

**ETHICS OVER OPTICS**
Align actions with promises and invest in systemic change

Inclusion-washing

**TRANSFORMATION, NOT TRANSACTION**
Prioritize social impact over market growth

Short-term gains

*Figure 6.1. Key Aspects of Inclusive Branding*

*This infographic outlines core principles and tensions in inclusive branding,including the shift from representation to participation, from optics to ethics and from market growth to relational accountability. It serves as a visual reference for marketers seeking to implement authentic, equity-driven brand strategies.*

### 6.3 Representation vs. Tokenism: A Critical Distinction

As brands attempt to be more inclusive, it is critical to separate tokenism from real representation. Both might include using individuals from underrepresented groups in advertising, but the intent, the content and the effect are quite different.

Representation is the contentful portrayal of various identities, experiences and cultures in a manner that confirms their agency and complexity (hooks, 1992; Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). Representation is product design, narrative and strategic choice that indicates actual engagement with the represented communities. Meaningful representation requires consultation, participation and contextual precision so that the representation is consistent with lived experience instead of stereotypes (Rebelo et al., 2020).

Tokenism, in contrast, involves superficial or symbolic action to seem inclusive while not challenging dominant norms or power relations. Tokenism is often based on visual diversity without structural transformation, using isolated figures of marginalized individuals to tick a box instead of including their voices in a substantive manner (Ahmed, 2012). This can result in "diversity washing",a performative inclusion that hides a lack of actual equity behind the scenes (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Vredenburg et al., 2020).

### From Image to Infrastructure

Real representation needs to run from marketing copy to brand leadership, recruitment, supply chains and innovation processes. A brand that includes queer or disabled people in its advertising, for example, needs to also hire and pay individuals from those groups at decision-making levels (Aaker, 2021; Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Otherwise, representation is a cosmetic gloss on an unchanged core.

This difference resonates with the idea of "inclusive design justice", which calls on brands to go beyond visibility and towards structural inclusion,bring marginalized communities into brand value design and distribution (Costanza-Chock, 2020).

### The Risks of Tokenism

Tokenism stands to alienate the same communities that it seeks to target, particularly when representations are stereotypical, monolithic or divorced from community lived experience (Banet-Weiser, 2012; Gill, 2007). Tokenism can also lead to reputational damage by placing the brand in the position of being openly criticized, backlashed or accused of brand hypocrisy.

For instance, promotional campaigns for International Women's Day in the context of internal gender pay gaps or a lack of maternity policies are an example of such tension. Consumers are calling for more brand congruence,a alignment between values expressed externally and practices adopted internally (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Brown, 2022).

**Conclusion**

The distinction between authentic representation and tokenism needs to be understood by brands committed to inclusive marketing. While both might look the same on the surface, representation is based on participation, respect and structural inclusion, whereas tokenism is an empty spectacle with a tendency to reinforce the very exclusions that it seeks to remedy. For brands to have authentic relationships with diverse audiences, they need to go beyond optics and make long-term, structural investments that marry their message with action. Only then can representation be a source of empowerment rather than exploitation.
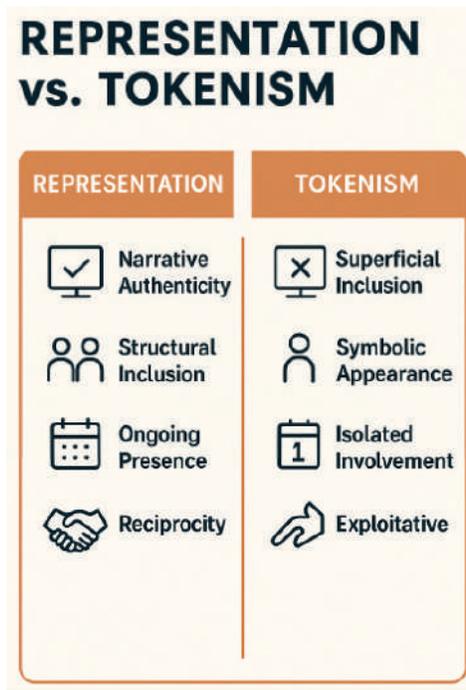


*Figure 6.2. Representation vs. Tokenism in Inclusive Marketing*

*This diagram highlights the key differences between genuine representation and tokenistic inclusion across four dimensions: purpose, process, impact and longevity. It serves as a diagnostic tool for marketers and organizations seeking to evaluate the depth and integrity of their inclusion efforts.*

### 6.4 Co-Creation in Brand Identity Development

Co-creation has also come forth as a disruptive force which revolutionized branding from its traditional top-down control of the brand to more participatory and decentralized model of brand identity construction (Ind, Iglesias, & Schultz, 2013). In the model, brand meaning is not constructed by the marketers but is co-shaped by consumers, communities, employees and other stakeholders. This innovation is a harbinger of bigger marketing changes toward participative value creation, openness and inclusiveness (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2016).

### From Control to Collaboration

Traditional brand identity models privileged control over how a brand was talked about and understood. Yet, in the era of digital interactivity, user-generated content, social media interactions and participatory design practices have rendered brand identity porous and fluid (Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Merz, He, & Vargo, 2009). Brands are now situated within narrative spaces, where various actors collaboratively co-construct and dispute brand meaning (Rebelo et al., 2020).

This shift forces marketers to shift away from being brand "guardians" and towards becoming brand facilitators,empowering plural stakeholders in the continuous construction of brand stories, values and experiences (Iglesias, Ind, & Alfaro, 2013). It forces marketers to give up some control, accepting tensions and contradictions that arise within multi-vocal brand spaces.

### Inclusive Co-Creation and Brand Identity

Co-creation is not only a strategic tool for differentiation or innovation in inclusive branding, but also an ethical and political one. By involving marginalized groups in co-shaping what a brand stands for, co-creation can potentially subvert dominant discourses and bring underrepresented voices to the foreground of the brand's identity landscape (von Wallpach et al., 2017; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001).

Examples are brands that:

- Collaborate with Indigenous artists to co-develop logos, packaging or advertising campaigns.

- Partner with disabled designers to co-create accessibility-first product designs.

- Engage minority groups in co-authoring brand values and mission statements.

All such practices are the ultimate form of identity co-creation as a communicative and cultural process,where brand meaning is constructed on joint authorship and symbolic equity (Schroeder, 2009; Brown, 2022).

### Tensions and Responsibilities

Though co-creation is abundant in consumer loyalty, social meaning and innovation, it also introduces ethical challenges with its inclusion. Brands are required to tread the tight rope between power, voice, ownership and compensation in engaging communities to co-create identities (Zwick, Bonsu, & Darmody, 2008). Unless there is an open and reciprocal attitude, co-creation can become another practice of cultural appropriation or extractive branding.

In order to avoid such dangers, researchers advise embracing participatory design approaches, open governance practices institutionalization and engaging in long-term collaborative partnerships with citizens,transactional partnerships for election cycles (Sanders & Stappers, 2008; Björgvinsson et al., 2012).

### Conclusion

Co-creation of brand identity is a paradigm shift from control to collaboration,one that is respectful of diversity, dialogue and co-authorship. Instead of putting consumers and communities into the role of passive audiences, inclusive co-creation sees them as active co-producers of a brand's emerging meaning and cultural relevance. By being practiced ethically and openly, co-creation can enhance authenticity, reinforce trust and turn brand identity into a living relational entity based on respect. In this way, co-creation aligns branding with big flows towards equity, inclusion and participatory innovation.

*Figure 6.3. Co-Creation in Brand Identity Development*

*This flowchart illustrates the inclusive co-creation process across five phases: community listening, collaborative ideation, participatory design, iterative feedback and shared authorship. It emphasizes equity, transparency and reciprocity as core principles guiding brand identity formation.*

## 6.5 Inclusive Brand Communication Strategies

Inclusive brand communication is the intentional and equitable building of brand messages, images, stories and experiences that connect with plural identities and social settings. It goes beyond demographic inclusivity but also includes cultural empathy, accessibility, intersectionality and emotional truthfulness (Aaker, 2021; Brown, 2022). Inclusive communication redefines branding as a two-way dialogue, rather than one-way broadcast, particularly with historically neglected or misrepresented communities (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

### Language and Visual Framing

Visual framing and linguistic signage used by brands have long-term social inclusion or exclusion consequences. Research shows that visual framing and linguistic signage can shape people's views of who belongs, who is empowered and who is "the norm" (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004; Gill,

2007). Inclusive brands refuse stereotypes, tokenism and "single stories" by representing people as complex, possessing agency and multifaceted (hooks, 1992; Crenshaw, 1991).

For instance, the Dove campaign of Unilever employed representative images to counter restrictive beauty standards, while Nike's "You Can't Stop Us" campaign crossed race, disability, gender and resilience narratives by embracing intersectional storytelling (Vredenburg et al., 2020). These initiatives demonstrate that not only is inclusive communication about representing diversity but also re-framing real life experiences and expressing actual social concerns and aspirations.

### Cultural Relevance and Local Adaptation

Inclusive brand discourse has to be sensitive culturally, too. Global brands increasingly localize their discourse so that it is attuned to local values, vernaculars and aesthetic sensibilities (Okonkwo et al., 2023). It implies shaping the communication style to suit the sociopolitical context of target groups and co-authoring the narrative with indigenous voices (Arnould & Cayla, 2015).

Ben & Jerry's and Patagonia have constructed varied stories of racial and climate justice through invoking activist discourses, positioning themselves within social movements and engaging with their own positionality within larger systems of privilege and power (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

### Accessibility and Multimodal Inclusion

Accessibility is yet another of those frequently underappreciated dimensions of accessible communication. It refers to making brand message accessible and comprehensible to all at all levels of ability, language and literacy. This includes closed captioning, sign language interpretation, alt-text, plain formats and culturally sensitive metaphors and examples (Costanza-Chock, 2020; Brown, 2022).

Digital-native businesses in particular need to take into account multimodal design,making their sites, applications and social networks provide level access to all, from disabled or impaired users (W3C, 2018). Inclusive communication is therefore no longer a question of saying, but of saying it how, where and to whom.

### Two-Way Engagement and Reflexivity

Brand inclusive dialogue is dialogue. Brands have to really hear communities out, be reflective about themselves and design feedback and accountability systems. Social media, online discussion forums and co-

storied storytelling provide routes for brands to listen to, not just talk to, their constituencies (Ind, Iglesias, & Schultz, 2013; Rebelo et al., 2020).

But inclusive communication is also perilous. Conversing about sensitive issues like race, gender or disability necessitates humility, moral prudence and openness to error. If executed with honesty and good follow-up, it can create brand trust, social legitimacy and emotional connection (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006).

### Conclusion

Inclusive brand language is not about tone or imagery, it's a total discipline that defines the way brands connect with society. By welcoming different voices, being receptive and being attuned to culture, brands are able to build trust, authenticity and lasting loyalty. Inclusion has to be conscious and answerable, however, built on dialogue and not on assumption. When used with care and consistency, inclusive communication is a source of social cohesion, cultural affinity and advertising that inspires instead of alienates.

**INCLUSIVE BRAND COMMUNICATION**
**A GUIDE**

**Cultural Relevance and Respect**
Ground messaging in cultural contexts; be mindful of appropriation and stereotypes

**Plain Language and Linguistic Inclusion**
Use clear, simple language, consider multiple languages and gender neutral terms

**Accessible Formats**
Ensure content is inclusive of diverse bites; provide all text, captions, and screen reader compati-

**Participatory Messaging Development**
Co-create messages with community members; gather feedback to refine communication

**Responsive Engagement**
Foster two-way communication; listen and adapt on community input

**Alignment with Actions**
Ensure communications reflect organizational values and commitments

*Figure 6.4. Inclusive Brand Communication: A Strategic Guide*

*This visual guide summarizes key principles for inclusive brand communication, including linguistic respect, multimodal accessibility, cultural fluency, co-created messaging and responsive engagement. It is designed as a practical checklist for marketers committed to equity-driven outreach.*

### 6.6 Accessibility and Inclusion in Brand Experience

Inclusion and accessibility of brand experience refer to the designing of interactions, spaces, services and products to enable equal participation for people of various abilities, backgrounds and identities. Far from being an afterthought or a mere compliance matter, inclusive brand experiences are intentionally created to accommodate diverse needs,visible and invisible (Brown, 2022; Costanza-Chock, 2020).

This is in keeping with larger universal design and design justice movements, both of which support placing center voices and experiences of the most frequently excluded from typical design practices (Imrie, 2012; Steinfeld & Maisel, 2012).

### From Functional to Experiential Accessibility

Historically, accessibility was conceived relatively narrowly in terms of sensory or physical disability,e.g., image alt-text or wheelchair ramps. These are still important, but inclusive brand experiences have broadened this beyond cognitive accessibility, digital usability, neurodiversity, language access and cultural intelligibility (W3C, 2018; Burgstahler, 2015).

For instance:

- Microsoft's Inclusive Design Toolkit shows how design for disability tends to benefit everyone, from voice command to closed captions (Microsoft, 2021).

- Airbnb's accessibility review process enables guests to look for accommodations based on mobility, vision or hearing aid needs,balancing usability and dignity.

- Nike's FlyEase adaptive sneakers were co-created with disabled athletes, offering not just functionality but brand value through design inclusivity (Tynan et al., 2014).

### Inclusive Retail and Digital Environments

Brands are also re-imagining physical and digital touchpoints to minimize friction and create a sense of belonging. Within stores, it's about bridging the sensory divide with haptic signage, unisex changing rooms or employees who have disability etiquette training (Baker et al., 2007). Online, inclusive UX/UI design ensures websites and apps are accessible to users who use screen readers, low bandwidth or struggle with cognitive load (W3C, 2018; Sauer et al., 2016).

These universal reimagining are not just moral obligations,they also create competitive benefit by being good for everyone, growing the marketplace and expressing care and capability (Liu et al., 2020).

### Emotional and Cultural Inclusion

Adopting a brand experience also makes possible the emotional and cultural aspects of engagement. These are the acknowledgment of trauma histories, the space for religious practice and making representation in service delivery and design possible (Aaker, 2021; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Brands that foster psychological safety and cultural validation,either in sensory-sensitive environments or multilingual call center representatives,grow both loyalty and lived equity (del Mar Fuentes-Fuentes et al., 2023).

### Designing With, Not For

Real accessibility is not compromising on what exists, but co-creating with, not for. Co-creation with end-users from a range of ability, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds is included in inclusive brand experiences. Participatory approaches enable the identification of barriers, creating insight and developing empathy-driven innovation (Sanders & Stappers, 2008; Björgvinsson et al., 2012).

### Conclusion

Accessibility and inclusion are not concerns behind closed doors,they are at the heart of delivering meaningful and inclusive brand experiences. By integrating inclusive design into the highest priority at the beginning, brands create a feeling of belonging, usability and respect for all customers, but especially those that have traditionally been excluded. By taking into consideration physical, digital, emotional and cultural aspects of accessibility and by involving users as co-creators, brands are able to turn passive consumption into participative, empowering experiences. This way, they both address diverse requirements and create trust, loyalty and social impact at scale.
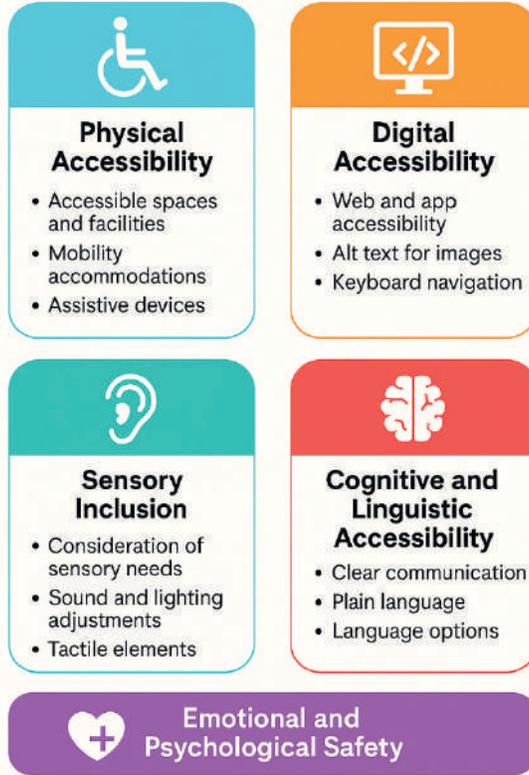
*Figure 6.5. Accessibility and Inclusion in Brand Experience*

*This infographic summarizes five key dimensions of accessible brand experiences,physical, digital, sensory, cognitive and emotional,offering a holistic framework for marketers seeking to remove barriers and design for equity.*

## 6.7 Addressing Historical Injustices and Brand Activism

As social consciousness increases during the era of activism, companies are now need to recognize previous injustices and adopt sincere brand activism that is proportionate to the current movement of justice and equality. This is more than tokenistic marketing,this is about institutional reflexivity, ongoing engagement and alignment between business practice and values of the brand (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Remedying historical injustices entails acknowledging a firm's or sector's role in a framework of oppression,e.g., colonialism, slavery, environmental destruction or sexism,and apologizing by means of deeds of restitution, revelation and rich storytelling (Sandlin & Maudlin, 2012; Sassatelli, 2007).

### From Denial to Acknowledgment

Historically, corporations have been complicit or silent regarding system oppressions. Presently, stakeholders expect brands to go from neutrality or silence to recognition and responsibility. It entails revealing concealed histories, making public apologies and redistributing resources to oppressed communities (Mukherjee & Banet-Weiser, 2012; Goldberg, 2020).

Examples:

- Ben & Jerry's, who have spoken out against racial injustice, advocated for reparations and released critical critique of white supremacy in corporate institutions.

- Levi Strauss & Co., which has apologized for its past use of segregation labor and now supports racial justice initiatives.

- Gucci, which has answered past cultural insensitivities with the formation of a diversity council and backing of Black designers.

These are signs of a new brand repair ethic,the deliberate fixing of harm from brand story or practice (Brown, 2022).

### The Rise and Risks of Brand Activism

Brand activism is a brand's public position for social, environmental or political issues, generally developed through campaigns, contributions, lobbying or platform activities (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018). Activism can be beneficial to consumer loyalty and confidence if actually done but can also engender a backlash if found to be incongruent, opportunistic or disingenuous (Moorman, 2020; Bhattacharya & Elsbach, 2002).

Brand activism to be effective should be:

- Based on organizational culture and values.

- Led by stakeholders, rather than trends.

- Motivated by transformational change, rather than tokenistic communication.

We know that customers, particularly Gen Z and Millennials, will support causes that support brands,but only if the rally is seen to be credible, sustained and backed by brand behaviors (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Accenture, 2018).

### Restorative Branding and Intersectional Justice

Increasingly, researchers call for restorative branding, wherein brands are treated as cultural actors capable of mending social wounds through inclusive methods and justice-centered narrative telling (Luedicke et al., 2021). This includes the raising of marginalized voices, investment in reparative actions and involvement in systemic change.

Moreover, brand activism needs to be intersectional,confronting the overlapping systems of oppression that affect different groups (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins & Bilge, 2016). For example, a climate campaign ignoring Indigenous land rights risks affirming exclusions even as it appears progressive.

### Conclusion

Correcting historical wrongs through brand activism demands more than shallow words or symbolic actions,it demands thorough-going institutional self-reflection, reparative practice and sustained commitment to justice. As consumers increasingly demand that brands become responsible for their influence on culture and society, successful activism must be rooted in authenticity, intersectionality and structural change. Done with honesty and humility, brand activism not only leads to social evolution but also redefines the brand as a responsible, ethical and active player in the public realm.



**The Path to Inclusive Accountability**

**Acknowledgment**
Confront historical ties to injustice and issue a public recognition of harm

**Community Consultation**
Engage affected communities to understand their needs

**Reparative Action**
Implement tangible measures for redress, such as investments or partnerships

**Transparent Communication**
Clearly communicate efforts and progress while being to feedback

**Sustained Engagement**
Commit to long-term advocacy structural change initiatives

*Figure 6.6. Addressing Historical Injustices through Ethical Brand Activism*

*This visual timeline outlines five key stages of inclusive brand activism: acknowledgment, community consultation, reparative action, transparent communication and sustained engagement. It offers a strategic path for brands aiming to address legacies of harm through ethical, community-centered practices.*

### 6.8 Metrics for Inclusive Branding Success

Inclusive branding success needs to be measured on a multidimensional scale that examines both social impact and brand performance. Conventional marketing metrics,brand awareness, customer satisfaction or market share, for instance,fail to capture the intensity and sincerity of inclusion initiatives (Aaker, 2021; Brown, 2022). Inclusive branding metrics, on the other hand, need to measure the extent to which a brand incorporates equity, representation and accessibility into its business, communications and relationships with stakeholders.

### 1. Representation and Equity Audits

A crucial step is to undertake representation audits of brand content, leadership, supplier diversity and organizational demographics. Audits examine who is being represented in brand imagery, who has decision-making authority and which communities are present or absent (Ahmed, 2012; Schroeder & Zwick, 2004).

For instance, a brand can monitor the representation of people with disabilities in campaigns or measure gender and racial parity in leadership positions (Liu et al., 2020).

### 2. Accessibility and Inclusive Design Benchmarks

Assessment of a brand's accessibility performance involves compliance with standards such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1), store accessibility, usability of products by individuals with disabilities and provision of alternative formats (W3C, 2018; Costanza-Chock, 2020). Disabled consumer user satisfaction rates, screen reader compatibility scores or sensory-friendly product take-up provide insight into a brand's ability to provide inclusive experiences.

### 3. Sentiment and Trust Analytics

Inclusive branding success is also indicated through public opinion, consumer trust and resonance within communities. Brands may track social listening metrics, online reviews, media coverage and engagement metrics across various demographic segments (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Sentiment analysis software and Net Promoter Scores (NPS) segmented by identity can indicate if inclusivity is coming across as authentic or performative (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

### 4. Community Impact and Stakeholder Engagement

Impact must also be quantified in terms of concrete benefits to marginalized groups. Metrics such as number of co-creation partnerships, investment in marginalized communities, models of community ownership and alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Ind & Iglesias, 2016; Sanders & Stappers, 2008) are included in this.

Stakeholder engagement surveys, advisory board activity and grassroots feedback loops offer continuous insight into the extent to which a brand is fulfilling its commitments to inclusion (Björgvinsson et al., 2012).

### 5. Inclusive Governance and Internal Culture

Brands need to look inward as well. Internal culture measurements encompass employee satisfaction within underrepresented groups, pay equity statistics, inclusive leadership training results and diverse talent retention rates (Brown, 2022; Ahmed, 2012). Such internal measurements are important since external communication without internal alignment results in brand dissonance.

### 6. Longitudinal and Qualitative Measures

Lastly, long-term and qualitative measures, including ethnographic research, focus groups and community narratives, should be used by brands. These record brand inclusivity's changing attitudes and offer context-full feedback that transcends numbers (Rebelo et al., 2020; Sandlin & Maudlin, 2012).

### Conclusion

Assessing inclusive branding success demands going deeper than superficial metrics to be more holistic and justice-minded in our approach. By pairing quantitative measurement with qualitative research and by looking at both internal culture and external impact, brands can gain a clearer sense of the depth, sincerity and success of their inclusion initiatives. Metrics are not only tools of accountability; they are also tools of learning, adaptation and ongoing improvement on the path toward genuinely equitable branding.

*Figure 6.7. Inclusive Branding Metrics Framework*

*This infographic presents five core dimensions for evaluating inclusive branding success: organizational inclusion, representation, consumer perception, accessibility and social impact. It provides a strategic structure for brands to assess and enhance their equity commitments.*

### 6.9 Challenges and Risks

As inclusive branding holds such vast potential for social influence and consumer involvement, so too does it hold a group of intricate challenges and risks to avoid. In the absence of authenticity, strategic fittingness and stakeholder involvement, the risk of performative inclusion, reputation damage or even consumer mistrust exists (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Moorman, 2020).

### 1. Risk of Tokenism and Performative Branding

One of the greatest challenges is tokenistic participation by diverse identities, a process commonly termed tokenism. Firms will place marginalized groups in advertisements and campaigns yet deny them opportunities for genuine participation in decision-making, product development or leadership (Ahmed, 2012; Gill, 2007). Such inclusion fails to be effective because customers demand more authenticity and transformation in the system, rather than token images.

### 2. Backlash and Polarization

Public stances on social issues can likewise be subject to complaint by specific consumer constituencies, political factions or shareholders. This is particularly the case in divided markets where brand activism is perceived as "taking sides" (Bhattacharya & Elsbach, 2002; Moorman, 2020). Nike and Gillette, for instance, have been both lauded and boycotted due to their progressive advertisement campaigns.

Solving this tension calls on brands to base their activism in key values, anticipate critique and remain consistent in the long run (Sarkar & Kotler, 2018).

### 3. Cultural Faux Pas and Appropriation

Unless they penetrate the culture profoundly and engage in cooperation with societies, brands stand to make representation mistakes,i.e., abusing venerated symbols, ethnic minorities stereotyping or mispronouncing indigenous languages. These mistakes can be deemed cultural appropriation where brands gain a benefit from cultural forms without acknowledging or paying (hooks, 1992; Schroeder & Zwick, 2004).

Successful inclusive branding requires co-creation, cultural comprehension and humility in the branding process (Costanza-Chock, 2020; Sanders & Stappers, 2008).

### 4. Internal Inconsistency and Brand Dissonance

Another risk comes when external communication is not supported by internal practice. A firm that launches a campaign for racial balance in advertising but has only a narrow diversity at the management or discriminatory work culture level can be accused of hypocrisy (Ahmed, 2012; Brown, 2022). Brand dissonance is demoralizing and portrays inclusion as a marketing strategy and not as a corporate value.

To prevent this, inclusive branding needs to be mainstreamed within corporate governance, HR policy and supply chain values,not the responsibility of communications departments (Ind & Iglesias, 2016).

### 5. Measurement Gaps and Impact Blind Spots

Inclusion efforts are frequently difficult to quantify in their actual effects. Excessive reliance on vanity metrics,likes, impressions or reach,can conceal more inherent systemic failing or blind spots in community engagements (Aaker, 2021; Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Without sound evaluative mechanisms, inclusion branding runs the risk of not effecting significant change.

The integration of qualitative feedback, data on lived experience and social impact measures avoids this risk (Rebelo et al., 2020).

**Conclusion**

Inclusive branding, though necessary, is likewise perilous and demands ceaseless, watchful attention. From refraining from tokenism and backlash to maintaining cultural competence and organizational alignment, the journey to equity-based branding is multidimensional and risk-free. But these risks are not flashes of discouragement,they are calls to brands to push their integrity deeper, to hear more intensely and to build adaptive relations with the communities they aspire to serve. In the face of humility, consistency and responsibility, inclusive branding is able to weather these threats and become a driving force for actual change.



*Figure 6.8. Challenges of Inclusive Branding and Risk Mitigation*

*This infographic highlights six major challenges faced by brands pursuing inclusion,tokenism, backlash, culture gaps, measurement difficulties, cultural appropriation and operational constraints,paired with strategic responses for navigating them with integrity.*

## 6.10 Conclusion

Inclusive branding is not a campaign. It is not a slogan. It is not a holiday promotion or a demographic annotation. It is a practice of change,a consistent process of aligning a brand's values, behaviors and relationships with the complex realities of human difference, structural inequality and collective possibility.

This chapter has demonstrated that inclusive branding needs to shift marketing from being a tool to persuade and towards being a stage for justice, empathy and co-authorship. It is not just about being heard, seen and represented, but also about who gets the voice, the hand and the agency to author the story, the experience and shape the destiny of the brand.

The path of inclusive branding is one of fallibility and tension. Brands are going to mess up. There will be misses, mishearings and cringe moments. But these aren't failures,these are calls to learn, listen more deeply and lead differently. The most genuine inclusive brands aren't the ones that purport to be all-knowing, but the ones who are willing to grow, remain open and relationally responsible.

Critically, inclusive branding is not only an external concern,it needs to be embedded within internal cultures of care, accessibility, equity and voice. It is not legitimate to present inclusion in communications when exclusion dominates hiring practices, supply chains, leadership or product design. Inside must equal outside. The story needs to be the lived experience.

As global markets become more socially responsible, interdependent and multicultural, inclusive branding can no longer be an avant-garde niche,it is now a business and ethical imperative. Those brands that continue to sell to an idealized "mainstream" by excluding others will become increasingly irrelevant, uncredible and distrusted. Conversely, those brands that embed inclusive practices in core strategy,not as an add-on endeavor,will build stronger brand loyalty, wider market reach and positive social impact.

In its essence, inclusive branding is a matter of rephrasing the marketing question from "How do we sell to them?" to "How do we stand with them?" From persuasion to participation. From representation to relationship. From consumption to co-creation.

This chapter is an invitation to marketers, designers, executives and storytellers to reimagine branding as a control game, but instead as a shared practice of care, courage and cultural regeneration. It is asking brands to win their seat in people's lives not by being loudest or most glamorous, but by being truer, more human and more fair.

The future of branding belongs to those who are willing to contribute- not superficially but deeply; not for a moment but meaningfully. That is the challenge, that is the mandate and that is the imperative.

# Digital Inclusion and Technology-Enabled Co-Creation

## 7.1 Introduction

As we reach the pinnacle of this book, we must take a brief pause to contemplate not just what inclusive marketing is, but what it enables. Inclusive marketing is not just a practice,it is a movement, an attitude and a trajectory of social change. Along the way, we have followed the moral grounding, theoretical foundations, participatory approaches and pragmatic strategies that enable a vision of marketing that does not exclude, stereotype or marginalize,but invites, enriches and cooperates.

This chapter turns our attention from theory to change. What's next? How do marketers, researchers, brands and communities carry on this work not as a trend but as an ongoing commitment? What are the possible directions for inclusive marketing as an emergent area of scholarship and actual practice?

Inclusive marketing arrives at a time when algorithmic bias, misinformation and social fragmentation compromise communication in industries. Under the circumstances, inclusive branding is no longer a privilege but a requirement. Brands are being increasingly asked to not only represent the diversity of society but to incarnate it with responsibility, redistribute attention and act with conscience.

But the road forward is not simple. As we have discovered, inclusion can be instrumentalized, watered down or commodified. The future of inclusive marketing will thus need to be innovative and creative, but also reflexive,

intersectional and accountably long-term. It must stay connected to people's own experience and motivated by communities, not campaigns.

This last chapter maps a path forward. It lays out the strategic imperatives, cultural transformations and system levers that must shape the next chapter of inclusive marketing. It offers guidance to practitioners who would endeavor to position inclusion at the heart of brand character and business culture. And it invites scholars and teachers to construct curricula, research agendas and measurement approaches that are justice- and equity-centered.

Finally, this book's conclusion is not a conclusion,but a start. An invitation to seed inclusion not just in marketing teams, but across whole organizations and systems. To transition from spasmodic representation to systemic change. To craft futures where marketing is an instrument of belonging, co-creation and collective freedom.

## 7.2 Understanding Digital Inclusion

Digital inclusion is the equal access to and effective usage of digital technology by all and every society, especially those lagging behind in the digital economy (Robinson et al., 2015; van Dijk, 2020). Digital inclusion encompasses more than internet access alone,it entails digital literacy, affordability, suitable devices, accessible design and socio-cultural content relevance (Gonzales, 2016; Warschauer, 2004).

As branding becomes more digital, digital inclusion has taken center stage in inclusive marketing. Brands that ignore digital imbalances risk reinforcing social inequalities and disenfranchising vulnerable populations.

### Bridging the Digital Divide

The digital divide is a phrase employed to define the inequality between those with regular access to digital technologies and those without, usually along lines of income, geography, age, disability and education (Selwyn, 2004; van Dijk, 2020). Digital inclusion seeks to close this gap not only through the availability of infrastructure but also through the availability of skills, confidence and content relevance for individuals to use online fully (Gillard et al., 2008).

In marketing applications, this implies that brands have to design for low-bandwidth users, provide multilingual content and resist assumptions of homogeneity of device access or digital literacy (Costanza-Chock, 2020).

### Accessibility and Design Justice

Digital inclusion also demands that brand experiences are accessible to individuals with disabilities and sensitive to the variability of user needs. To this end, there is a need for screen-reader support, keyboard navigation, captioned video and visual contrast modes (W3C, 2018). Design justice principles demand that the most excluded are centered in the design of digital platforms and tools and that participatory and community-driven approaches are brought to digital brand experiences (Costanza-Chock, 2020).

### Inclusive Content and Representation

Equitable digital participation also requires that users see themselves reflected in the language, images and stories of online content. Brands have an important role to play in making marginal voices visible but also powerful as storytellers and co-creators (Noble, 2018; Jenkins et al., 2016a).

### Structural and Intersectional Barriers

Digital exclusion is usually overlaid with structural inequalities of poverty, systemic racism, gender discrimination or geographical remoteness. Intersectional digital inclusion initiatives acknowledge that people can experience several, intersecting obstacles to access and utilization (Crenshaw, 1991; Eubanks, 2018).

Thus, inclusive digital branding has to extend beyond platform design to policy advocacy, infrastructure building and community capacity development in collaboration with local stakeholders.

### Conclusion

Digital inclusion is a pillar of inclusive branding in the 21st century. It invites brands to think beyond access and consider a more profound commitment to digital equity,making technologies, content and platforms accessible, culturally relevant and empowering to everyone who uses them. By overcoming the compounding barriers of ability, geography, language and systemic inequality, brands can craft more inclusive digital experiences that mirror and serve the diversity of their audiences. In doing this, they not only maximize reach but also add significant value toward bridging the digital divide and advancing social justice through technology.
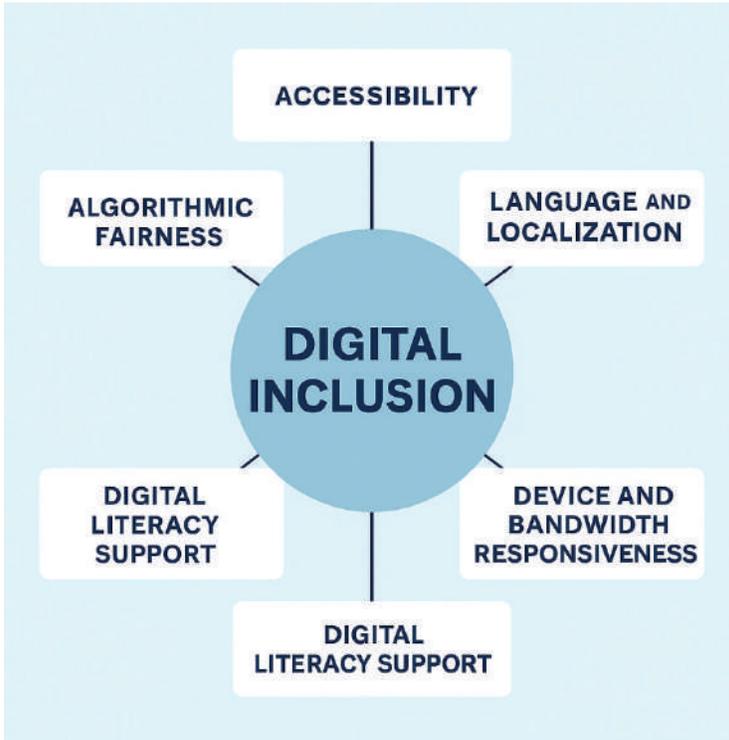
*Figure 7.1. Six Pillars of Digital Inclusion in Marketing*

*This infographic visualizes six core components of digital inclusion,accessibility, localization, responsiveness, user-centered design, algorithmic fairness and digital literacy,highlighting how brands can create equitable digital experiences across platforms.*

## 7.3 Platforms as Spaces of Empowerment and Marginalization

Platforms are now key spaces for branding, storytelling and social connection. From social networking sites and sharing websites to shopping websites and gig economy apps, platforms provide possible spaces for empowerment and risks of exclusion. For marginalized communities, platforms can heighten voices, build communities and achieve economic opportunities without using old gatekeepers (Jenkins et al., 2016a; Noble, 2018). However, the same platforms has a tendency to recycle social inequalities, subjecting users to surveillance, algorithmic discrimination, exclusion and exploitation (Eubanks, 2018; Benjamin, 2019).

### Empowerment through Visibility and Self-Representation

Platforms allow marginalized groups to narrate themselves, stage social movements and interact directly with brands. Activists, influencers and producers from marginalized groups have leveraged online platforms to bring themselves to voice, accumulate community capital and contest cultural narratives (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015; Florini, 2014). Movements such as #BlackLivesMatter, #DisabledAndCute and #IndigenousTikTok demonstrate the potential of online activism to disrupt hegemonic imagery and reclaim agency.

### Algorithmic Inequities and Structural Marginalization

Concurrently, websites are frequently controlled by algorithmic and business rationales that favor participation at the expense of equity. Scholars have demonstrated how algorithms can entrench racial, gender and language stereotyping, suppressing certain voices while promulgating others (Noble, 2018; Benjamin, 2019). AI moderation software, for instance, might erase Black or Indigenous producers' material disproportionately because of discriminatory training data or cultural misreading (Gillespie, 2018; boyd, 2017).

In addition, monetization contracts can replicate class and geographical disparities, favoring content from consumers who are subjected to greater resources, quicker internet or Western beauty ideals (Abidin, 2020; Duffy & Hund, 2015).

### Surveillance and Exploitation of Digital Labor

Platform economies construct surveillance and digital labor exploitation risks specifically for marginalized workers. Uber gig workers, Amazon Mechanical Turk workers or content moderation farm workers earn low pay, have algorithmic management and no benefits (Gray & Suri, 2019; Scholz, 2017). User data is commodified to sell advertisements or train AI algorithms,sometimes unknowingly and without permission (Zuboff, 2019; Eubanks, 2018).

These relations blur who reaps the rewards of digital engagement and on what terms.

### Direction towards Platform Justice

To develop equitable branding in platformed spaces, brands need to engage critically with the power imbalances that are inherent in digital infrastructures. This requires taking up other platforms, speaking out for

equitable labor practices, designing equitable algorithms and codestimating with marginalized groups (Costanza-Chock, 2020; Srnicek, 2017).

Platform brands must also see their role in breaking up systems of exclusion, not in succumbing to them. Presence is not an issue of inclusion, it is an issue of voice, power and equity in digital space.

**Conclusion**

Platforms can be transformational in bringing up marginalized communities through visibility, voice and economic empowerment. Platforms are also inscribed with structural inequalities that can keep exclusion, bias and exploitation in place. For brand inclusivity, platforms are not merely about taking up virtual space but about openly participating in remapping terms of engagement. Through co-creation with marginalized users, counteracting algorithmic vices and promoting platform justice, brands are able to assist in transforming such virtual spaces from spaces of inequality to platforms of co-power and authentic representation.
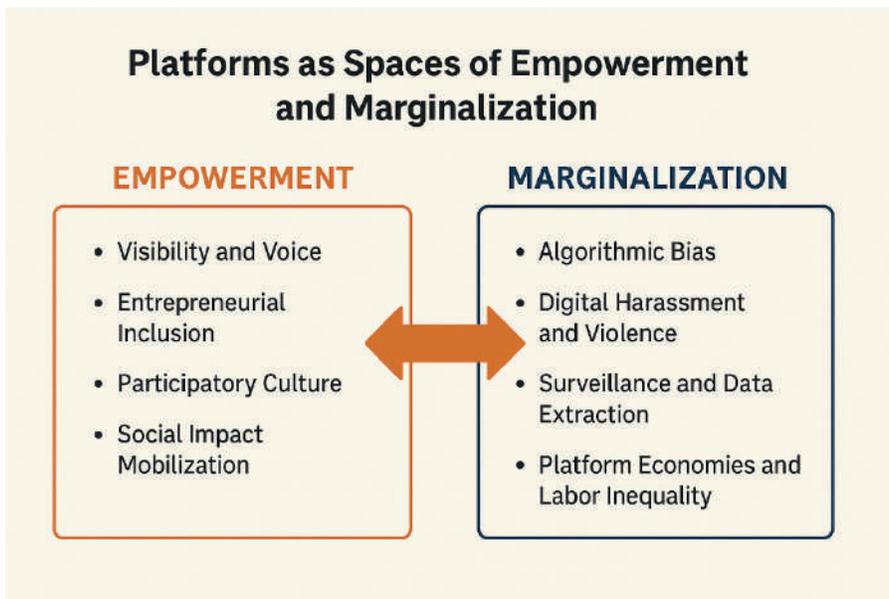


*Figure 7.2. Platforms as Spaces of Empowerment and Marginalization*

*This diagram contrasts the dual nature of digital platforms: their potential to amplify marginalized voices, entrepreneurial access and social movements, alongside the risks of algorithmic bias, surveillance and digital exclusion. It offers a diagnostic tool for marketers navigating the ethical use of digital platforms.*

### 7.4 Social Media and Participatory Storytelling

Social media has revolutionized narrative as a mediated, brand-oriented process to one that is interactive and a collaborative process where consumers,particularly those on the margins,are able to become co-authors of brand stories. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok and Twitter allow users to upload their own stories, subvert mainstream discourses and influence public debates around identity, justice and belonging (Jenkins et al., 2016b; Highfield & Leaver, 2016).

#### From Broadcast to Dialogue

Conventional marketing was predominantly a monologic system of communication, whereas social media sites ensure interactive discourse with co-creation of meaning with the audience and brand. This shift coincides with the process of transmedia storytelling,where brand narratives exist across various platforms with user contributions building upon and remixing the initial narrative (Jenkins, 2006; Phillips, 2012).

#### Amplifying Marginalized Voices

For the first time ever, with participatory storytelling in social media, historical exclusions have been challenged while seeking a revival of exclusive misrepresentation and reclaiming narrative agency. The use of #SayHerName, #MeToo, #DisabilityTwitter and #OwnVoices engages the thought that digital storytelling is one of the prime tools of resistance and identity construction (Clark, 2016; Jackson et al., 2020).

Such behaviors also impact brand storytelling and consumers increasingly demand that brands present authentic stories, lived stories and community stories in their commercials. The failure to recognize such stories exposes them to claims of erasure or unauthenticity (Lazard & Atkinson, 2015).

#### Risks of Appropriation and Story Extractivism

Yet, participatory storytelling brands must avoid story extractivism,the tendency to harvest people's stories for brand purposes without true interaction or sharing of benefit (Couldry, 2010; Costanza-Chock, 2020). Participatory storytelling has to be ethical collaboration, transparency and mutual power with storytellers.

#### Metrics and Impact

Brands can monitor the effectiveness of user-generated storytelling through metrics of engagement, sentiment and voice variety of content associated with the brand. Nonetheless, quantitative metrics like community

resonance, emotional authenticity and narrative coherence are also critical (Rebelo et al., 2020).

**Conclusion**

Social media leveled the playing field of narrative, providing marginalized groups with the powerful media to tell identity, resist master narratives and bargain with brands on their own. To marketers, participatory narrative is no longer a choice,it is a cultural imperative that requires authenticity, mutuality and ethical involvement. Where brands heed, partner and co-create with their consumers, narrative becomes not just a marketing task but an instrument of representation, empowerment and social change.



*Figure 7.3: Social Media and Participatory Storytelling*

*A visual map of user-driven storytelling across platforms,highlighting co-creation, hashtag activism, grassroots voice and brand-community dialogue in inclusive marketing.*

### 7.5 Mobile-First Strategies for the Global South

Mobile tech throughout the Global South is not a amenity, however,instead, it's a lifeline to digital access, economic engagement and social interaction. Since broadband infrastructure is constrained, the mobile phone is the initial or sole gateway to the internet for most users (GSMA, 2023; Donner, 2015). It demands mobile-first branding that focuses on affordability, accessibility and cultural sensitivity in design, content and user experience.

#### Access through Mobile and Not Desktop

Unlike Global North consumers, who will move between a sequence of devices, Global South users are typically mobile-only (Sambasivan et al., 2013). As regards brands, this implies low-bandwidth optimization, creating light-weight apps and making mobile interfaces friendly at levels of varying literacy and languages (Medhi et al., 2011). This also implies drawing on already well-established platforms in the weave of quotidian existence, such as WhatsApp, Facebook Lite and mobile money platforms like M-Pesa (Maurer, 2012).

#### Localization and Cultural Sensitivity

Effective mobile-first approaches also involved cultural localization. Visual design, interface language, tone and user flow must be tailored to the local culture's values, behavior and limitations (Chib et al., 2015; Bidwell et al., 2013). For instance, voice interfaces in low-literacy areas or offline-to-online functionality in areas with bad network connectivity, enhance usability and trust.

#### Participatory Design and Grassroots Innovation

Mobile innovation in the Global South is bottom-up, with users in the South hacking, recycling or co-creating digital technology to suit local contexts. Brands who seek to compete in such spaces need to adopt participatory design, involving local users and communities as customers, but also as co-producers of services and products (Heeks, 2009; Rangaswamy & Cutrell, 2012). This is commensurate with inclusive marketing values and encourages higher adoption and impact.

#### Barriers and Opportunities

As promising as it is, mobile access in the Global South is threatened by gendered digital divides, affordability limitations and infrastructural disparities (UNESCO, 2019; GSMA, 2023). Brands need to overcome these obstacles through investments in digital literacy initiatives, enabling

inclusive content development and pushing policy environments that increase connectivity and access.

**Conclusion**

Mobile-first business practice in the Global South is not merely a matter of adapting technology,it's a matter of equity, empowerment and cultural sensitivity. Since mobile phones are the primary gateway to the internet for billions, inclusive branding needs to be rooted in local contexts, user involvement and access via design. Brands that listen, co-create and care about usability, affordability and representation thrive in such markets. If brands mobilize as an inclusion vehicle, they can reap market value and more social relevance.
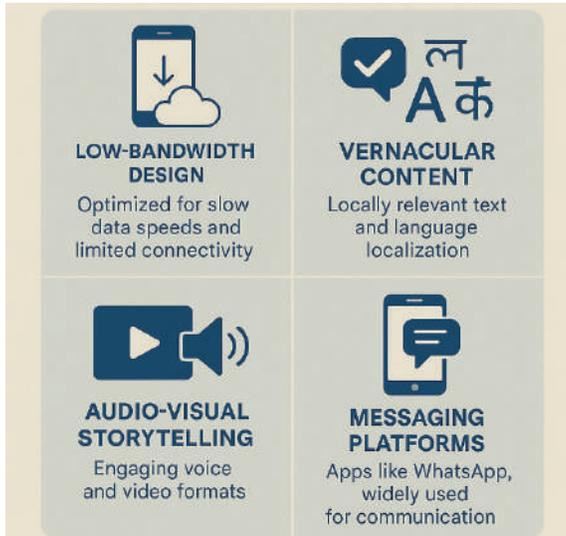


*Figure 7.4: Mobile-First Strategies for the Global South*

*A visual guide to inclusive mobile engagement,highlighting localized content, voice-first interfaces, low-bandwidth design and culturally grounded mobile storytelling in emerging markets.*

## 7.6 Community-Owned Platforms and Digital Cooperatives

Community-owned platforms and digital cooperatives represent a powerful alternative to mainstream platform capitalism, challenging centralized control by enabling collective ownership, democratic governance and equitable value distribution (Scholz, 2016; Pazaitis et al., 2017). In these models, communities,rather than corporations,set the rules, share

the profits and shape the digital infrastructure according to their needs and values.

### Platform Cooperativism and Digital Sovereignty

Platform cooperativism, as a growing movement, seeks to reclaim the digital economy by embedding cooperative principles,such as member ownership and participatory decision-making,into digital platform design (Scholz & Schneider, 2017). These platforms aim to redistribute power and value in sectors like transportation (e.g., CoopCycle), creative work (e.g., Resonate) and data governance (e.g., DECODE).

Such efforts are particularly significant for marginalized communities, offering pathways to economic agency, cultural p-reservation and resistance to extractive digital models (Muldoon, 2022).

### Inclusive Branding within Cooperative Structures

Branding in the cooperative digital space differs from commercial approaches,it is grounded in solidarity, transparency and community co-authorship. The brand identity of a digital cooperative often reflects its social mission, shared values and member contributions, rather than polished corporate messaging (Pazaitis et al., 2017). This fosters deep trust and loyalty among members, users and supporters.

### Challenges of Scale and Sustainability

Despite their promise, community-owned platforms face challenges related to scaling, funding and visibility in a digital ecosystem dominated by Big Tech (Emejulu & McGregor, 2019). However, networks such as the Platform Cooperativism Consortium and European projects like Platoniq and Fairbnb illustrate how cross-sector collaborations can support ecosystem development and public awareness.

### The Role of Brands in Supporting Alternatives

Mainstream brands can contribute by amplifying, funding or partnering with cooperative digital initiatives,provided such engagement respects autonomy and avoids co-optation. This aligns with inclusive branding goals, particularly when focused on digital equity, participatory governance and economic justice (Sadowski, 2020).

### Conclusion

Community-owned platforms and digital cooperatives represent a transformative shift in how digital systems are designed, governed and experienced. By centering collective ownership, democratic participation

and equitable value distribution, these models challenge the dominance of extractive platform capitalism and offer inclusive, resilient alternatives. For inclusive branding, engaging with or supporting such platforms is not merely an ethical gesture,it is a strategic alignment with a future where technology serves people, not the other way around. As awareness grows and ecosystems mature, these cooperative digital spaces may redefine the values and practices of branding itself.



*Figure 7.5: Community-Owned Platforms and Digital Cooperatives*

*A visual map of decentralized digital participation,illustrating cooperative ownership, data autonomy, shared governance, ethical design and inclusive innovation in alternative platform models.*

## 7.7 AI, Data and the New Frontiers of Exclusion

Artificial intelligence (AI) and big data platforms more and more fuel branding, customer interaction and organizational decision-making. These technologies, however, only mirror and even amplify prior racial, economic and social exclusion if they are used without ethical consideration and inclusive design principles (Benjamin, 2019; Eubanks, 2018).

### Algorithmic Bias and Structural Inequality

AI systems are largely trained on data that exhibits historical and systemic biases,usually compiled from platforms or institutions biased against particular groups. Algorithms can therefore replicate discriminatory outcomes in areas such as facial recognition, content moderation, credit scores and targeted advertising (Noble, 2018; Angwin et al., 2016). For instance, predictive policing software and algorithmic hiring websites have been found to disadvantage Black, Indigenous and other marginalized groups (O'Neil, 2016; Raji & Buolamwini, 2019).

### Exclusion by Design and Data Poverty

Apart from data bias, exclusion might be structural and deliberate, intrinsic in the very logic of data systems. These encompass surveillance of weak groups, underrepresentation in data and harvesting digital labor for machine learning without credit or reward (Gray & Suri, 2019; Crawford, 2021). Certain communities, particularly those in the Global South, are also subject to "data poverty" – thin digital footprints due to infrastructural marginalization – thereby excluding them from the AI economy (Taylor & Broeders, 2015).

### Marketing, Personalization and Ethical Risk

Personalization with AI in marketing and branding can enhance discriminatory targeting, filter bubbles or stereotypes when they are based on unclear profiling mechanisms (Zuboff, 2019). Without ethical safeguards, data-driven marketing strategies pose risks of identity commodification and reassertion of social segmentation over inclusion (Couldry & Mejias, 2019).

### Toward Ethical and Inclusive AI

As a counter to these dangers, inclusive branding will need to promote algorithmic openness, data justice, collaborative design and inclusion in AI development (Costanza-Chock, 2020; Raji et al., 2020). Inclusive practices of AI for branding give human dignity, community participation and access equity and they cause data governance to rethink with the marginalized center.

### Conclusion

As data systems and artificial intelligence increasingly set the limits of marketing and brand engagement, they likewise establish new lines of exclusion and harm. Without mindful ethical frameworks or participatory design, these technologies threaten to reproduce instead of remediate structural injustices. Inclusive branding in the era of AI requires more

than cutting-edge technology,it requires critical thought, governing by participation and a dedication to data justice. Only by centering the rights and voices of marginalized communities can brands ensure that AI becomes a tool for empowerment, not exploitation.



## AI, DATA, AND THE NEW FRONTIERS OF EXCLUSION

### INCLUSIVE AI MARKETING PRINCIPLES

**Representation in Data**
Use diverse and representative training datasets

**Transparency and Explainability**
Ensure algorithms are understandable and accountable

**Human Oversight**
Maintain human involvement in AI decision-making

**Consent and Privacy**
Respect user consent and data privacy rights

**Community Co-Design**
Involve marginilazed groups in AI development

### EXCLUSIONARY AI MARKETING PRACTICES

**Bias in Data Sets**
Rely on data that reinforces existing social biases

**Opaque Algorithms**
Use "black box" models lacking transparency

**Full Automation**
Minimize human intervention in AI workflows

**Surveillance Marketing**
Exploit personal data without user consent

**Exclusionary Design**
Build AI systems that exclude marginalized users

*Figure 7.6. Ethical vs. Exclusionary AI in Marketing*

*This infographic contrasts inclusive AI marketing practices,such as co-designed data, transparency and community oversight,with exclusionary approaches rooted in opaque algorithms, biased datasets and surveillance marketing. It offers a practical framework for evaluating ethical alignment in AI-powered branding.*

### 7.8 Designing Inclusive Digital Co-Creation Experiences

Inclusive digital co-creation engages marginalized users in the design, testing and development of digital platforms and brand experiences, ensuring their needs, identities and opinions are central, not peripheral, of innovation. It redefines power relations from passive consumption to active engagement, constructing user agency on all phases of the digital design process (Sanders & Stappers, 2008; Costanza-Chock, 2020).

#### Principles of Inclusive Co-Creation

Key values are accessibility, cultural sensitivity, language integration and fair participation. These must be intentionally embedded into digital platforms, from user interface design and message tone to backend structure and moderation guidelines (Gilbert, 2019; Bødker, 2015). Universal design models and access technologies have a key role to play in ensuring co-creation is accessible for disabled users (Steinfeld & Maisel, 2012).

#### Digital Co-Design Methods

Methods like participatory design, speculative design and co-design sprints are being employed more and more to support substantial participation in virtual spaces (Spinuzzi, 2005; Björgvinsson et al., 2012). Platforms like Miro, Slack or WhatsApp have been repurposed for co-input collection, performing adequately in low-resource or geographically dispersed situations (Light & Akama, 2014).

#### Power, Voice and Ethics

Power inequalities continue in digital co-creation, particularly when groups, facilitators or researchers do not share representativeness with the groups they are attempting to engage with. Reflexivity, reciprocity and transparency constitute ethical co-creation, a guarantee that participants are gaining from engaging and that their inputs are appreciated beyond tokenistic consultation (DiSalvo et al., 2012; Frauenberger, 2019).

Digital co-creation initiatives need to assess quantitative indicators (e.g., amount of engagement, accessibility usage) with quantitative methods like participant satisfaction, voice perception and cultural adequacy (Bratteteig & Wagner, 2014). Above all else, inclusion is not a tool matter, it arises in the development of trust relationships, respect and ongoing dialogue.

#### Conclusion

Inclusive digital co-creation is not access, it is collaborative authorship practice, ethical production and relational accountability. By prioritizing the

words and lived realities of marginalized users, brands can transition from extractive design practices to actual collaboration. This type of practice builds trust, creativity and relevance in digital brand experiences and redistributes power throughout the design system. Ultimately, inclusion in digital co-creation isn't solely found in tools, but rather a consistent commitment to equity, empathy and respect.
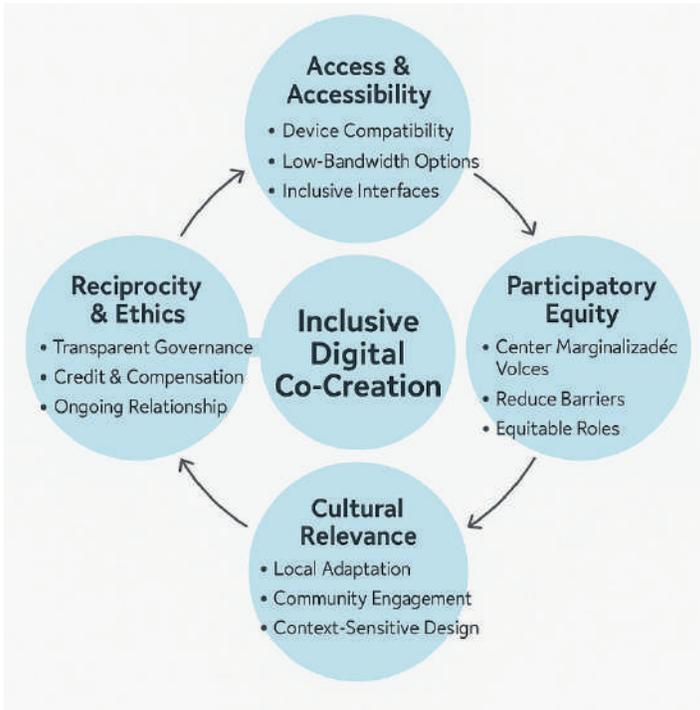


*Figure 7.7. Inclusive Digital Co-Creation Framework*

*This visual model outlines the core design elements for inclusive digital co-creation,highlighting access, equity, cultural relevance, transparency and relational ethics as interconnected pillars of a just and participatory innovation process.*

## 7.9 Measuring Digital Inclusion and Impact

Digital inclusion measurement is a multilateral exercise that goes beyond internet penetration or device ownership tracking. It entails measurement of access, affordability, digital skills, content relevance and the capacity to contribute effectively to the digital economy and society (OECD, 2021; ITU, 2020). Inclusive brand efforts must be measured not just by reach but by their power to empower vulnerable users and communities.

### Frameworks and Indicators

There are a number of frameworks informing digital inclusion measurement. The ITU's Digital Inclusion Index and the OECD's Going Digital Toolkit provide benchmarks against access, use, skills and inclusive outcomes (ITU, 2020; OECD, 2021). National and regional endeavors,like Australia's Digital Inclusion Index and the EU's DESI framework,provide contextual relevance through the inclusion of localized socio-economic and cultural variables (Thomas et al., 2020; European Commission, 2023).

### Beyond Access: Participation and Empowerment

Further literature calls for movement beyond access-based metrics to those of participatory parity, civic engagement and empowerment in technology (Selwyn, 2004; Warschauer, 2004). User agency in platform design, data ownership or content co-creation, for instance, paints a more nuanced picture of digital inclusion than levels of usage alone.

### Qualitative and Mixed-Methods Approaches

Quantitative indicators like broadband speed or number of devices need to be supplemented by qualitative indicators, such as user satisfaction, felt inclusion or a sense of digital belonging (van Deursen & Helsper, 2015). Mixed-methods methodologies,like participatory assessment, digital storytelling or ethnographic observation,add richness and validity to impact evaluations (Lievrouw, 2011; Sharp, 2024).

### Brand-Level Measurement and Responsibility

For brands, gauging digital inclusion impact involves creating KPIs that map onto inclusive design principles, such as accessibility compliance, multilingual engagement, platform equity and responsiveness to feedback. There must be ethical data curation practice and reporting transparency so that inclusion metrics are not performative but transformative (UNESCO, 2022).

### Conclusion

Assessing digital inclusion and impact necessitates movement away from reductionist, access-based measures and toward multifaceted, multidimensional models foregrounding equity, empowerment and participation. For inclusive branding, this involves looking beyond vanity metrics and adopting tools that account for lived experience, systemic barriers and meaningful engagement. Coupled with ethical data practice and community-led assessment, such measurements can lead brands toward

more responsible, transparent and socially attuned digital strategies,so that inclusion is not just measured but substantively achieved.



*Figure 7.8. Measuring Digital Inclusion and Impact*

*This infographic summarizes the core dimensions and sample indicators for evaluating inclusive digital marketing efforts,including access, cultural relevance, participation, trust and equity,alongside ethical considerations for participatory data practices.*

### 7. 10 Conclusion

New digital technologies have revolutionized the nature of the relationship between brands and humans,exploding the size, velocity and

reach of engagement. But this revolution is not neutral. It is replicating prevailing society asymmetries and, if left unchallenged, can intensify or even widen digital exclusion.

The chapter has set out how inclusive marketing in the digital economy must address a combination of interconnected issues:

Who gets to participate? Who gets heard? Who benefits,and at whose cost?

From platform design to data stewardship, from mobile-first initiatives to co-creation processes, each digital touchpoint is also a political and ethical landscape. Designing for digital inclusion does more than fill in the gaps of access,it involves tearing down structural barriers, questioning algorithmic bias and reconceptualizing technology as a space of empowerment, rather than merely efficiency.

We mapped how practices of inclusive branding intersect with challenges like:

- Digital literacy and infrastructure divides

- Community ownership and platform governance

- Narrative justice and participatory storytelling

- AI-driven exclusion and data ethics

- Equitable models and cooperative design principles

Ultimately, we contended that measurement needs to change. Inclusive digital social impact can't be reduced to clicks or conversion but with participatory, equity-based metrics that show lived reality, community agency and long-term well-being.

In short, this chapter is requesting marketers, designers and strategists to assume a greater level of responsibility when shaping the digital public sphere. Brands aren't merely existing in digital space anymore,brands are co-creating cultural reality, building identity and deciding whose voices are amplified or silenced.

Inclusive digital marketing is not an add-on, therefore. It is a fundamental practice,a practice of justice, of humility, of co-authorship and of care. As digital ecosystems develop, so will our ability to build with,not for,the communities we're seeking to serve.

The future of marketing is inclusive. The future of technology is relational. The future of inclusion is now.

# Measuring Inclusion and Impact

## 8.1 Introduction

As we reach the concluding chapter of this book, we are standing at a crossroads for social change and marketing practice. The preceding chapters have demonstrated that marketing inclusion is not a boutique niche issue or transitory fad,it is an ethos that transforms. It reshapes not only what brands communicate or offer but how they listen, construct and intersect with the world.

But seeing the potential for inclusion is just step one. The real test is to operationalize inclusion,to place it alongside the infrastructures, practices and collaborations that define marketing work. This chapter meets that test by rendering the book's theoretical underpinnings, ethical requirements and case-based takeaways actionable playbooks for brand leaders, marketing organizations, educators and policy-makers.

We start with the reality that inclusive marketing does not take place in isolation. It takes place within systems that are influenced by legacy ways, prejudices embedded and performance pressure. Inclusion requires demands of both mindset shift and systems shift. It needs to be led at the top, well-resourced, measured constructively and maintained over the long term.

This last chapter is organized around a single hypothesis: inclusion is not the province of a department,it's the province of the entire system of a brand. We talk to how businesses build inclusive brand cultures, establishes cross-functional accountability and create community-driven partnerships that shift from representation to redistribution.

We are also focused on tools, roadmaps and the implementation framework for:

- Drive marketing to DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) and ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) goals

- Unleash inclusive innovation pipelines through co-design and joint research

- Embed measurements of care, trust and belonging in branding KPIs

- Develop internal cultures to aid in the inclusion on the outside promised

Finally, this chapter is a call to action and a guide. It invites practitioners to envision inclusion as not risk or expense,but as strategic and innovative possibility, moral duty and force for long-term brand strength.

Inclusion is not something we do,it is who we are.

And now, the most crucial question: How?

## 8.2 Why Measurement Matters in Inclusive Marketing

For inclusive marketing, measurement is not just a function of evaluation,it is a responsibility. It will allow brands to break through rhetoric and demonstrate whether or not their practices actually facilitate equity, representation and participation (Gupta et al., 2021; Deloitte, 2020). Without significant metrics, inclusion efforts to activate marginalized customers are more likely to be symbolic or performative instead of substantive and authentic (Czarniawska, 2013).

### Accountability and Transparency

Metrics enable accountability by providing concrete points against which to measure progress and gaps. Openness about how inclusion is being measured and defined also instills stakeholder trust and brand credibility (Okatta, 2024). For instance, the release of inclusion dashboards or impact reports enables internal and external stakeholders to determine a company's level of conformance to its publicly declared values.

### Strategic Alignment and Innovation

Measurement informs alignment and therefore inclusive marketing initiatives are defined in terms of broader organizational purpose and values (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). Furthermore, through intentional interaction with consumers' perspectives, especially those from diverse groups, brands

are capable of co-creating more meaningful and applicable campaigns, propelling innovation through inclusivity (Fisk et al., 2018).

### Steering Clear of Tokenism

Weakly executed inclusive branding can degenerate into tokenism or stereotyping. Measurement tools like audience sentiment analysis, representation audit and participatory monitoring allow brands to gauge whether the message promotes inclusion or even repeats harm (Davis, 2020; Hankivsky, 2014). These tools provide an avenue of correction grounded in evidence rather than intuition.

### Emerging Metrics for Complicated Realities

Traditional marketing KPIs will not include the relational, cultural and emotional dimensions of inclusion. Inclusive marketing therefore requires an expanded metrics approach that includes dimensions such as perceived respect, voice, representation and impact on the community (Trkulja et al., 2024). This means more qualitative and participatory methods and tracking in the long term of structural change.

### Conclusion

Measuring inclusive marketing is strategic direction and moral stopping point. It makes intention into action by giving marketers the vehicle to measure, learn and improve. When brands quantify not just reach, but also representation, respect and relevance, they're investing in a promise to greater accountability,a people-first accountability based on the lived experiences of marginalized peoples. Beneath it all, quality and reflective measurement practices give brands the ability to move beyond symbolic performance to sustained, structural inclusion.

**MEASUREMENT IN INCLUSIVE MARKETING**

| Dimensions | Example Metrics |
|---|---|
| Representation | % of underrepresented groups in advertisemennts |
| Accessibility | Accessibility compliance rate |
| Participation | Involvement in content co-creation |
| Trust | Consumer perception of inclusivity |
| Impact | Outcomes for marginalized communities |
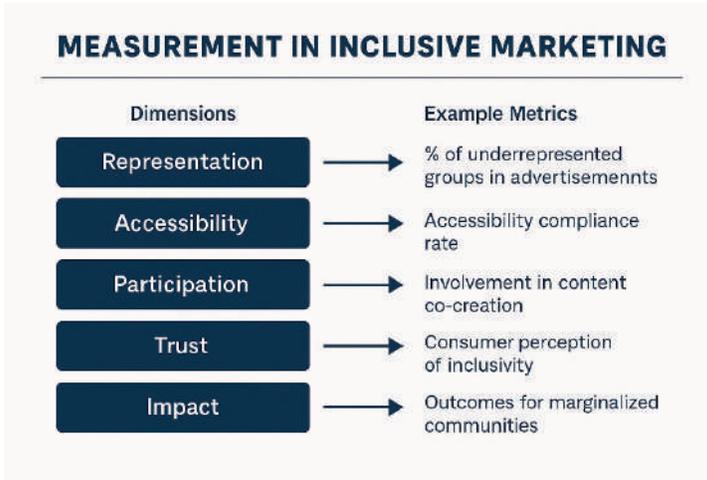
*Figure 8.1. Measurement in Inclusive Marketing*

This infographic outlines key categories and sample indicators for evaluating inclusive marketing efforts,ranging from representation and accessibility to participatory design, trust, internal alignment and long-term impact,encouraging brands to embed ethical and equity-centered metrics into their evaluation systems.

### 8.3 Key Dimensions of Inclusive Marketing Impact

Inclusive marketing success cannot be quantified through commercial metrics alone. Rather, it demands a multi-dimensions measure incorporating representation, accessibility, agency, emotional connection and community influence (Cappetta et al., 2006; Trkulja et al., 2024). All of these enable the measurement of not just what the brands are communicating but how they are connecting, who they are reaching and the actual-world impacts of their actions.

### 1. Representation and Visibility

Representation takes the form of visibility in marketing materials, ad campaigns and leadership dynamics. But figures are not enough,engaging, contextually rich depictions need to be in place to prevent tokenism and the reinforcement of stereotypes (Fraser, 2008; Davis, 2020). Representation audits can quantify visual, linguistic and narrative inclusion in brand communication.

### 2. Accessibility and Usability

Physical and virtual access continues to be the foundation of accessible brand interaction. This includes adhering to accessibility guidelines, including WCAG 2.1 for digital media, as well as accessible product design for disabled consumers or consumers with varied cognitive needs (Steinfeld & Maisel, 2012; Jaeger, 2012).

### 3. Voice, Agency and Participation

Inclusive marketing enables the voice and co-creation of heretofore marginalized groups to inform how they are served and represented (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). Mechanisms like participatory design, community councils or feedback loops embed user agency within brand strategy.

### 4. Cultural Relevance and Emotional Impact

Emotional connection is the platform of brand value, particularly where trust is lost due to exclusion or exploitation. Identification, resonance and perceived respect across various demographic groups can be measured and ascertain whether brand message is inclusive in tone and impact (Escalas & Bettman, 2005; Tynan et al., 2010).

### 5. Structural and Social Impact

In its most extreme form, inclusive marketing leads to systemic transformation,either by shifting public opinion, policy or resource distribution. Quantified through impact storytelling, stakeholder testimonials or third-party reviews of brand-led actions (UNESCO, 2022; Sen, 2000).

### Conclusion

The reach of inclusive marketing goes far beyond cosmetic look,it goes to the very fabric of how people are perceived, heard, touched and empowered. In listening to key areas such as accessibility, engagement, emotional connection and systemic change, brands can transition from symbolic inclusion to material transformation. Evaluating such areas calls for rigor and reflexivity so that marketing is no longer merely a commerce driver but a justice platform, an equity platform and a shared prosperity platform.

*Figure 8.2. Key Dimensions of Inclusive Marketing Impact*

*This infographic visualizes six core dimensions of inclusive marketing effectiveness,Representation, Accessibility, Participation, Trust, Well-being and Structural Alignment,offering a holistic framework for assessing both external impact and internal integrity.*

## 8.4 Social Impact Assessment (SIA) in Marketing

Social Impact Assessment (SIA) provides a valuable framework for consideration of the effect of marketing practice on individuals, groups and social systems. Initially constructed in association with development and infrastructure works (Vanclay, 2003), SIA has more and more been applied to business and marketing purposes in an attempt to consider both positive and negative social impacts (Esteves et al., 2012). To the practice of inclusive

marketing, SIA provides a means of connecting branding initiatives with pillars of justice, equity and sustainable social value.

### Making Sense of SIA in Marketing Environments

SIA marketing is interested in quantifying how campaigns, brands and product stories influence social inclusion, empowerment, identity formation and wellbeing. It seeks to go beyond traditional measure markers like sales or engagement to interrogate harder questions: Who is better off? Who is worse off? Whose voices are central or peripheral? (Arnstein, 1969; Noble, 2018).

### Participatory and Context-Sensitive Approaches

A participatory SIA process entails involving stakeholders,particularly historically marginalized ones,in the development of evaluation criteria and interpretation of outcomes (Ife, 2012). This accords with feminist and decolonial frameworks that prioritize relational accountability and community-conceptualized indicators of success (Smith, 2021; Hankivsky, 2014).

### SIA Tools in Practice

Some illustrations of tools being used in marketing SIAs include:

- Most Significant Change (MSC) storytelling (Davies & Dart, 2005)
- Outcome harvesting for non-linear change
- Community mapping and stakeholder analysis
- Blended methods combining sentiment analysis, interviews and impact diaries

These methods add qualitative depth and richness, especially when gauging emotionally or culturally sensitive aspects of impact.

### Integration into Marketing Strategy

Including SIA in marketing strategy not only helps brands steer clear of harm but participate in actually adding to a positive impact on social change. For example, inclusive branding strategies for people with disabilities or cultural representation can be gauged against their domino effect impact on social attitudes and cohesion at the community level (Mohr et al., 2001; Kotler & Lee, 2008).

## Conclusion

Social Impact Assessment (SIA) provides marketers with the way of thinking about the wider consequences of what they do, beyond transactional measurements to see how campaigns, brands and narratives influence people's lives and social institutions. Rooted in participatory, equity-based approaches, SIA is a practice that can change marketing for the good of getting marketing aligned with ethical accountability and long-term public value. For inclusive branding, it ensures that not only is impact measured, but that it is meaningfully interpreted, with marginalized voices being placed at the center of both design and assessment.
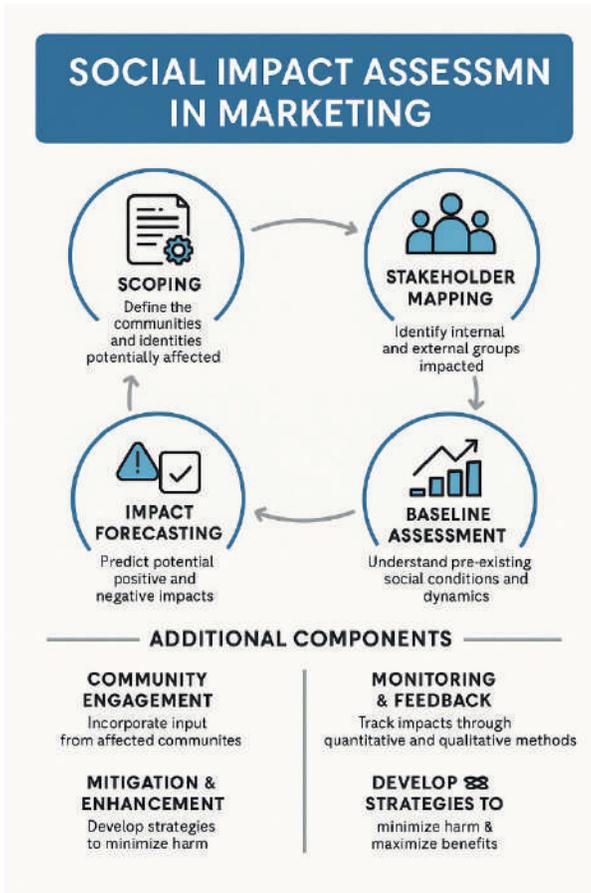
*Figure 8.3. Social Impact Assessment in Inclusive Marketing*

*This infographic illustrates the key components, ethical considerations and participatory methods involved in conducting a social impact assessment for marketing initiatives, highlighting the shift from campaign outputs to community-centered outcomes.*

### 8.5 Measuring Brand Equity through Inclusion Lenses

Such as traditional brand equity models that tend to focus on awareness, perceived quality and loyalty (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). These models may fail to recognize the cultural and emotional role of inclusion for marginalized communities. Brand equity must be measured inclusively by building upon traditional measures to evaluate how well a brand is doing in relating to various identities, engendering trust and championing belonging.

### 1. Perceived Inclusion and Representation

Belongingness feelings,being noticed, valued and esteemed,can influence low-income consumers' brand equity judgments significantly (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Brands that reflect individuals' daily lives and themselves convey cultural relevance, inducing emotional connections and long-term loyalty (Ladhari et al., 2020).

### 2. Cultural Relevance and Authenticity

The most important inclusive brand equity dimension is cultural relevance. By connecting the communities in a meaningful way,via appropriate cultural storytelling, a culture of inclusion and representation in leadership and relationship-building,greater trust and equity are built (Cleveland et al., 2016; Davis, 2020).

### 3. Emotional Connection and Empowerment

Inclusive branding provokes not only awareness but empowerment. Brands that take on consumers' multicultural futures, histories and values drive emotional bonding,a central aspect of brand equity (Thomson et al., 2005; Tynan et al., 2010). This involves overcoming past exclusions, story reframing and co-creation of meaning with consumers.

### 4. Social Impact as Brand Equity Driver

Inclusion-aware consumers increasingly quantify brand equity as a firm's contribution to society. What the firm does to create equity, sustainability and justice is now viewed as part of its perceived value (Porter & Kramer, 2011; Ladhari et al., 2020). Social impact indicators,e.g., stakeholder well-being, transparency and advocacy,become part of brand equity measurement tools.

### 5. Reflexive and Participatory Evaluation Tools

Reasonably frequently, measurement of inclusive brand equity employs qualitative techniques. These range from community listening and sentiment analysis to brand storytelling audits and participatory studies (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). These tend to uncover emotional and cultural factors that are not picked up in simple surveys or sales statistics.

### Conclusion

Brand equity measurement with an inclusion model redraws our imagination for brand value within a multiculture, justice-sensitive global economy. It requires moving beyond economic and utilitarian measures to determine how brands come to make individuals feel seen, respected and empowered. By incorporating cultural salience, emotional connection and social influence into measures of brand equity, marketers will be better equipped to quantify the relational and societal value their brands bring to play. Ultimately, shared measures of brand equity eschew positioning branding as solely about market share, but about meaning shared, belonging and responsibility.

**MEASURING BRAND EQUITY THROUGH INCLUSION LENSES**

| TRADITIONAL BRAND EQUITY METRICS | INCLUSION-ENHANCED MEASUREMIENT |
|---|---|
| Brand Awareness | Awareness Among Diverse Audience Segments |
| Brand Associations | Inclusive, Culturally Resonant Associations |
| Perceived Quality | Ethical Quality, Accessibility, Social Impact |
| Brand Loyalty | Values-Based Loyalty and Trustworthiness |
| Brand Advocacy | Recommendation for Inclusive Practices |
| Emotional Connection | Felt Recognition and Belonging |

**TOOLS AND METHODS**

- Brand Trust Audits
- Representation Analysis
- Social Listening

- Representation Analysis
- Social Listening
- Community Voice Panels

*Figure 8.4. Measuring Brand Equity Through Inclusion Lenses*

*This infographic outlines inclusive extensions to traditional brand equity metrics, highlighting new dimensions such as representation, cultural resonance, perceived justice and consumer belonging, offering a framework for equity-based brand performance assessment.*

### 8.6 Data Sources and Mixed Methods

Inclusive marketing studies are advantaged by intentionally combining quantitative and qualitative data sources to record multifaceted social phenomena, lived experiences and systemic injustices. Mixed methods designs provide opportunities for more subtle, in-depth understandings that extend beyond superficial metrics, enabling the assessment of inclusion initiatives holistically (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Quantitative findings, including surveys and behavioral data, yield generalizable trends on consumer attitudes, access and brand equity. These measures are particularly valuable for benchmarking inclusion efforts across geographies, demographics and timepoints (Greene, 2007). Quantitative approaches do not, however, tend to shed light on emotional, cultural and contextual nuances of inclusion.

Qualitative methodologies, including interviews, ethnographic observation and participatory storytelling, are needed to explore how marginalized communities undergo branding, marketing and representation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). Such methodologies enable marketers to co-create meaning alongside participants and have their voices lead brand stories, instead of being interpreted passively.

Online data sources,like social media postings, online reviews and user-generated videos,provide another rich dimension. Netnographic studies allow researchers to tap into naturally occurring online expressions of inclusion and exclusion (Kozinets, 2020). Digital traces allow brands to measure real-time responses to campaigns, inclusive messaging and community-building activities.

Triangulation or the combination of various data sources and types, contributes to the credibility and ethical integrity of inclusive marketing research (Flick, 2018). For instance, pairing social media listening with in-depth interviewing has the potential to confirm patterns without violating personal context and emotional tone.

Finally, ethically and culturally responsive data collection needs to guide all inclusive research activities. Participatory and transformative paradigms give rise to egalitarian power dynamics between researchers and participants (Mertens, 2009). These paradigms call for transparency, reciprocity and agency,where inclusion is not just performed in marketing material but within the knowledge-production process itself.

## Conclusion

Inclusion-based marketing requires methodological pluralism in order to represent the lived experiences of marginalized communities in an authentic manner. By combining quantitative rigor and qualitative depth,and augmenting both with digital data and participatory action,researchers can create knowledge that is not just statistically significant but also socially meaningful. Mixed methods designs, inflected by ethical and transformative paradigms, enable brands to co-create with communities instead of merely researching them. Such methodological pluralism is not only a technical option but a moral necessity in the pursuit of inclusive, justice-oriented marketing.
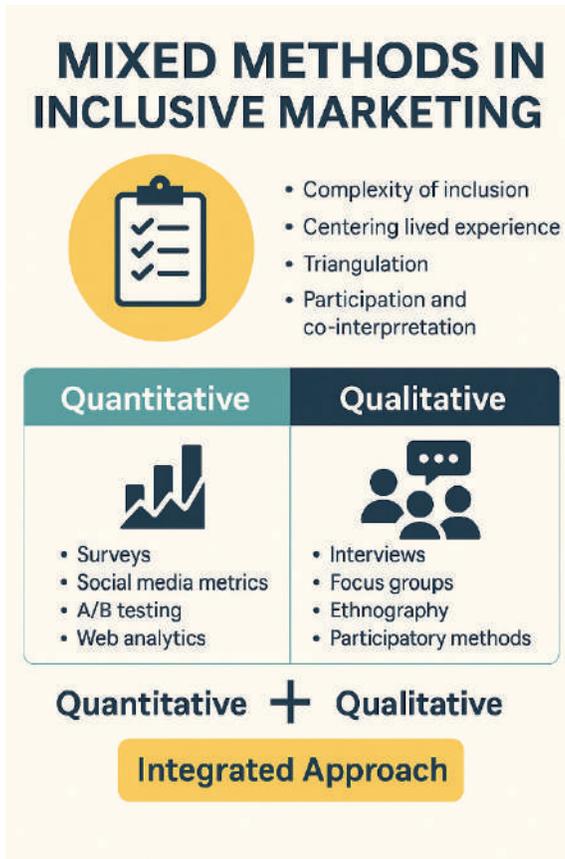


*Figure 8.5. Mixed Methods in Inclusive Marketing*

*This infographic summarizes key data sources, research techniques and ethical considerations for inclusive marketing evaluation, illustrating how qualitative and quantitative methods work together to generate equity-centered insights.*

### 8.7 Institutionalizing Inclusion: From Campaign to Culture

In order to succeed and last, inclusive marketing has to move beyond individual campaigns and be integrated into organizational culture and operational systems within organizations. Institutionalizing inclusion involves changing underlying systems, leadership commitments and daily practices to produce equity across brand touchpoints that is equal (Balakrishnan et al., 2022; Aaker et al., 2021).

This change begins with leadership responsibility. Brands need to move from performative allyship to structural commitment by building inclusive recruitment practices, equity-driven key performance indicators (KPIs) and diverse leadership pipelines (Ahmed, 2012). Top-management support is key to making inclusion a strategic rather than symbolic imperative.

Cross-functional engagement is equally important. While front-facing engagement efforts will normally be driven by marketing, other departments like HR, product development, customer service and procurement must be involved in an attempt to balance internal processes with external messages (Kiron et al., 2022). For example, making products accessible from a design perspective and incorporating inclusive workplace policies enhances the credibility of inclusive initiatives.

Staff engagement is an essential process for bringing inclusion into practice. Employee resource groups (ERGs), internal listening forums and equity training programs serve to bring up lived experience and facilitate co-creation of policies within (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018). These practices build organizational empathy and intersectional identities become more transparent.

Policy integration is also an important aspect. Incorporating inclusive values into brand guidelines, codes of conduct for suppliers and product lifecycle assessments guarantees aspirations are translated into the day-to-day practice (Wheeler et al., 2005). Brands have to ensure inclusion is not only inscribed in vision statements but also in measurable actions and institutional mechanisms.

Last but not least, institutionalization is ever-learning and ever-adapting. Impact measurement, openness to criticism by the marginalized and the willingness to correct oneself when needed exemplify a growth mindset and accountability (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2022).

## Conclusion

Institutionalizing inclusion is the linchpin that turns inclusive marketing into more than a performative exercise and renders it sustainable organizational culture. When equity is ingrained in leadership priorities, employee engagement, policy functions and brand operations, it moves beyond singular campaigns to shape culture and infrastructure. This alignment ensures that inclusion is not only advocated for but lived,enabling brands to become stronger, authentic and attuned to changing needs of diverse stakeholders. Only through such infrastructure commitment can brands authentically say they are for equity and justice.

**FROM CAMPAIGN TO CULTURE: INSTITUTIONALIZING INCLUSION**

**EPISODIC INCLUSION**

- Periodic Campaigns
- Surface-Level Diversity

**STRUCTURAL COMMITMENT**

**INSTITUTIONALIZED INCLUSION**

- Leadership Commitment
- Inclusive Hiring & Advancement
- Internal Education
- Co-Creation & Innovation
- Measurement & Accountability

*Figure 8.6. From Campaign to Culture: Institutionalizing Inclusion*

*This flowchart visualizes the progression from episodic inclusion efforts to full organizational integration,highlighting leadership commitment, structural accountability and cross-functional culture change as the pillars of sustainable inclusive branding.*

## 8.8 Accountability and Transparency

Transparency and accountability are fundamental to inclusive marketing, ensuring that brand promise to equity and representation is not performative but part of organizational practice. In the absence of accountability processes, inclusion action risks becoming symbolic for the sake of it rather than sparking meaningful structural alteration (Banerjee, 2020).

Transparent communication allows stakeholders,redundant consumers, community allies and employees,to gauge a brand's inclusion agenda honesty

and effectiveness. These include public release of diversity metrics, equity audits and frequent seeking of inputs from underrepresented voices (Dixon-Fyle et al., 2020; Harrison & Wicks, 2013). For example, B Corporation-certified companies must release impact assessments, maintaining a culture of transparency and ongoing progress (B Corporations, 2023).

Besides measurement, accountable responsibility entails sharing power and participative governance. This can involve the creation of advisory boards consisting of different stakeholders, co-designing assessment systems and making third-party monitoring commitments (Balakrishnan, 2022). Equity audits and community scorecards are collective processes through which external parties can hold brands accountable for inclusive commitments (Frow et al., 2011).

Significantly organizations should not be victims of vanity metrics,skewed measures that project an image of progress without camouflaging embedded inequities. Instead, inclusive brands need to invest in outcome equity measures (e.g., hiring, retention, representation) and process equity measures (e.g., voice, co-decision-making) (Aaker, 2020).

Finally, accountability and transparency need to become iteratively reengineered from PR strategies into essential norms of brand governance, formalized by continuous dialogue, reflexivity and ethical accountability.

### Conclusion

Coupled, transparency and accountability are not best practice addenda but intrinsic drivers of inclusive marketing. By putting in place participatory processes, open disclosures and intense impact tracing organizations hold the ability to transform idealistic buzzwords of inclusive branding into sustained systemic transformation. This demands a move away from top-down command towards collective governance, wherein previously excluded voices directly influence not only representation but actually power structures. Only through such revolutionary accountability can brands create lasting trust, legitimacy and genuine social impact.

*Figure 8.7. Accountability and Transparency in Inclusive Marketing*

This infographic highlights the tools, ethical principles and organizational mechanisms necessary for embedding accountability and transparency in inclusive branding strategies,ensuring sustained trust, responsibility and structural change.

### 8.9 Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

Inclusive marketing, as great as it sounds, is susceptible to a range of intrinsic traps that can corrupt its intentions. At the top of these are aesthetic representations, where companies choose symbolic inclusion over actual engagement with marginalized groups (Hankivsky, 2014; Vredenburg et al., 2020). This can lead to performative allyship,action which is affirmation of solidarity but absent structural change (Walter et al., 2024).

The other problem is that a sense of diversity that is overrepresented as the dominant cultural narratives or stereotypes tends to flatten multifaceted identities. In fact, these sorts of reductions can strengthen the negative patterns of inequality on which inclusive marketing aims to work (Crockett, 2008; Tounsel, 2022). For example, it is de-empowering them to make disability bluntly idealistic or commercialized deponents.

Moreover, the inability to create internal accountability mechanisms may enable good intentions-to-go-bad with no backlash or effect. Without inclusive governance and a diverse workforce organizations are at risk for internal behaviors-and-communications breaks with branding (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Liewendahl et al., 2025). Open metrics, intersectional questioning and deliberative feedback loops are required to avoid these breakdowns (Safari & Parker, 2024).

Lastly, inclusive strategies tend to overlook language accessibility and localized cultural sensitivity, particularly when going global. Such overlooking will be inclined to alienate non-Western audiences and further marginalize indigenous voices (Banerjee & Linstead, 2001; Caruelle, 2025).

Inclusive marketing has transformative potential, but only if tackled with depth, integrity and foresight. Companies that try to treat inclusion as something superficial and campaign-like are bound to drive away the very groups they want to engage with. Common pitfalls,e.g., tokenism, stereotyping, too little internal alignment and inability to create inclusive feedback loops,can diminish credibility and influence. To be free from such traps organizations have to address inclusive marketing as a constantly changing practice based on authenticity, cultural awareness and co-creation. By integrating inclusivity into its fundamental strategies and models, brands are able to foster more balanced, empathetic and authentic relationships with diverse consumers.

### Conclusion

More than good intentions is needed to prevent the usual failures of inclusive marketing,structural consciousness, humility and accountability.

Tokenism, extraction, overgeneralization and performative inclusion are more than strategic mistakes; they are ethical missteps that have the power to cement greater marginalization. By directly recognizing and participating in these pitfalls, marketers can transition from reactive methods to proactive, equity-driven practices. Inclusive practice demands ongoing self-reflection, co-governance, open evaluation and a willingness to learn from failure. When executed mindfully, these challenges are opportunities to establish trust, authenticity and lasting impact. Inclusive marketing is not a perfection,it's growth on the foundation of real relationships and respect for each other.

## COMMON PITFALLS IN INCLUSIVE MARKETING

| PITFALL | HOW TO AVOID IT |
|---|---|
| **TOKENISM OVER REPRESENTATION** | Involve diverse voices in decision-making |
| Superficial inclusion of underrepresented groups | Engage with cultural consultants |
| **CULTURAL APPROPRIIATION** | Commit to long-term initiatives |
| Exploiting cultural elements without permission or understanding | Use localized and segmented approaches |
| **ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL MESSAGING** | Follow accessibility best practices |
| Generic campaigns ignoring differences between communities | Follow accessibility best practices |
| **LACK OF FOLLOW-THROUGH** | Implement ongoing inclusion efforts |
| Failure to sustain efforts after | Listen, acknowledge and learn from mistakes |
| **DEFENSIVENESS IN THE FACE OF CRITIQUE** | |

*Figure 8.8. Common Pitfalls in Inclusive Marketing*

*This infographic outlines frequent missteps,such as tokenism, cultural appropriation, performative allyship and inaccessibility,and provides actionable strategies for avoiding them through authentic, equity-centered practices.*

### 8.10 Conclusion

Inclusive marketing is not a moment it is an ongoing journey of accountability, self-examination and recalibration. This chapter has illuminated the ways that brands can shift from superficial representation to root anchor inclusion at the core of measurement systems organizational design and ethical commitments. The goal is not to appear inclusive but to be accountable for the effect brands have on the world.

Whereas "reach," "impressions," and "conversions" remain useful, they are insufficient to measure efforts in terms of justice, dignity and belonging. As was demonstrated by this chapter, inclusive marketing demands a more expansive system of measurement,transparent about what was accomplished, for whom, with whom and at what cost or reward.

Measuring from Metrics to Meaning

Transitional marketing to inclusive marketing demands to be measured:

- Belonging, rather than brand awareness

- Empowerment, rather than engagement

- Equity, not efficiency

- Relational value over time, not short-term conversion

This reframing will necessitate methodological pluralism, blending quantitative metrics (e.g., multifaceted audience reach, access scores, equity KPIs) with qualitative understanding (e.g., community trust, lived experience feedback, ethical consideration). It will also necessitate a movement from success as the foundation for brand to success as the foundation for community effect.

### Inclusion as a Culture of Accountability

Measuring inclusive marketing is not a report card,it is a relationship-building habit. It calls on marketers to take the pledge of ongoing learning, two-way conversation and perpetual fine-tuning. Inclusion stops being an audit process and becomes a cultural beat embedded in all facets of branding,from idea to campaign, from strategy to narrative.

To institutionalize inclusion, measurement must be accompanied by:

- Transparency – Regular sharing of what worked and what didn't work

- Accountability – Owning harm or misalignment

- Flexibility – Redefining strategies in terms of new learning

- Joint power – Co-construction of indicators with the most affected communities

This paradigm redirects metrics away from tools of judgment and towards tools of justice.

**Toward a New Ethos of Marketing Evaluation**

As companies increasingly struggle with consumers, regulators and civil society, the message could not be clearer: don't just be there inclusively,demonstrate it. Inclusive marketing impact cannot be measured to check a box; it must be embodied in an enlarged ethics of care, equality and solidarity.

Through the development of measurement systems that are ethically based, diverse and context-specific, marketers can transcend optics and into actual, systemic change. These systems aren't merely about measuring outcomes,they build culture.

Last Word

"What gets measured gets done," people say,but in inclusive marketing, what gets measured has to be what matters.

And what matters is people, dignity and the potential of marketing to create a more equitable world.

# Barriers and Ethical Dilemmas

## 9.1 Introduction

Inclusive marketing is not just an ethical necessity and strategic differentiator,it's also an organizational competence that needs to be developed, nurtured and fortified over time. As brands transition from awareness to action and from campaign-level inclusion to systemic change, the next horizon is obvious: embedding inclusive principles in the organization's DNA. This chapter investigates inner structures, leadership models and cultural changes to enable inclusive marketing to be more than a project, but a core competence of the organization.

Whereas previous chapters dealt with the models, case studies and human-centric approach to branding, the final chapter looks inwards upon examining how these organizations need to redefine and restructure power, priorities and incentives in such a way as to enable them to deliver consistent, equal and credible inclusive branding. Inclusive campaigns cannot be without silos in the interest of sustainability; they must be strategically integrated into all marketing and branding efforts.

- Systematized by systems, incentives and resources
- Championed by leaders and employees at all levels

**From External Promise to Internal Practice**

The integrity of inclusive branding, though, rests on whether external commitments are honored internally. Customers become more sensitive to when what a firm says does not match up with what it does. They observe when diversity in marketing is not matched with diversity in leadership,

when language of oneness is not complemented by equitable policies or when local partnerships appear exploitative instead of mutual.

This "say-do gap" may be the greatest risk to trust in inclusive marketing,and it has to be closed through an organized, cross-functional effort linking brand values to organizational behavior.

### Why Organizational Integration Matters

Embedding inclusive marketing practices within the organization:

- Strengthens resilience by linking mission, brand and operations

- Spans efficiency, eschewing having to "reinvent" inclusion for each campaign

- Amplifies authenticity, eschewing reputational risk with inconsistency

- Supports employee engagement and well-being through representation and belonging

- Establishes a foundation for innovation grounded in diverse perspectives

This is not a one-off,it is a sustained capability developed through leadership commitment, policy reform, regular training and measurable results.

### From Advocacy to Infrastructure

All effective inclusive marketing initiatives start with committed individuals or small groups of people. These initial champions have a crucial role in breaking the mold and raising awareness. But without infrastructures, even the best ideas fall prey to burnout, backsliding or side-lining. The second step is to transition from advocacy to infrastructure:

- From short-term projects to sustained programs

- From sporadic training sessions to systematic learning systems

- From inspirational values to open accountability systems

Inclusion is not a "nice-to-have" anymore but a non-negotiable part of the way the brand is run and success is defined.

### What This Chapter Is About

This chapter has the practical details on building and maintaining inclusive marketing in the company, such as:

- Inclusive leadership frameworks

- Cross-functional integration strategies

- Internal education and training systems

- Accountability systems and incentive alignment

- Inclusive team building and hiring

- Organizational culture change processes

- Tools for maintaining momentum and preventing regression

It also gives some hands-on examples, diagnostic instruments and strategic questions to enable leaders to diagnose their situation today and map out a direction for institutional inclusion.

### Conclusion

Inclusive branding starts as a narrative,but it needs to become an architecture. It starts as a snapshot,but it needs to become a habit. This chapter provides the blueprint for how to make sure inclusive adverting is not a flash in the pan of progress, but a lasting culture shift based on the firm itself.

"Inclusion can be a campaign. But only if it's also a commitment."

### 9.2 Structural Barriers to Inclusive Marketing

Inclusive marketing programs tend to face entrenched structural barriers that exist in both social structures and industry norms. The most significant obstacle is likely algorithmic bias, where online marketing software and AI-based platforms reflect society's biases, disproportionately excluding marginalized groups unfairly (Benjamin, 2019; Noble, 2018). These technologies, as seemingly unbiased as they appear, tend to reproduce the biases of the institutions and datasets that create them.

Besides, underrepresentation within advertisement leadership and creative teams continues to undermine inclusive views in campaign creation and strategic decision-making (Campbell et al., 2025). When brand stories are created without proper representation of the voice of long-excluded communities, it often yields tokenism instead of actual engagement (Poole, 2021; Kipnis et al., 2021).

Inequality of access also limits participation in the marketing economy. Areas that do not have good digital infrastructure, learning material or resources are severely limited in their ability to become co-producers of brand meaning or market actors (Eubanks, 2018; Couldry & Mejias, 2019). This reinforces a cycle of exclusion where only those possessing economic

and technological capital can sufficiently influence or be influenced by marketing systems.

Theoretically, neoliberal foundations of marketing are a more ideational block. Marketing logic favors profit maximization and effectiveness over structural change or social justice and therefore it becomes challenging for inclusive intentions to be intertwined (Penaloza, Toulouse, & Visconti, 2018; Brownlie & Tadajewski, 2008). This market model opposes tacitly the actions that would disturb existing hierarchies or need redistributive policies.

Breaking these structural barriers demands something more than representational rhetoric,it demands transformative reform. This entails the reframing of success metrics, diversifying industry leadership, decolonizing digital infrastructures and contesting the ideologies that underpin marketing education and practice (Kipnis et al., 2021; Benjamin, 2019).

## Conclusion

Meeting structural barriers in inclusive marketing entails a shift from representational surface-level action to systemic transformation. These obstacles,algorithms and leadership homogeneity to unequal access and deeply embedded neoliberal logics,indicate that exclusion is not a mistake but rather often institutionalized. They can be overcome by redesigning the structures, values and practices that constitute marketing itself. That is, making access more democratic, diversifying decision-making bodies and integrating equity into strategic and operational marketing levels. Only by disrupting in such a deliberate manner can marketing be made an inclusive, participatory and socially equitable field.

## Structural Barriers to Inclusive Marketing

**Homogeneity in Leadership and Decision-Making**

Executive tearns, boards, and marketing leadership are often demographically uniform, lacfs to limited perspectives

**ACTION POINT:** Establish inclusive hiring pipelines, succession, plan

**Siloed Organizational Structures**

Inclusion efforts are isolated in specific departments, results in fragmentation and lack of itrigat into Instion

**ACTION POINT:** Embed Inclusive goals across all functions and foster collaboration

**Short-Termism and Campaign-Driven Thinking**

Focus on immediate results and campaign cycles impede long-term rel#tionship

**ACTION POINT:** Balance data infrastructure to impact incators

**Insufficient Training and Capacity Building**

Limited cultural competence hinder inclusive content nteation.content.co/#comesion

**ACTION POINT:** Normalize ongoing anti-bias and learning programs

**Inflexible Policies and Bureaucracy**

Rigid guidelines, legal potocols, or procurement policies thwr't inclusive initiatives

**ACTION POINT:** Conduct policy audits and remove procedural ba-

**Lack of Accountability Mechanisms**

Absence metrics, incevtives conduct inconsistent and unt-sustainable progress

**ACTION POINT:** Introduce inclusion audits, scorecards, and tied

**Lack of Accountability Mechanisms**

Linsextenam metrics, incentives causing inconsistenat lyvsonstainable progress

**ACTION POINT:** Introduce inclusion audits, scorecards

*Figure 9.1. Structural Barriers to Inclusive Marketing*

This infographic summarizes the seven major structural barriers organizations face in implementing inclusive marketing, ranging from leadership homogeneity to lack of accountability, and proposes targeted organizational strategies to overcome each.

### 9.3 Ethical Dilemmas in Co-Creation

Though co-creation is extolled as an empowering and participative marketing school, it is far removed from some of the most pertinent ethical challenges. Its greatest challenge is that between businesses and consumers there is often asymmetry of power, particularly where marginalized or weak groups are involved. Though co-creation promises mutual value, corporations can exercise decision-making power and thus problems of co-optation and symbolic membership instead of authentic participation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Dentoni & Bitzer, 2015).

The second issue is tokenism, a situation where companies favor consumer engagement for reputation building without listening to participants in meaningful terms. This performative solution disempowers the potential for co-creation transformation and reinforces structural exclusion (Ind & Coates, 2013; Frow et al., 2015).

Intellectual property rights (IPR) complicate co-creation ethics because, when consumers contribute ideas, designs or stories, ownership, payment and acknowledgement are problems. Uncertainty of who owns co-created information can lead to mistrust and produce exploitation feelings (Zwass, 2010; Ostrom et al., 2010).

Furthermore, consumer data use,particularly in digital co-creation spaces,raises essential questions of informed consent and transparency. People do not know the ways their contributions, behavior or inputs are examined, recontextualized or commodified by corporations (Zwick, Bonsu, & Darmody, 2008; Khutsishvili et al., 2024). It is an ethical blind spot in which participation and surveillance are merging.

Lastly, co-creation projects lack inclusive governance systems. In the absence of systems that guarantee mutual accountability, equity and reciprocity, co-creation turns out to be extractive instead of collective (Hansen, 2019; Jaakkola & Alexander, 2014). Hence, firms have to develop mechanisms that amplify consumer voices, safeguard participant rights and share value fairly.

### Conclusion

Morally challenging co-creation problems call for more reflexive and critical participatory marketing. While co-creation is revolution in potential, it must break through tokenism and power disparities to realize real collaboration, openness and equitable value distribution. It is only possible by overcoming these issues with strong ethical bases, participatory governance processes and a justice commitment oriented towards participant autonomy

and protection against exploitation. It is only by careful design that co-creation can live up to the potential as an empowering and collaborative marketing practice.

**ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN CO-CREATION**

| ETHICAL TENSION | BEST PRACTICE |
|---|---|
| **POWER IMBALANCES** Who sets the terms? Respond to disparity | Acknowledge and Redistribute Pow |
| **REPRESENTATION & APPROPRIATION** Lack of clear communiciation, usage risks, profit, intent | Transparency and Fair Agreements |
| **CONSENT AND INFORMD PARTICIPATION** Exploitation of vulnerability Re-traumatitization | Adopt Trauma-Informed Practices |
| **EMOTIONAL LABOR AND TRAUMA EXTRACTION** Exploitation/vulnerability Re-traumatization | Ensure Shared Value and Co-ownership |
| **EQUITY IN VALUE DISTRIBUTION** Is the distribution of gains equitable? | Prioritizing Readiness, Defining Terms |
| **EXPLOITATION OF URGENCY OR CRISIS CONTEXTS** Instigation tactic and follow-throuugh | Transparent Commitments, Long-Term Relations |

*Figure 9.2. Ethical Dilemmas in Co-Creation*

*This visual summarizes seven core ethical dilemmas that arise in co-creation processes,ranging from power asymmetry and cultural appropriation to emotional labor and value extraction,alongside guiding principles for responsible, equitable engagement.*

### 9.4 Reputational Risks and Brand Activism Backlash

Although brand activism can work to create loyalty and distinguish, it can also damage brands' reputation if they look opportunistic, incoherent or fake (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Consumers increasingly check corporate values for authenticity, especially in socially complex situations. Faux pas like performative allyship, tokenistic involvement or theatric declarations of abandoning causes already adopted can trigger backlash, boycotts or viral pushback (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020).

Consider the Pepsi protest ad and Nike's partnership with Colin Kaepernick. In the first, trivialization of protest issues was roundly decried, but in the second, even though there was initial outrage, Nike's action came to be regarded as being courageously bold and consistent with its brand ethos (Moorman, 2020). Both lead to the truth that interpretation is not only culture- and politically contingent but also history-dependent depending on what record exists of the brand taking or not taking action.

Notably, reputation damage is not only caused by external parties but also impacts internal ones. The employees can be disappointed if outside-stated brand values are not lived out inside,something known as "value incongruence" (Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). Authenticity and long-term commitment are therefore necessary to ward off backlash.

Brands also have to be ready for polarized reaction. Silence may enrage some groups but potentially fortify emotional connections with other like-minded individuals (Bhagwat et al., 2020). This is the conundrum that represents the strategic and ethical nuance of brand activism.

### Conclusion

Brand activism is full of potential for social transformation as well as a more fulfilling brand-consumer relationship but replete with reputation risk. Unless grounded on long-term commitment and genuineness, activism can be seen as performative or exploitative and therefore triggering consumer blowback and internal disillusionment. The more critical and polarized public space requires brands to demonstrate outside message consistency with in-house values and putting into practice their declared commitments on a constant basis. Finally, brand activism succeeds because a brand can say something true, without fear and with the willingness to endure the backlash of standing up for something.
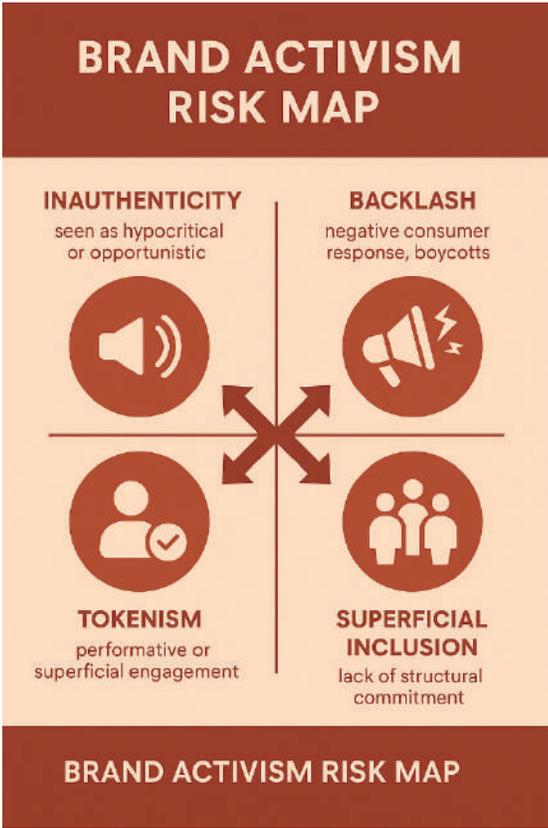
*Figure 9.3: Brand Activism Risk Map*

*A visual summary of the primary reputational risks brands face when engaging in activism without authentic structural commitment,highlighting inauthenticity, backlash, tokenism and superficial inclusion.*

## 9.5 Psychological and Emotional Labor

Inclusive and participatory marketing efforts, as empowering as they may seem on the surface, may entail a heavy psychological and emotional labor for both co-creators and consumers, especially those belonging to historically marginalized groups. Emotional labor, as coined by Hochschild (1983), refers to the act of emotion management to meet the emotional demands of a role,now being increasingly called for in co-creation settings, where lived experience and personal identity lie at the core of participation.

Those who participate in brand-driven storytelling, user-generated campaigns or activism-based branding frequently undergo inner conflict,

self-monitoring or emotional exhaustion via the ongoing negotiation between personal and market-driven authenticity (Scholz, 2013; Banet-Weiser, 2012). Such work is heightened for those who are compelled to "represent" groups, to negotiate vulnerability or to publicly reveal traumatic experiences for the benefit of social change or economic profit (Duffy & Hund, 2015; Gill & Orgad, 2018b).

For instance, co-creation sites routinely presuppose ongoing affective labor,e.g., hope, resilience or joy,without delivering structural or psychological support necessary to metabolize the affective cost of engagement (Terranova, 2000; Toxtli et al., 2021). Invisibility of these emotional costs threatens to commodify marginal voices without redressing underlying structural disparities marketing campaigns of this sort purport to address.

In addition, there is a power imbalance in participatory brand collaborations where affective storytelling is exploited for brand value while participants are underpaid or not accorded long-term commitment and recognition (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). Extractive logic of digital capitalism is one in which affective labor is instead coded as voluntary "authenticity" and not labor to be accorded ethical value and protection (Nakamura, 2007).

Inclusive marketing needs to negotiate such tensions then through the creation of emotional safety protocols, informed consent, equitable compensation and long-term relationship-building with contributors, going beyond tokenized representation towards ethical co-creation in good faith (Faulkner, 2023).

## Conclusion

Though inclusive marketing seeks to give voice to marginalized voices, it also needs to negotiate the usually concealed psychological and emotional labor it requires. Co-creation efforts that ignore the emotional labor of participation will reproduce the very inequalities they seek to overthrow. An authentically ethical strategy obliges brands to acknowledge affective contributions as real work,deserving protection, care and compensation. This means participatory processes must be designed around care, informed consent, emotional safety and reciprocity. Inclusive marketing can then create not only visibility, but lasting empowerment for those at the margins.

*Figure 9.4: Psychological and Emotional Labor in Inclusive Marketing*

*A visual summary of the often-unseen emotional and psychological work involved in inclusive branding,highlighting burdens on consumers, invisible labor among employees, risks of commodification and principles for ethical engagement.*

## 9.6 Legal and Policy Constraints

While co-creative and participative advertising campaigns promise more levels of equality of engagement, they also have to navigate the nuances of the legal and regulatory space. Intellectual property rights (IP) are of utmost significance. Where consumers co-create or provide ideas, issues of ownership become muddled. Where usage of such content is not properly attributed, paid for or licensed by well-informed consent, legal controversy and reputation damage ensue (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Cova & Dalli, 2009).

Data protection laws, more specifically the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the European Union and the equivalents in formation in the rest of the world, impose stringent restrictions on the gathering, storage and use of consumers' data in co-creative processes.

Transparency and consent are a legislative requirement, not an optional ethical choice (Voigt & Von dem Bussche, 2017). Businesses operating in participatory online media must ensure that users understand what is to be done to their information and creative content and include withdrawal or dispute settlement mechanisms.

In addition, accessibility legislation,such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the US or the European Accessibility Act,places pressure on digital infrastructure, to facilitate universal participation through physical as much as mental capability. Co-creation platforms that are not accessible not only can exclude some users, but companies can also become legally accountable (Lalitha, 2025).

In addition, policy-level constraints may result from government surveillance, internet blockages or censorship in certain countries that may specifically affect marginalized communities that already face system-level obstacles. Such co-creation activities must take these geopolitical threats into account and avoid inadvertently exposing participants to harm (Deibert, 2013).

With the evolving regulatory landscape itself, companies need to act ahead with legal and ethical considerations in co-creation strategies,accepting definitive content ownership practices, platform accessibility and data governance regimes.

**Conclusion**

Legal and policy limitations are not secondary but are inescapable to participatory marketing programs' integrity and long-term sustainability. From data protection compliance and accessibility to intellectual property rights and geopolitical risks, co-creation efforts need a sound legal foundation. Otherwise, the most ethically driven campaigns could be at risk of exclusion, exploitation or harm to participants. As participatory marketing gains traction moving from the periphery towards the center, marketers need to proactively include legal and policy compliance in participatory strategy formulation, implementation and measurement. Only with a balance of regulation and innovation can brands build trust, accountability and genuine empowerment in their co-creation process.
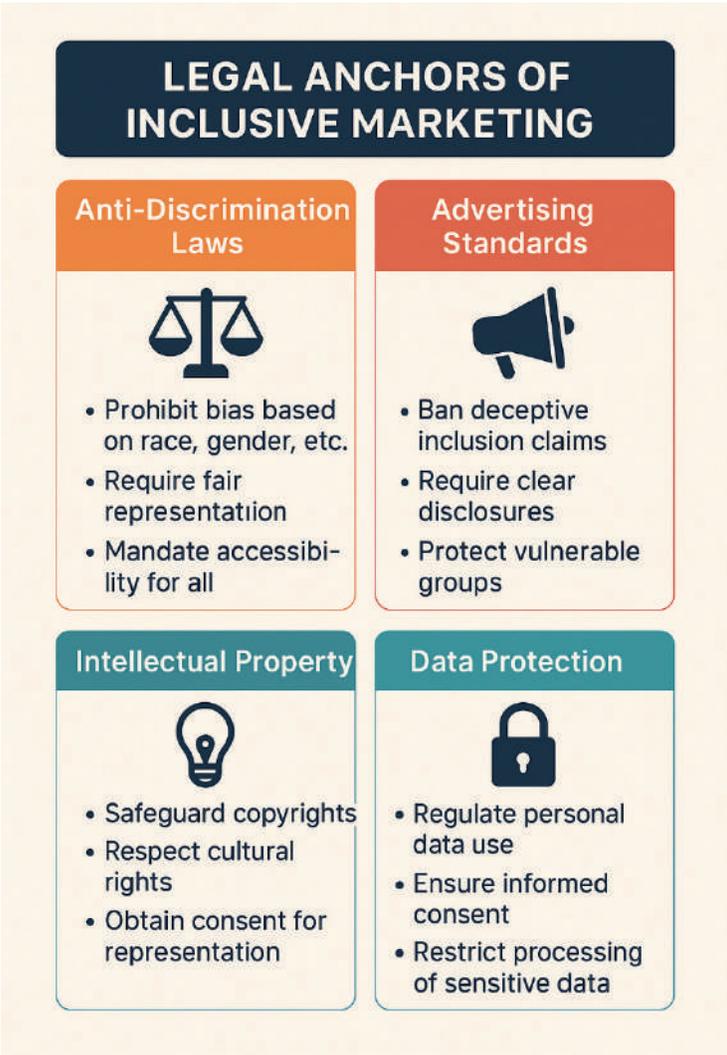
*Figure 9.5: Legal Anchors of Inclusive Marketing*

*A quadrant visual outlining key legal domains that shape inclusive marketing,anti-discrimination laws, advertising standards, intellectual property rights and data protection regulations.*

## 9.7 Navigating Internal Resistance

Inclusive marketing efforts are usually met with internal resistance due to organizational inertia, strongly ingrained biases or tension between diversity objectives and fundamental business motivations (Gundemir et al., 2024). The resistance may be passive,through failure to establish buy-

in,or active,through opposition from stakeholders who view inclusive approaches as risky, irrelevant or politicized (Saha et al., 2024). Internal obstacles are usually supported by prevailing organizational cultures that favor homogeneity and short-term status quo performance measurements against long-term social value creation (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018).

Effectively overcoming such resistance involves developing inclusive leadership that exemplifies accountability and cultural humility. Leaders need to make the strong business case for inclusion, grounded in empirical evidence of market expansion, innovation results and stakeholder trust (Saha, 2024). In addition, mid-level managers,frequently neglected,are essential enablers or hindrances of inclusive transformation. Investment in training them and in incentive alignment around inclusive key performance indicators (KPIs) is vital (Nishii & Mayer, 2009).

A second successful approach is the creation of employee-led inclusion councils or employee resource groups (ERGs), which are vehicles for participatory sense-making and bottom-up innovation. These structures have been demonstrated to increase belonging and offer safe spaces to challenge dominant norms without retribution (Shore et al., 2011). Transparency about inclusive objectives and progress, such as through regular audits and feedback systems, also minimizes internal skepticism and promotes organizational learning.

Finally, managing internal resistance is more a matter of conflict transformation into productive conversation and mutual commitment rather than conflict resolution. This entails a move from compliance to culture models that make inclusion not an add-on but central to the business's purpose and market relevance (Ferdman & Deane, 2014).

## Conclusion

Surmounting internal resistance to inclusive marketing is more a protracted cultural transition than a discrete intervention. It takes dedicated leadership, aligned incentives and mechanisms that give voice to diverse perspectives from throughout the organization. Resistance, when noted and engaged strategically, can spur critical reflection and authentic transformation. By placing inclusion in the organizational DNA,not merely as a strategic mandate but as a fundamental value,brands can develop resilient, adaptive cultures that are more equipped to engage diverse markets and negotiate complexity with integrity.
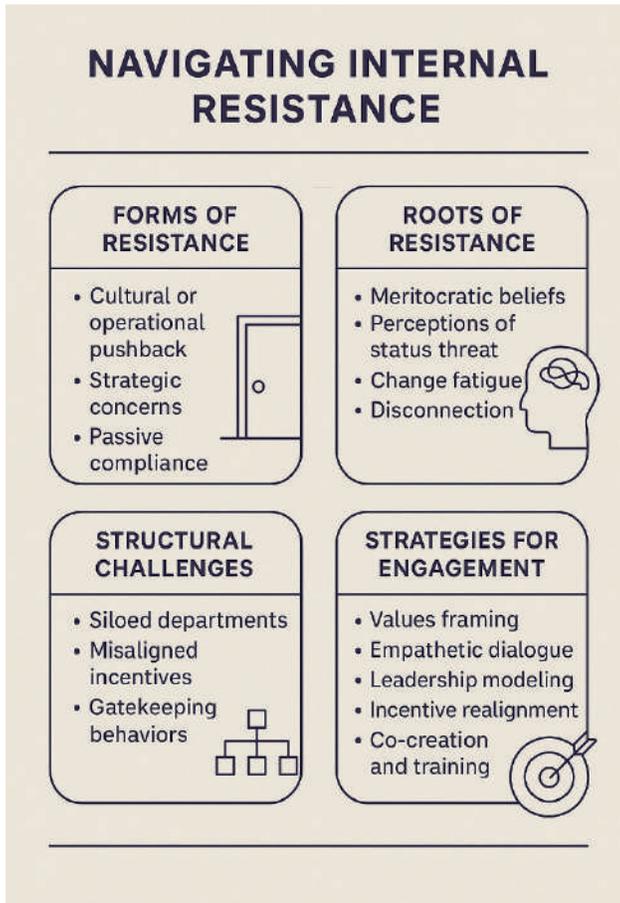
*Figure 9.6: Navigating Internal Resistance*

*A visual framework outlining four key dimensions of internal resistance to inclusive marketing: its forms, ideological roots, structural barriers and practical strategies for engagement.*

## 9.8 Embracing Uncertainty and Imperfection

Inclusive marketing is also complicated by its very nature, in that it seeks to respond to disparate needs, shifting cultural dynamics and power imbalances. In so doing, uncertainty and imperfection are not signs of failure, but instead inevitable characteristics of a co-creative process. Companies that pursue inclusive efforts need to be comfortable acting imperfectly informed, taking the risk of being wrong and being open about their limitations (Heath, 2018; Mourey, Olson, & Yoon, 2017). Adopting a learning mentality, a mentality that embraces listening, iteration and mutual responsibility, enables brands

to develop in tandem with their communities instead of imposing top-down solutions (Borzaga, Bodini, & Salvatori, 2020).

Marketing campaigns that strive for perfection prior to launch can hold back substantive inclusion. Rather, recognition of the fluidity of culture and contextual specificity of marginalization can facilitate more responsive and ethically sensitive intervention (Bhatt, 2022). Imperfection in inclusive marketing can take the shape of partial representation, skewed participation or messaging mismatch, but where mistakes are greeted with accountability and self-reflection, they can also serve as catalysts for organizational learning (Bulmer et al., 2024).

The openness to embracing and learning from imperfection also enables marginalized participants to claim their voices without being limited by mainstream expectations of manicured participation or performative professionalism (Sandlin, O'Malley, & Burdick, 2011). Uncertainty is then an opening of generative tension within which genuine transformation is achievable.

### Conclusion

Imperfection and uncertainty are precursors to true innovation and effective inclusive marketing. Instead of perfection, brands need to prioritize transparency, active listening and iterative learning in order to establish trust with diverse consumers. Mistakes, if owned and discussed openly, can be valuable sources of learning and co-creation. Through uncertainty as a source of innovation instead of danger, companies can create more adaptive, resilient and truly inclusive marketing processes.

*Figure 9.7: Embracing Uncertainty and Imperfection*

*A quadrant-style visual summarizing four key principles for ethical and adaptive inclusive marketing: letting go of perfection, fostering transparency, learning from mistakes and navigating contradictions with integrity.*

## 9.9 Conclusion

Inclusive marketing is not only a communications strategy,a cultural, ethical and organizational commitment. This chapter has navigated the underlying tensions, institutional frictions, affective burdens and legal constraints that contour the landscape of inclusive brand practice. From reputational risk and emotional labor to legal limitations and internal pushback, the path to inclusion is fraught, nonlinear and often painful. But it is exactly this pain that marks the potential for transformation.

What defines inclusive brands is not a lack of error or critique,but that responsiveness, humility and ethical reflexivity are present. The majority of sustainable brands are ones that are able to hold contradiction, claim imperfection and develop in relation to the communities they attempt to

serve. Inclusion can't be completely scripted or controlled,it has to be co-created, lived and renegotiated on an ongoing basis.

A number of important insights surface in this chapter:

- Inclusion is relational: It has to be founded upon respect, consent and care,not merely representation.

- Inclusion is work: It entails emotional, psychological and organizational labor that needs to be visible and redistributed fairly.

- Inclusion is governed: It is framed by legal imperatives, policy mandates and institutional accountability,not merely moral imperative.

- Inclusion is iterative: It entails errors, feedback and revision,not fixed ideals or marketing schemes.

Brands need to shift from performative allyship to structural, participatory and accountable inclusion. That involves approaching inclusion not as a department or a campaign but as a filter through which all marketing,indeed, all business,decisions pass.

Also, the becoming inclusive is not to be "achieved" and then left behind. It is an ongoing practice of ethical becoming,a commitment to remain open, to unlearn and to co-evolve. In this sense, inclusive marketing is not simply an issue of what is being represented to the world,it is an issue of how the world is learned about, shared and shaped through the marketing process.

As the following chapter opens systemic designs for embedding inclusive values throughout organizational cultures, this reflection poses the question: What would it be for marketing not only to include, but to redistribute power, affirm dignity and create belonging? That is the horizon toward which genuinely inclusive marketing must strive.

CHAPTER 10

# The Future of Inclusive Marketing

## 10.1 Introduction

To date, we have described inclusive marketing as a public practice and offstage organizational behavior,one that calls for ethical storytelling, collaborative strategies, legal sensitivity and emotional intelligence. Even with the best of intentions, however, even the most inclusive campaign can stumble if not supported by fundamental organizational transformation. For this final chapter, the conversation is one of quiet initiatives to transformative change,one of tactical inclusion to inclusive culture.

Far too often, inclusive marketing is a front-stage show and backstage operations are not altered. Campaigns are to honor diversity, yet leadership does not shift. Messages call for equity, but procurement policies, hiring or innovation pipelines are still exclusionary. In order to have enduring impact, inclusion has to extend beyond the role of marketing to be locked into institutional DNA,integrated into governance, infrastructure, incentive systems and in day-to-day operations.

This chapter examines how companies shift from episodic, performative campaigns to sustained, company-wide culture of inclusion. It inquires:

- What internal systems support or prevent inclusive marketing?

- How do leadership, HR, legal, operations and finance function in alignment with inclusive brand values?

- What processes of accountability ensure inclusion is not merely aspirational but quantifiable and enforceable?

- How do inclusive marketing get flipped from brand storytelling to brand governance?

Its credibility and sustainability are at risk. Internal-external cultural-claims alignment is absent and brands risk not just reputational damage but moral dissonance,alienating the people they aim to serve as well as the employees whose work sustains their business.

This chapter sets out a plan for institutionalizing inclusion across four areas:

- Leadership and Governance: Weaving inclusive values into strategic direction and decision-making authority.

- Operational Infrastructure: Creating systems of just practice in procurement, data, design and distribution.

- Workplace Culture: Establishing psychological safety, participatory feedback and equitable advancement.

- Accountability and Measurement: Shifting from intention to impact through open metrics, audits and community co-governance.

Inclusive marketing can't be delegated to one team,it needs to be a dispersed capability. It needs to shift from campaign calendars to organizational charters. And it needs to be understood not as a reputational tactic, but as a leadership imperative and a relational responsibility.

By investigating case studies, diagnostic tools and strategic frameworks, this chapter provides a final guide to creating marketing systems that not only appear to be inclusive,but are inclusive by design, by culture and by accountability.

## 10.2 From Inclusion as Opt-In to Inclusion as Default

Prehistoric marketing patterns have always viewed inclusion as a situational or discretionary add-on,a switch flipped only when addressing particular demographics. Such an opt-in policy tends to marginalize various groups by viewing them as special cases rather than a natural part of the brand's ecosystem. Contrastingly, moving towards a default model of inclusion reverses this practice and refocuses diversity as an underlying principle. This reframing supports global values of universal design and systematic inclusion methodologies, which prefer building physical environments, products and communications for universal access by design instead of as an added feature (Burgstahler, 2015; Gupta, 2025).

This paradigm transformation away from reactive inclusion towards proactive design has watershed implications for marketing ethics, brand worth and consumer involvement. As Simon (2020) contends, inclusive design creates emotional and cognitive connection via respect for varied lived experiences right from the beginning. Furthermore, empirical research shows that customers increasingly anticipate brands to demonstrate inclusive values in corporate culture and external communication (Accenture, 2018; Deloitte, 2021). By not doing so, not only are excluded marginalized consumers, but other wider publics for fairness and authenticity are also eroded.

Thus, embracing inclusion as a default operating mode means that firms need to retool their idea generation, strategic and analysis processes. It means infusing inclusive norms into the development of content, review of representations and testing of products and, thus, freeing the consumer from adaptive burden and loading it onto systems. This is in line with ethics of care and social justice frameworks, where equity needs to be structurally prefigured and not superficially added (Tronto, 1993; Sen, 2009).

### Conclusion

Moving inclusion from a reactive, opt-in strategy to an active, default setting is a paradigm change in marketing practice. By integrating inclusivity into design, strategy and delivery stages organizations can disassemble systemic barriers and establish true connection with all audiences. Not only does such a move raise ethical responsibility and brand value, but it resonates with the modern consumer desire for equity, representation and social responsibility. Inclusion by default is not merely a design choice,rather, it is a strategic imperative for building robust, compassionate and forward-looking brands.
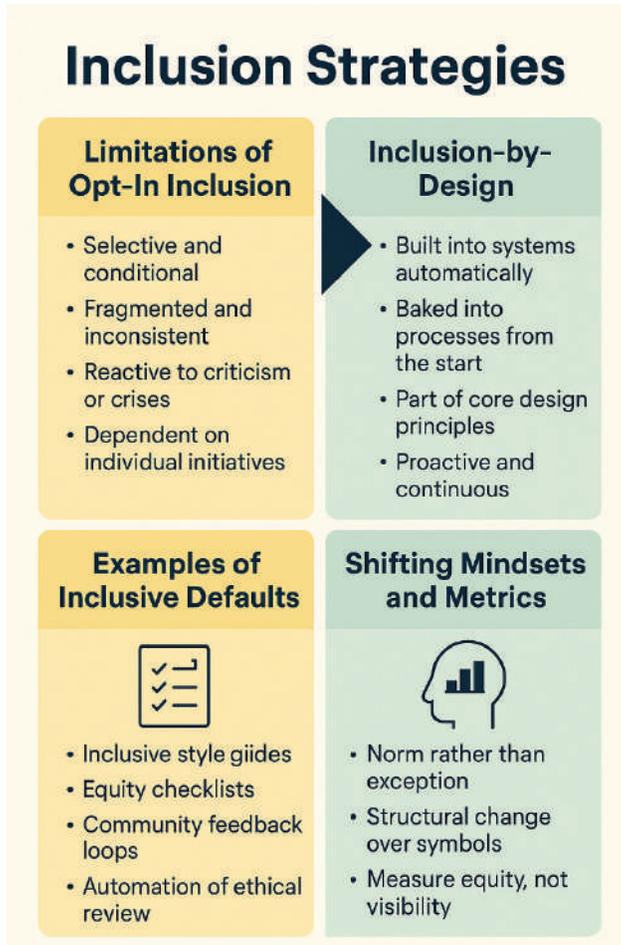
*Figure 10.1: From Opt-In to Default – Inclusion-by-Design*

*A visual comparison of opt-in versus default inclusion strategies, emphasizing how brands can embed equity across systems, workflows and decision-making.*

## 10.3 Technology as a Force for Decentralized Co-Creation

New digital technologies such as blockchain, AI, open-source platforms and mobile apps are facilitating decentralized co-creation by bridging hierarchical barriers and leveling the playing field to access participation (Cricelli et al., 2022; Nambisan et al., 2017). These new technologies create scope for direct engagement of marginalized groups in brand narrative, product design and storytelling without requiring corporate gatekeeping structures.

Blockchain technology, for example, can augment transparency and traceability in collaborative value exchanges co-created, inducing trust within collaborative communities (Tapscott & Tapscott, 2016). Online platforms such as GitHub, Ushahidi or Web3-based DAOs (Decentralized Autonomous Organizations) also demonstrate how technology can make horizontal participation models with contributors in charge, data rights owned and reputational capital (Schlagwein et al., 2017; Jenkins et al., 2016b).

Mobile technology is therefore highly critical in mobilizing decentralized co-creation in the Global South to make bottom-up innovations in health, agriculture and finance responsive to local values and needs (Donner 2015; Heeks 2017). Such transformations enable postcolonial reconfiguration of who gets to design, narrate and orchestrate markets.

Yet, access to technology is lacking. Decentralization has to be combined with governance systems that honor local systems of knowledge, non-extractive encounter protocols and community control over outcomes (Cohen & Fung, 2004; Milan & Treré, 2019). Otherwise, online spaces may replicate centralized and exclusionary logics with new wrappings.

### Conclusion

Technology has the revolutionary power to democratize co-creation processes, shifting power away from institutions to decentralized communities. If used ethically and with inclusivity, digital platforms, blockchain technologies and mobile phone technologies have the potential to promote more participatory and contextually aware innovation. This is dependent on deliberate design that prioritizes local agency, cultural sensitivity and just governance. As marketers adopt decentralized architectures, there is a need to move beyond technological euphoria and critically reflect on the social, political and ethical implications of digitally mediated co-creation.
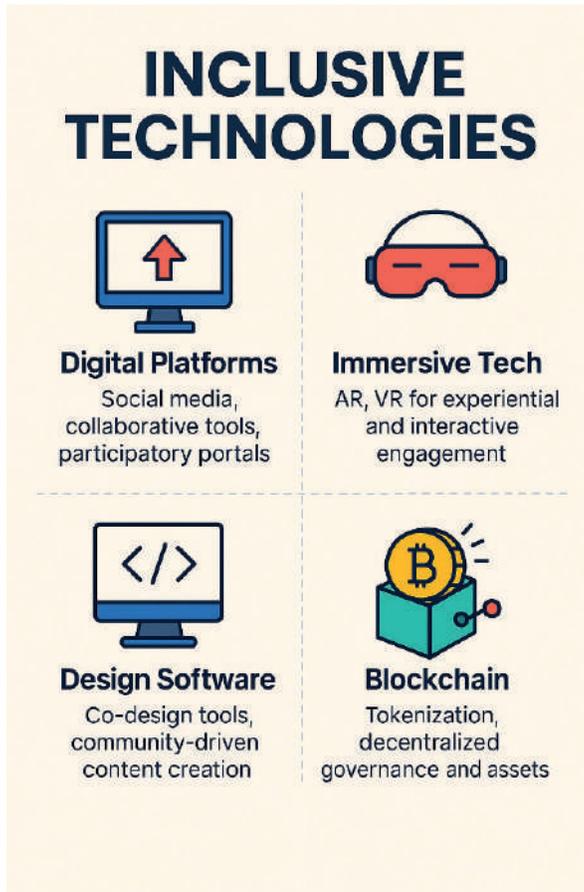
*Figure 10.2: Tech Stack for Inclusive Co-Creation*

*A digital architecture showcasing tools and platforms that support ethical, participatory brand practices, from social media co-design and storytelling platforms to blockchain and feedback loops.*

## 10.4 Co-Creation Beyond the Consumer

Although the majority of co-creation studies focus on consumers' participation in value creation, increasing studies stress that inclusive marketing must also apply co-creative practices to a wider system of stakeholders aside from the end-user. These stakeholders could range from community groups, civil society, frontline employees, marginalized producers, activists and policy lobbyists (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2016).

Inclusive marketing campaigns that actually acknowledge systemic exclusion must be co-designed with and by those traditionally excluded from a place at the decision-making table (Fisher & Shapiro, 2005). The stance takes marketing up as not just a business but also a social and ethical practice, whereby companies are sites of participatory discussion in and through asymmetrical power dynamics (Santos, 2014).

Co-creation displaced tokenistic inclusion with the injection of reciprocity, shared ownership and long-term interaction. Procedures that are inclusive in recruiting (Peters et al., 2024), co-creating community benefit contracts or injecting values of co-design in supply chains are a few examples. These practices acknowledge that consumer behavior is not the only context where marketing practice can shape broader socio-political settings.

Furthermore, participatory procedures involving NGOs, policymakers and poor people have also been proven to build trust and legitimacy in brand-led social change activities (Afuah & Tucci, 2012; Laczniak & Shultz, 2021). These multi-actor systems enable distributed innovation and ensure corporate goals are aligned with local needs and people's realities.

By reframing co-creation outside the transactional box, inclusive marketing has the capacity to shift organizational values, business models and accountability systems towards justice and fairness (Frow et al., 2011).

### Conclusion

Spinning co-creation out of the consumer repositions inclusive marketing as a cooperative, systemic practice rather than consumerist. By incorporating more actors other than consumers,e.g., communities, civil society and grassroots actors,brands can develop more sustainable, equitable and socially responsible systems. This change not only strengthens trust and legitimacy but also puts marketing in a broader context of collective empowerment and ethical responsibility. Finally, inclusive co-creation is an instrument of structural change and not brand uniqueness.

**COLLABORATIVE BRAND CREATION THAT INCLUDES AND EMPOWERS BROADER STAKEHOLDERS**

**Employees**
- Cultural knowledge holders
- Ethical sentinels
- Design collaborators

**Local Communities**
- Place-based consultation
- Cultural partnerships
- Revenue sharing

**Activists**
- Early engagement
- Campaign resources

**Civil Society**
- Feedback mechanisms
- Inclusion metrics

**Culturatelınofonjustice**
- Place-based consultation
- Cultural partnerships
- Revenue sharing

*Figure 10.3: Co-Creation Beyond the Consumer*

*A stakeholder constellation illustrating inclusive co-creation with employees, communities, civil society and activists,expanding value beyond transactional marketing relationships.*

## 10.5 The Rise of Inclusive Marketing Metrics and Standards

As inclusive marketing shifts from moral imperative to strategic imperative, firms understand they need standardized metrics to monitor, measure and report on inclusion results. Conventional marketing KPIs like reach, engagement and ROI don't address whether campaigns are resonating the same across multi-consumer groups or whether marginal voices are being heard at equal levels (Tuli et al., 2025).

Inclusive marketing measurement strives to close this measure disparity by measuring metrics like representational diversity of image and message, inclusive language usage, content accessibility and emotional campaign resonance across identity groups (An & Kwak, 2019). For example, the

Association of National Advertisers (ANA) has urged benchmarking on inclusive storytelling, supplier diversity and media placement equity inclusion in brand measures (ANA, 2021).

Metrics like the Geena Davis Institute's Gender Equality Measure (GEM) and the Global Alliance for Responsible Media (GARM) offer systematic frameworks to measure inclusion and minimize harm in content. The metrics allow companies to measure internal creative process and external campaign effectiveness, looking for gaps and blind spots for bias (Davis Institute, 2023; GARM, 2022).

In addition, intersectional efforts that illustrate intersecting identities,race, gender, disability and sexuality,are becoming increasingly important so as to avoid inclusion turning into tokenism or representation on one axis alone (Uduehi et al., 2024). Other companies are also embracing social impact dashboards for monitoring not just customer-facing diversity but also stakeholder engagement for campaign co-creation and message development (Hobson, 2022).

With rising expectations for transparency, third-party verification agencies and sustainability scores are now beginning to incorporate inclusion metrics in their assessments. Therefore, inclusive marketing is not only a values-driven endeavor but also an auditable, comparable and improvable aspect of brand performance.

### Conclusion

As inclusive marketing becomes entrenched in corporate planning, building and applying solid, multi-dimensional metrics becomes essential to realizing intent as impact. Intersectional metrics and standardized indicators, in addition to increasing responsibility, enable organizations to track progress, close representational holes and establish sustainable trust among multicultural communities. By integrating these inclusive metrics as the central part of brand performance measurement, marketers can shift from performative gesture of surface-level alteration toward sustained, quantifiable alteration that connects ethical responsibility to strategic power.

*Figure 10.4: Inclusive Marketing Metrics and Standards*

*A matrix comparing traditional marketing KPIs with justice-oriented inclusion metrics,highlighting new benchmarks for representation, equity, community engagement and ethical impact.*

## 10.6 Institutionalizing Inclusive Marketing in Education and Leadership

Overall, institutionalizing inclusive marketing in education and leadership reflects imperatively on the building of marketing as a social instrument, rather than a commercial tool, that builds equity. Traditional paradigms based on Western, consumerist ideologies have dominated marketing and business schools hitherto at the expense of diversity, justice and social orientations (Saren et al., 2019; Protopapa & Plangger, 2023). To shift the narrative, there is a pressing need to inscribe inclusion as a central marketing competency,equal to strategic thought or analytics.

It is brought about through the revolution in pedagogy. Incorporation of critical marketing, multicultural insight and ethics into curricula allows students to critique everyday common sense and examine marginalized voices

(Riedel et al., 2023; Brownlie & Tadajewski, 2008). Experiential learning arrangements,such as participatory research and co-creation projects based in communities,can make students appreciate marketing's role in well-being (Varman, 2024).

Leadership growth is also important. Organizations need to develop marketing leaders who are culturally aware, sensitive and reflective,qualities that enable inclusive brand stewardship (Sharma et al., 2023). Programs such as reverse mentorship, diversity councils and intersectional leadership training can break down institutional prejudice and institutionalize inclusive decision-making (Syed & Ozbilgin, 2009).

In addition, there has to be accountability in institutions. Incorporating diversity initiatives in accreditation criteria, funding research into the inclusion of interdisciplinarity and offering opportunities to the career development of scholars from underrepresented groups are crucial to institutional transformation (AACSB, 2020; Bendl et al., 2015).

**Conclusion**

Organizing inclusive marketing into education and leadership is not optional,it is a necessity. By reconstructing curriculum, redefining leadership development and engendering accountability within institutions of learning, the practice of marketing can make its practice harmonious with its larger social agenda. It is only through such systemic changes that inclusive marketing will become a mandatory practice, not an optional practice and guide business education and leadership in the years ahead.
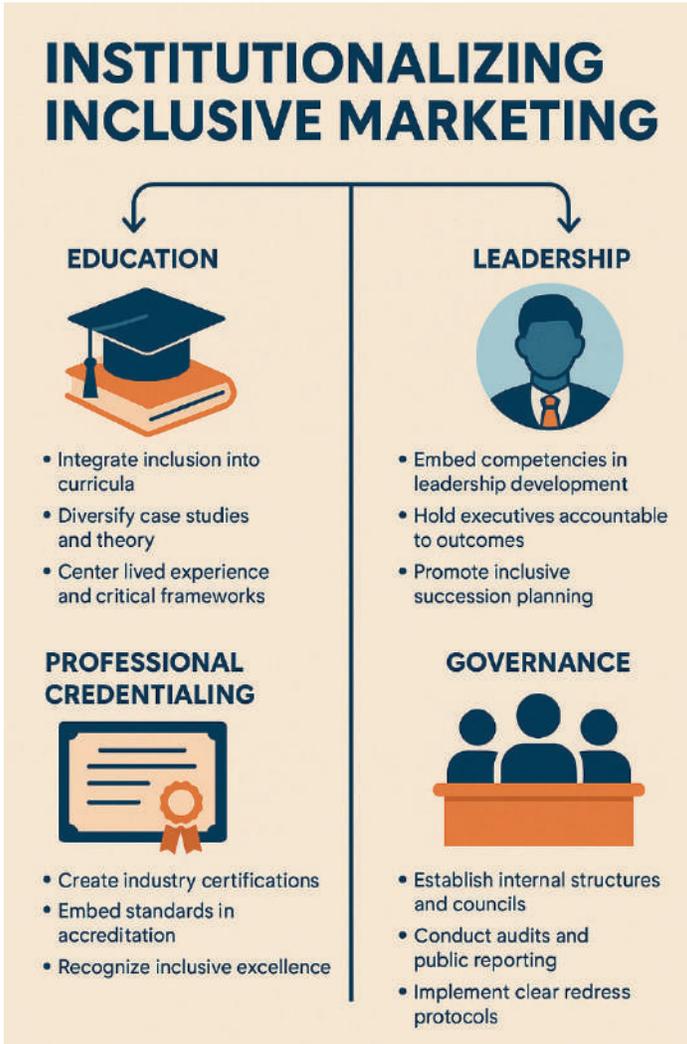
*Figure 10.5: Institutionalizing Inclusive Marketing*

*A layered diagram highlighting key pathways to sustainable inclusion in marketing: curriculum reform, leadership training, credentialing systems and structural governance.*

## 10.7 Global South Perspectives and Indigenous Knowledge

Inclusive marketing in the Global South calls for a form that is not just responsive to cultural diversity but also founded on epistemic pluralism, the understanding of different ways of knowing. Conventional marketing models, built largely in the Global North, tend to overlook indigenous

epistemologies, bottom-up innovations and community-based approaches, causing epistemic injustice (Spivak, 1988; Santos, 2014). They risk reenacting colonial power relations whereby Western consumer logics become universalized.

Indigenous marketing wisdom, via collective memory, intergenerational narrative, spiritual balance with location and reciprocal resource exchange, offers a different narrative to hyper-individualism of dominant marketing culture (Love, 2024; Kwaymullina, 2016). For example, the Ubuntu philosophy in some of Africa or the Andean Buen Vivir principle eschew extractivist rationality and provide relational worldviews wherein wellbeing is distributive, not competitively attained (Gudynas, 2011; Nhemachena et al., 2021).

Critical marketing researchers posit that postcolonial theory should guide inclusive brand practices to counter symbolic violence and reclaim subordinated knowledge (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Sodergen, 2024). Inclusive co-creation in such contexts is not representation but cognitive justice,a world where indigenous knowledge is legitimate and not exoticized (Visvanathan, 2009).

Second, Global South marketing needs to overcome policy and infrastructural asymmetries. For instance, digital inclusion statistics have a tendency to overlook linguistic diversity, offline community protocols or oral transmission systems (Bidwell, 2016). Such statistics hence require locally situated co-design processes that involve the community elders, women leaders and traditional institutions not as "beneficiaries" but as sovereigns of their own knowledge (Escobar, 2018).

Inclusive marketing in the Global South needs to move beyond representational tokenism to participatory economies of knowledge. Initiatives need to disrupt extractive branding models and instead adopt co-created mutual value creation on the basis of reciprocity, relationality and reparation (Banerjee & Linstead, 2001; Tiwari & Herstatt, 2012).

### Conclusion

Reclaiming inclusive marketing from Global South epistemologies and Indigenous knowledge systems resists Western paradigm hegemony and attests to the possibility of manifold epistemologies. Instead of positioning inclusion as an add-on or superficial feature, this would necessitate decolonizing marketing practice based on reciprocity, collective agency and relational ethics. As inclusive marketing continues to grow, co-creation does not have to be evident just in ends but also in the structures whereby

value, identity and effect are envisioned. Only by incorporating epistemic justice and honoring the sovereignty of the indigenous knowledge holders can inclusive marketing be radically transformative,speaking to cultures, communities and generations.
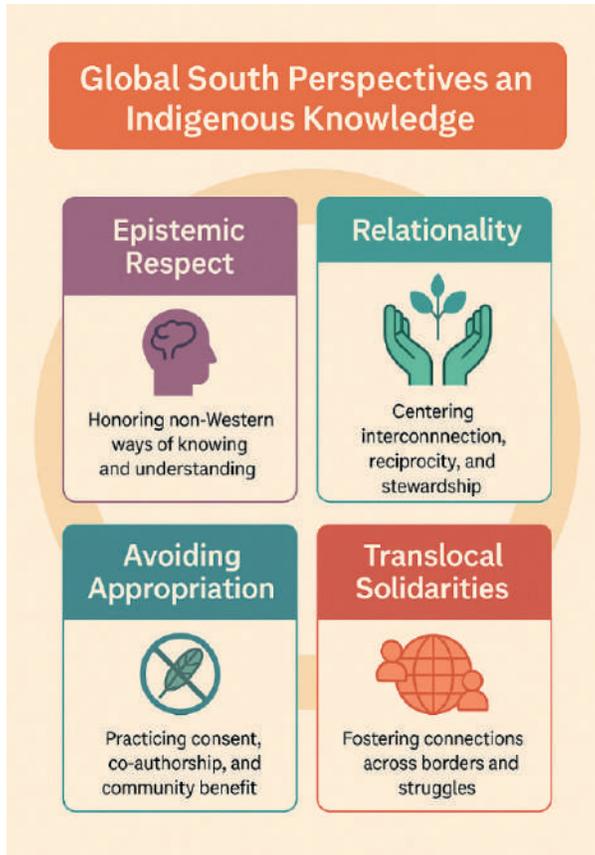


*Figure 10.6: Global South Perspectives and Indigenous Knowledge*

*A visual framework highlighting epistemic humility, relational ethics, narrative sovereignty and translocal solidarity as pillars of truly inclusive and decolonized marketing practice.*

## 10.8 From Awareness to Action: A Call for Radical Empathy

The zenith of inclusive marketing practice is not representation or symbolic action, but rather radical empathy. Radical empathy is an intense, ongoing attempt to comprehend and unpick structuring inequalities that organize consumer lives (Hooks, 2001; Ruitenberg, 2009). Radical empathy is not

merely about calling upon marketers to behold difference, but to feel with and act for those who have historically been excluded or misrepresented.

Inclusive marketing then has to move on from defensive awareness efforts towards deliberate, structural transformation. That is to formulate marketing strategies from lived experience by marginal voices as co-authors instead of data in building narratives (Brown, 2019). It requires relational accountability, an Indigenous borrowing for what it is that relationships are at the center of ethical engagement and something to be built over time (Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009).

Radical empathy brands do not wait to hear what the public will respond before they shift their messaging,they bring equity structures into each step of the marketing process, from product development to distribution (von Rosen, 2022). They see the affective and psychological burden taken on communities that are asked to educate or represent their group repeatedly. This takes practices such as emotional reciprocity, open feedback loops and repair mechanisms in case of harm (Harrison, 2020).

Lastly, the transition from knowing to doing necessitates that marketers be vulnerable, self-aware and able to relinquish power when called for. This involves abandoning performative inclusion and adopting marketing as a moral, co-creative and human practice.

### Conclusion

Radical empathy is certainly not a marketing phenomenon,it is a revolutionary practice reconfiguring the ethical center of inclusive marketing. Transcending knowledge and coming to action requires courage, accountability in relationships and a willingness to co-create with the most excluded individuals. When brands position themselves this way, they're not only narrating inclusive stories,brands are part of the narrative of equity, justice and structural transformation. In doing so, inclusive marketing steps back from being a strategy and a tactic and becomes a stance of social leadership grounded in justice and compassion.

## FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION: A CALL FOR RADICAL EMPATHY

**Beyond Performative Inclusion**
- Acknowledge complicity in exclusion
- Center affected voices
- Redisigne practices for shared values

**Empathy as Embodied Practice**
- Listen with humility
- Slow down decision-making
- Practice emotional reflexivity
- Integrate trauma informed approaches

**Bridging Structural Gaps through Solidarity**
- Co-create with communities
- Share ownership and profit
- Amplify activist movements
- Resourcing long-term change

**Marketing as a Site of Emotional and Moral Imagination**
- Design for belonging
- Imagine inclusive futures
- Storytelling as healing

*Figure 10.7: From Awareness to Action*

*A visual pathway illustrating the shift from surface-level inclusion to radical empathy,through structural solidarity, emotional reflexivity and ethically accountable marketing practice.*

## 10.9 Conclusion: Marketing as a Tool for Collective Liberation

Inclusive marketing, when rooted in justice-based frameworks and informed by an ethics of care, can be so much more than a tactical device,it can be a path toward collective liberation. Instead of being relegated to

superficial representation or tokenistic advertising, inclusive marketing necessitates a reimagining of the very systems and structures through which value is produced, exchanged and communicated.

This vision invites us to move from marketing that mirrors current power structures to marketing that counters and transforms them (Saunders, 2015). By employing co-creation, inclusive storytelling and participatory approaches, marketers are able to amplify narratives that rebuild dignity, voice and visibility for historically oppressed communities (Chatzidakis et al., 2021; Saren et al., 2007).

Marketing's broad cultural reach puts it in a singular position to counter dominant ideologies, create systemic change and recast value, success and engagement meanings. Practiced with radical empathy and with the aim of social justice agendas, inclusive marketing makes a contribution to not just brand relevance but also to community resilience, equity and empowerment (Ertimur & Coskuner-Balli, 2015; Gopaldas & DeRoy, 2015).

As such, this book dares marketers to view themselves as not merely storytellers or strategists but as co-architects of more inclusive futures,ones in which economic opportunity, cultural recognition and ethical accountability are shared by all. It is in this capacity that inclusive marketing is a tool of collective liberation, one that can carry us beyond performativity and on to transformation.

Final Words

The future of inclusive marketing is not in surface representation or brand-safe diversity. It is in radical redistribution, ethical co-creation and structural transformation. It is in truth-telling and reparative practice, in community-led design and narrative sovereignty and in making markets that center life over capital.

*Figure 10.8: Marketing for Liberation*

*A systems-level diagram highlighting the shift from transactional to transformative marketing,rooted in reparative justice, structural inclusion, community co-creation and cultural healing.*

# Conclusion Summary: Marketing as a Moral and Transformative Practice

This book has followed a bold route,from criticizing exclusive models of marketing systems to imagining fresh, more expansive, ethical and justice-based participation. Throughout its pages, there is one unifying message that has emerged: marketing is never merely about markets. It is about meaning, power and participation.

Historically, marketing has been at the forefront of refiguring systems of oppression: commodifying self, engineering desire and reifying destructive race-, gender-, class- and geography-based hierarchies. Through commodifying self, engineering desire and reifying destructive hierarchies, marketing has historically tended to prefer the interests of capital to the interests of community through exploitative representation, extractive branding or excluding marginalized voices from strategy and storytelling.

It doesn't have to be this way.

This book has provided us with a guidebook for restructuring marketing as collective freedom,a practice of listening, repairing, redistributing and reclaiming. By using decolonial thought, Indigenous knowledges, feminist ethics and critical consumer studies, we have provided a vision of inclusive marketing that is not tokenism or optics. Rather, it is based on:

- Co-creation with communities as agents, not audiences
- Radical empathy that connects feeling to structural transformation,
- Narrative sovereignty, whereby individuals speak for themselves in their own voice
- Relation, consent and responsibility care ethics

- Governance reform, with inclusion integrated into governance, measurement and culture

- Decolonizing Eurocentric norms of marketing through Global South and indigenous leadership

- Systemic imagination, whereby brands are forced to unite in healing, not harm

In the process, we have challenged marketers not to "include" the excluded within existing systems,but to re-design those systems themselves.

### From Transaction to Transformation

We should shift from attention-manipulating marketing to belonging-building marketing. From profit-based campaigns to dignity- and justice-building platforms. From symbolic apologies to systemic reparations. From optics that can expire in weeks to solidarity that outlives a lifetime.

This takes courage. This demands that marketers not only be creative, but civic leaders, moral stewards and cultural allies. This challenges us to unlearn much of what has been learned in the traditional marketing approach,and re-learn from social movements, elders, frontline communities and young visionaries leading the way.

### Marketing for the World We Deserve

Inclusive marketing, in this vision, is more than a strategic benefit. It is an ethical imperative. It is how we construct economies that reverence life, narratives that tell truth and connections that honor interdependence.

In a world marred by inequality but full of promise, marketing has to be more than a market strategy. It has to become a force for transformation,a place where we dream and craft the world we desire to inhabit.

This is our duty:

Make marketing an ethics of care, imagination and shared freedom.

Make brands custodians of equity, compassion and planetary rebirth.

Make marketers creators of futures in which all humans belong.

### Author's Note

I wrote this book because I feel that marketing can be a healing force and not merely about selling.

As a researcher and practitioner, I've had the honor to work with communities whose narratives, their resilience and their tactics never find

their way into textbooks or boardrooms. And I've gotten things wrong. And I've discovered that work that is inclusive isn't perfect, but that it's powerful when it is authentic.

This book is not a conclusion. It's an invitation. You could be a marketer, student, activist, policymaker or just someone who is interested in how we can improve. Wherever you're at, your voice counts.

If this book makes you wonder, think or do something slightly differently, then it has done its work.

Let's keep creating, together.

*Dr. Altug Ocak*

Asst. Prof. at Istanbul Beykent University

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# Beyond Performativity:
# Inclusive Marketing as A Tool of Social Transformation

**Asst. Prof. Altug Ocak**