

**ENGAGING CONSUMERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA:  
A CRITICAL REVIEW OF INCLUSIVITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA  
MARKETING**

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## **TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

ASM	Auxiliary Sustainability Marketing
CCT	Consumer Culture Theory
EDI	Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity
RSM	Reformative Sustainability Marketing
SIT	Social Identity Theory
TSM	Transformative Sustainability Marketing
UGC	User-Generated Content
UGT	Uses and Gratification Theory

## **ABSTRACT**

Inclusive marketing can be defined as the conscious creation of an advertising campaign that respectfully includes and considers the complexity of the individuals who make up the target audience (Pittaway, 2020). Inclusivity seeks appreciate and understand different identities and cultures (Fish, 2016). It intends to call for more inclusive marketing campaigns which takes people who have been or have been consistently marginalised or underrepresented into consideration. Looking at the history of social movements, being inclusive becomes social imperatives for fashions brands. There are different forms of inclusivity has been fought in the historical social movements including racial diversity, gender equality, feminism, LGBTQ+ and so on. Shifting to the contemporary context, social media has been demonstrated to have a substantial impact on how people perceive social norms and beauty standards and led to greater consumer activism. As consumer are willing to be featured on the platform of their daily life and feel good about themselves, fashion brands are expected to create more inclusive dialogues with consumers to depict and include various consumers.

Therefore, in academic research, it is critical to understand how inclusivity is manifested on social media; in practices, brands need to find the proper ways of demonstrating inclusivity in marketing campaigns on social media. This critical review aims to contribute to the area of inclusive marketing, by building a holistic understanding of on inclusivity and inclusive marketing. Subsequently, this effort will uncover unexplored or underexplored areas of inquiry and prompt opportunities for scholarship regarding new research, theory development and consequential marketing practices. More specifically, this critical review focuses on addressing three main research gaps: lack of measures to evaluate the inclusiveness of marketing activities; limited research into diverse individual characteristics influencing consumers' perceived inclusion; lack of understanding into how inclusivity interacts with social media content. To fill in these research gap, this review chooses the critical approach to advance the knowledge of inclusivity in marketing literature, as critical review can synthesise and evaluate the existing sporadic literature of a new topic in mature area and then emerge a conceptual framework for future research.

This review starts with searching the keywords of the forms of inclusivity manifested in social movements, such as inclusive marketing, inclusive advertising, gender stereotypes, stereotypes

advertising, femvertising, LGBTQ+ advertising, race advertising, age advertising, etc. Through examining the titles, keywords, and abstracts, 42 articles are left for conducting critical review. Through a critical synthesis and evaluation of the literature, it concludes two main thematic topics: the different forms of inclusivity in marketing literature, and the discrimination and exclusivity in the marketplace. In addition, there are four thematic topics (i.e., racial identity, gender and feminism, sexual identity, and age) illustrated under the research branch of different forms of inclusivity in marketing literature.

This review found that the dimensions of inclusivity have not been defined in any research. Moreover, there is no comprehensive framework discuss inclusivity in relation to consumer-related constructs such as brand attitudes. Regarding certain thematic topics of inclusivity, the research is not balanced. While there is majority of recent research focusing on gender and feminism, research on racial identity in marketing is more outdated and shift to ethnic identity with an emphasis on cultural differences rather than physical appearance. There are very few studies addressed age and disability inclusivity in marketing literature and the emerging context of social media for addressing this problem remain unexplored. Finally, a conceptual framework that introduces the construct of inclusivity and underlines the interrelations between inclusivity and consumer-related constructs is proposed to guide future research on inclusivity and inclusive marketing.

**Keywords:** Inclusivity, Inclusive Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Racial Identity, Gender Equality, Feminism, LGBTQ+, Age Inclusiveness

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with introducing some pre-understanding on the choice of topic. It shows the practical relevance of the study, leading to the research problem background. Thereafter, the theoretical relevance of the study is demonstrated by discussing the research gap. Then, the research aim and objectives are presented. The chapter ends with the expected theoretical, managerial, and societal contributions as well as the study delimitations.

### 1.1 The Choice of Topic and Pre-Understanding

We all live in a progressively interconnected society shaped by globalisation and technological advance where social justice and fairness are fundamental values for sustaining a diverse and tolerant society. With the behaviour shift after the Covid-19 pandemic, both for consumers and enterprises, we can see increasing demand for information credibility, mindful consumption, and social justice. Fashion and social issues, such as equality, diversity, and inclusivity, are two of the most widely debated topics. However, scandals over racially and culturally insensitive designs and campaigns still happen (Campbell, 2019).



(source: Cheung, 2022)

**Figure 1 A mid-length pleated skirt designed by Dior (left) and Mamianqun, a traditional Chinese garment (right)**

Dior is facing accusations of cultural appropriation after Chinese social media users and protesters outside one of the label's Paris stores, claimed that a pleated skirt was resemble and

inspired by a centuries-old traditional garment. The pleated mid-length skirt, priced at \$3,800, was launched in May as part of Dior's Fall 2022 collection. Despite being described as a "hallmark Dior silhouette", it was thrust into the public spotlight after Chinese social media users noticed the similarity of its pattern and folds to the Chinese horse-face pleated skirt (mamianqun), a type of Hanfu typically worn by women in the Ming Dynasty (Figure 1). The case has shed light on the fine line fashion brands have to tread while doing business worldwide, consumers are increasingly concern about the depictions and descriptions of their self-identities.

In recent years, it is not the first time that Dior has sparked outrage in China. In 2021, featured in an exhibition hosted by the brand, a photo by the celebrated fashion photographer Chen Man sparked backlash for "smearing Asian women". Its choice of a model with "small eyes" has been criticised as it perpetuated negative Western stereotypes about Asian people. Dior withdrew the photo from a Shanghai exhibition and posted a message on social media expressing respect for "the sentiments of the Chinese people". Similarly, Gucci arose criticism and boycott after it released a jumper which perceived as resembled blackface by consumers. There have been a series of missteps by a range of brands, from Gucci and Prada blackface scandals to Dolce & Gabbana's chopstick controversy, leading to a sizeable social media backlash or a slump in revenues (Ly et al., 2018).

It is impossible to create an exhaustive list of misdeeds, but these examples can suggest the extensive reputational damage and global impact of these issues and also indicate the need for brands to operate in a more inclusive paradigm. Not only are brands subject to scrutiny for any political message as well as cultural insensitivity, they are also under growing pressure to portray people and culture. Fashion is not simply the creation of designers. It is an image full of references and ideas that echoes the context of an era. It mirrors different aspects such as politics, beauty standards and technological innovations. Historically, the fashion industry has been a victim of standardisation. It has lacked diversity and inclusivity as it catered to a standard size of customers. Facing the advancement of technology, individuals acquire greater access to media resulting in more awareness, unprecedented debates about inclusivity are taking place. Disciplines associated with traditional fashion design are being disassembled.

The relationship between fashion and society is dual-way. It is possible to see how fashion changes according to the historical and contemporary social movements. Social change means

a prominent revision in behaviour patterns and cultural values. Fashion reflects social changes, and makes the connection between the industry and society. If we are advancing in certain social topics, that means that the fashion industry will soon feature them. What is seen on brand collections and fashion shows, is a reflection of what is happening in real life, outside of the catwalks. That's why it's so important to bring the issues of inclusivity to attention and keep this conversation moving forward.

In this social media era, social media has provided a space for individuals to take self-expression to another level. Moving toward a future deeply linked with virtual communities, individuals become more concerned with their online presence and digital personas on social media. Therefore, the presence of fashion brands on social media become more prevalent and play an essential part of self-expression and exploration in the digital realm. Meanwhile, fashion is a lens through which one could study the transformation of cultural values. Given the critical importance of inclusivity to fashion brands in social media context, the motivation behind this research is in support of improving inclusive branded content on social media and marketing practices when marketing to diverse audiences and why it is important to address the dilemma of tokenism and exclusion? Brands and affiliated public figures have a significant influence on a large part of the population on social media. Rather than examining a type of advertising message appeal or a content characteristic in social media marketing practices, I will focus my study on the manifestations of inclusivity in current social media climate as it relates to how well brands interpret inclusivity in their social media content and connect it with the social construction of inclusivity from the consumer perspective.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

The contemporary social media marketing practice that recognises inclusivity manifested in branded content as a message appeal and distinguishes it from other message appeal or content element is a relatively new field of research. To date, the majority of social media marketing research has focused on the impacts of content variables (e.g., type of message appeal, content element) on consumer outcome variables (e.g., brand attitude and purchase intention) or the impact of consumer variables (e.g., consumer perceived similarity or attachment to content) on their responses to social media marketing (Sokolova and Kefi, 2019; Xu and Pratt, 2018). Moreover, in relation to the effectiveness of brand communication, researchers have compared the different types of marketing communication in social media (e.g., firm-generated content, user-generated content) and investigated the impacts of disclosure information including

sponsorship and affiliated link on consumer responses to brand-related posts. In general, these studies indicate that the effectiveness of social media marketing is contingent on consumers' impression of the brand's credibility or popularity, and consumers' perception of feeling attached to the brand, thus affecting outcomes linked to brand.

In addition, in relation to the main focus of this thesis on the impacts of different manifestations of inclusivity in social media content on engaging consumers, recent research has addressed the following issue that is of particular interest; the effects of inclusive marketing and stereotypes on consumer responses to brands' posts on social media (e.g., Eisend, 2019; Naisbayeva et al. 2018). When inclusivity implies including those who might be excluded or marginalised from the majority (Struve, 2019), inclusive marketing describes campaigns that embrace diversity by including people from different backgrounds or stories that unique audiences can relate to (Hubspot, n.d., cited in Ramakrishnan, 2020). As inclusive marketing is a relatively recent conception and research within this area is still in an early phase, it is comprehensible that the majority of studies on inclusivity and inclusive marketing have focused on gender stereotypes and gender portrayals (Akestam, 2017a; Abitbol and Sternadori, 2016; Robertson and Davidson, 2013). Although gender stereotypes and portrayals are an essential dimension of inclusivity and inclusive marketing, but inclusivity is a multi-dimensional conception and inclusive marketing also goes beyond that. There are still some other issues within inclusive marketing such as racial diversity, feminism, LGBTQ+ and age that remain unexplored.

Moreover, acknowledging that to be inclusive in marketing is important for brands, previous research has considered the critics to this. Inclusive marketing is often criticised due to the claimed practise of corporate social responsibility-washing (CSR-washing), in which firms make political comments in their advertising to appease stakeholders, but do not address the issues internally, which is deceptive (Sterbenk et al., 2019, p. 1). Greenwashing is best known but there are other forms that are connected to inclusive marketing, such as rainbow washing which is when "organisations use rainbow patterns and symbols to appear aligned with the LGBTQ+ community" (Mitchell and Ward, 2010, cited in Sterbenk et al. 2019, p. 4). Femvertising is advertising that empowers women and female talent in some way (Sheknows, 2014, cited in Hainneville et al., 2021, p. 1). Similarly, to green marketing, femvertising can easily devolve into fem-washing, which misleads stakeholders into believing that the

corporation is engaging in socially responsible measures when they are not. Ethnic marketing communication has also been an object for criticism. Ethnic marketing is when marketers target customers due to their ethnic characteristics (Cui, 2001, p. 23). The critics argue that ethnic marketing often is generalising and ignoring the variety within the population and within different ethnic groups (Burton, 2002, p. 212).

This indicates that inclusive marketing must be carefully developed within businesses. It is a delicate subject since it involves topics that frequently include minority groups in society. Inclusive marketing aims to elevate these groups so that everyone feels included. Occasionally, brands lack expertise about how to accomplish it properly. One example is the now famous H&M advertisement from 2018 with a boy of African origin wearing a sweatshirt with a slogan perceived racist, which created chaos on social media (Bever, 2018). The campaign's attempt at diversity ended in a scandal and damage to the brand's reputation. Hence, what remains unexplored is consumers' perceptions or attitudes towards these improper executions of inclusive marketing.

To conclude, several research gaps related to inclusivity and inclusive marketing that need to be addressed. First, regarding the research context for this thesis is social media, the majority of previous studies on social media marketing have focused on the isolated content elements in social media, ignoring the presence of inclusivity in the branded content that might interact with content elements to invoke consumer responses. Second, besides gender stereotypes and portrayals, more forms of inclusivity including racial diversity, sexualities and age is lacking and needs to be explored. Finally, there is scarce research on consumers' perceptions or attitudes towards mis-conductions of inclusive marketing.

### **1.3 Research Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this thesis is to explore different forms of inclusivity in social media marketing and its impacts on consumer responses by providing critical analysis and synthesis of the theoretical paradigms, methodologies, and findings of previous research on inclusivity and inclusive marketing in the social media context. The focus is on different forms of inclusivity manifested in social media brands' marketing activities that contain portrayals of inclusivity and consumer responses to these portrayals. The inclusivity issues are mainly categorised into four different forms: 1) racial identity, that are portrayals of diverse racial identities in branded content, 2) feminism, that are portrayals of women empowerment and gender equality in branded content,

3), LGBTQ+, that are portrayals of diverse sexualities in branded content and 4) age, that are portrayals of different age groups in branded content; Other issue of inclusivity such as disability is also elaborated. This research aim is achieved by accomplishing following objectives:

**Research Objective 1:** To propose the dimensions of inclusivity by critiquing the definitions, theories and methodologies underpinning inclusivity and inclusive marketing research.

**Research Objective 2:** To explore the impacts of different forms of inclusivity manifested in social media brands' marketing activities by critically examining the existing literature on inclusivity and inclusive marketing.

**Research Objective 3:** To develop a theoretical framework calling for more inclusive marketing practices on social media based on the multi-dimensionality of inclusivity and critical synthesis of relevant models.

This research aim is approached through three research questions derived from the research problem. The research questions are the following:

**Research Question 1:** What are the different forms of inclusivity being fought for in social movements, and what are the impacts on fashion?

**Research Question 2:** What is the state of the art addressed in the academic literature on inclusivity and inclusive marketing?

**Research Question 3:** What are the main findings from current research on the impacts of different forms of inclusivity in branded content on consumer responses?

**Research Question 4:** How should fashion brands portray inclusivity in their branded content on social media?

#### **1.4 Expected Contributions**

This review is expected to contribute to the theoretical field of inclusive marketing by critically synthesising the theoretical foundations of inclusivity in marketing literature and also providing a holistic understanding of this multi-dimensional conception. Previous research of the consumer perspective within inclusive marketing is mostly focused on gender stereotypes,

more attention should be given to other topics on inclusive marketing. Therefore, this research is a pioneer in adopting a critical approach to explore different forms of inclusivity and its impacts on consumer responses. Within this process, a conceptual framework illustrating the future research agenda for this domain will be proposed. This review presents originality because of the new constructs (i.e., inclusivity) of the topic (i.e., inclusive marketing and social media marketing) and the research methods (i.e., critical literature review) employed.

Except for theoretical contributions, this study will also have managerial contributions. This study will help marketers to gain a deeper understanding of inclusive marketing from the perspectives of the consumers. This will benefit fashion brands to get more knowledge of inclusive marketing and understand consumers' expectations on them. As inclusivity has become social imperative for brands, this study is expected to contribute to get more brands engaged in the issue and to understand how to be more inclusive in their marketing practices.

The findings of this study will also benefit the society because it contributes to more research in the field of inclusivity and further debate of the issue. By highlighting the topic even more, it can contribute to a more inclusive media landscape that will benefit the society and the people living in it. Social inclusion is linked to human belonging and well-being (Frederickson et al. 2007, cited in Licsandru and Cui, 2017, p. 331). It can also foster confidence and self-esteem (Forrester-Jones et al., 2006, p. 286). Belongingness and social acceptance both have “direct relevance to the individual (the desire to belong to the mainstream society) and the society (the society's willingness to accept the individual)” (Licsandru and Cui, 2017, p. 331).

## **1.5 Outline of the Thesis**

This thesis is structured into five chapters. Following the introduction (Chapter 1), the conceptual background of the thesis is presented (Chapter 2). Next, the methods used to collect and analyse the literatures are described (Chapter 3). This is followed by Chapter 4, which synthesises the significant research streams on inclusivity in marketing literature, and then propose a framework of inclusive marketing. Chapter 5 consolidates the findings of the thesis, discusses its contributions to research and practice, considers its limitations, and provides suggestions for future research.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

Inclusivity is a significant topic concerning societal cultures and marketing practices. To delineate the scope of literature review and enrich the interpretation of findings, this chapter conceptualises inclusivity with a bigger picture. Firstly, in section 2.1, some critical social movements throughout history are discussed to capture the manifestations of inclusivity in the social discourses and explore their impacts on fashion marketing practices (section 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). This discussion exemplifies how the emergence of social media facilitates social movements spread, consumer activism and escalates inclusivity issues (section 2.1.2). Secondly, section 2.2 situates the notion of inclusivity in academic research. It exhibits the connections between sustainability, social sustainability, and inclusivity (section 2.2.1) and then explicates the theories essential to research into inclusivity (section 2.2.2). In accordance with the preceding sections, section 2.3 recapitulates the interplay among inclusivity, fashion marketing and social media to outline the primary research streams featured in this critical review.

## 2.1 Manifestations of Inclusivity in Social Movements

### 2.1.1 Historical Social Movements and Their Impacts on Fashion Marketing in the Pre-Social Media Era

Section 2.1.1 explicates three forms of inclusivity being fought for throughout historical social movements. Then, their impacts on fashion marketing are disclosed respectively.

#### 2.1.1.1 Civil Rights Movement: Racial Identity

In 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement elevated African Americans' predicament to the forefront of American political and intellectual discourse (Newman, 2020). The ideological foundation of this movement was a feeling of black pride accompanied by a strong sense of urgency for equality. During this time, politics and fashion were fused. Some significant cultural symbols became impressive visual displays of racial identity, such as the African hairstyle "Afro" and black beret (Ogbar, 2004).



(source: Polyzoidou, 2021)

**Figure 2 Black Panther members in 1969**

These symbolic fashion statements emerging from political struggle gradually transformed the black identity into a part of beauty standard and sent a powerful message of change to the American society (Walker, 2007; Vargas, 2009). For the first time in American popular culture,

“Black was Beautiful” (Newman, 2020). When the political meaning of these African inspired fashions was absorbed by society, fashion not only became a visual means of communication in the Movement. It also allowed American culture to be more inclusive (Vargas, 2009). Therefore, the use of fashion by the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in 1960s was instrumental in altering American consciousness and incorporating African elements into American societal culture (Newman, 2020).

#### *2.1.1.2 Women’s Rights Movement: Gender and Feminism*

Another form of inclusivity has been fought for throughout history is gender equality. Feminism emerged little by little and the first manifestation of it was made by the Suffragettes at the end of the 18th century (Newman, 2020). While the first-wave feminism of the 19th and early 20th centuries focused on women’s legal rights, especially the right to vote, the second-wave feminism of the women’s rights movement (women’s liberation movement in the 1960s) started to embark on other issues such as fair pay, equitable opportunities for employment, education, the right to freedom, respect, security, and so on. Thus, the relationship between feminism and fashion can be predated before the 1960s. Margaret Finnegan (1999) claims in her research of the link between consumer culture and nineteenth and early twentieth-century suffragists that there were several feminist perspectives on fashion. As a display of gentility, some suffragists adopted the fashion of their period. Finnegan stated, ‘some suffragists obsessively followed the latest styles’ (Finnegan, 1999, p. 18). Others proposed different forms of dress reform, such as bloomers, the most well-known example of "rational dress". This kind of bifurcated clothes of the mid-nineteenth century granted women greater mobility than crinolines. Linda M. Scott (2006) also believed that varied cultural backgrounds of these feminists impacted their perspectives on fashion in her research of feminist clothing reformers. Therefore, dress reform was a response against social control to women (Fischer 2001, p. 5).

With historical and theoretical roots in Black feminism and women of colour activism, intersectionality is a concept developed to address concerns relating to inclusivity and representation in social movement (Crenshaw, 1991). The concept is incorporated into the study of feminist social movements (Bassel and Emejulu, 2010; Lépinard, 2014), and scholars at the intersection of feminism and activism have exposed the failure of organisations focused on a single identity such as gender to address relations among stakeholders while prioritising the needs and interests of the privileged (Laperrière and Eléonore, 2016). In other words, when brands targeting on certain segments of consumers, gender representation should be considered

in addition to other forms of inclusivity such as racial identity. The fashion industry has been known for having oppressed and deprived many women of its dictatorial rules present in the editorials of influential brands, being an evident obstacle in its search for freedom and respect. Dressage like corsets, tight dresses, heels, in a way, reflects how macho society imposes certain standards even on the streets that women should wear. Feminism, therefore, has come to break these standards and women are encouraged to express themselves in all aspects without confines, including in their dressing ways.

#### *2.1.1.3 Gay Rights Movement: Sexual Identity*

In 1965, when the civil rights movement secured new legislation forbidding racial discrimination, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. witnessed the first homosexual rights marches. The other form of inclusivity, sexual identity came into sight. On June 28, 1969, guests of the popular Stonewall Inn in New York's Greenwich Village fought back against police raids of their neighbourhood bar, marking a turning moment for gay liberation (Morris, 2009). Stonewall is still regarded as a turning point for LGBT pride and has been memorialized annually since the 1970s. The gay liberation movement of the 1970s witnessed the emergence of numerous political organisations, which frequently competed with one another. Lesbians influenced by the feminist movement of the 1970s founded their own collectives, record labels, music festivals, newspapers, bookstores, and publishing companies, and advocated for lesbian rights inside mainstream feminist organisations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW).

Some of these estimates of the homosexual market's potential may well be based on stereotypical depictions rather than on real numbers. These stereotypes and cliché views of hip, fashion-conscious gays and lesbians are often presented in mainstream entertainment with gay characters and storylines as well. It is true that some of these stereotypes are supported by actual research and statistics, despite the diversity within the segment (Willcocks, 2004). This is true for gay men in particular, with one study showing empirically that gay men tend to be more fashion-conscious than straight men, showing greater tendencies toward both fashion awareness and fashion interest than their straight counterparts (Sha et al., 2007). Ethnographic consumer research as well supports the idea of consumption of fashion products stereotypically associated with the gay subculture (such as dyeing hair, wearing jewellery or using branded cosmetics for gay men) as a form of commitment to that subculture (Kates, 2002). In the gay community, fashion is an important means of communication of both personal identities and

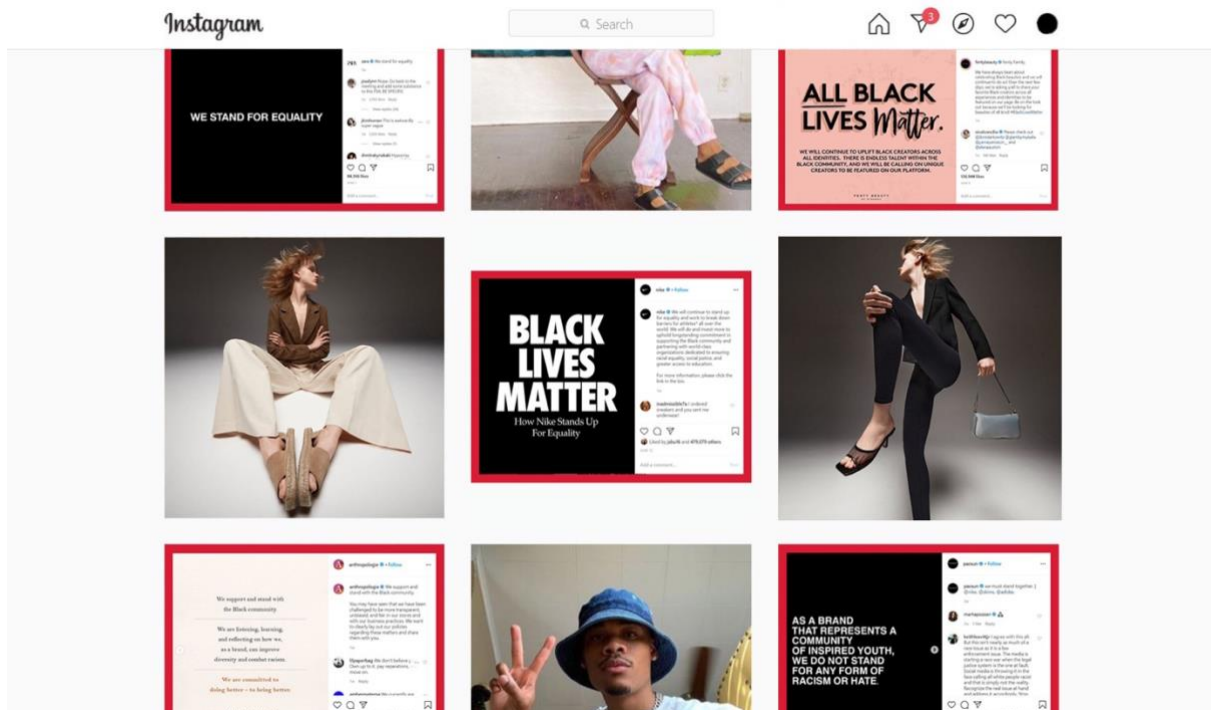
of group affiliations, where the pro-active use of clothing facilitates acceptance, differentiation, and integration (Schofield and Schmidt, 2005). These differences in meanings of and usages for products are evident for both gays and lesbians, and these different product experiences do affect the way they interpret product depictions in advertisements (Penaloza, 1996).

## 2.1.2 Contemporary Social Movements and Their Impacts on Fashion Marketing in the Social Media Era

Section 2.1.2 exemplifies different forms of inclusivity manifested in contemporary social movements with four examples in particular. These examples correspondingly mirror the three manifestations of inclusivity (i.e., racial identity, gender, and sexual identity) being fought throughout historical social movements since 1960s and continue the former discussion into contemporary social movements to highlight the evolving context for inclusivity issues.

### 2.1.2.1 Black Lives Matter Movement: Racial Identity

In 2020, the tragic killing of George Floyd and the subsequent wave of protest around the globe brought the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement back to the forefront of public and political attention. The movement began in 2013 in response to the death of black teenager Trayvon Martin by police officer George Zimmerman.



(source: Pravato, 2020)

**Figure 3 Brand posts in support of the Black Lives Matter Movement**

It originated on social media with the hashtag #blacklivesmatter, which is now associated with messages about protests and activist pledges to remove racism. The term 'Black Lives Matter' has prompted global discussions about racism and equality and started a networked movement (Silverstein, 2021). This is clearly a reflection of ongoing challenges regarding systemic racial inequality and violence in the society, but at the same time it also exemplifies a wider phenomenon: in that we are increasingly seeing new technology-driven protest movements (such as BLM and #MeToo) at the forefront of efforts to push for change.

A new understanding of social movements fuelled by support for #BlackLivesMatter: people are continuing to debate and evolve their behaviour to move beyond performative, one-time actions and commit to transformative allyship. Brands have been challenged to maintain their social media presence as audiences invest their attention into major social movements and changes to their way of life. Audiences not only want brands to comment on social movements, but they also view social media as the optimal platform for doing so. Consistently, the message has been that audiences seek brands' participation on social issues. Black Lives Matter is one of the first social movements in which fashion designers, businesses, and celebrities used their social media platforms to criticise racism (Dunivin et al., 2022).

#### *2.1.2.2 #MeToo Movement: Gender and Feminism*

Feminism has also resurged due to social media and utilised it for prompting public awareness of gender equality. In 2017, when the New York Times released an investigation into years of sexual assault claims against Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein, the feminist hashtag #MeToo became an influential movement (Ambás and Sádaba, 2021). On social media, the #MeToo hashtag served as "connective tissue" and a forum for millions of female victims to be heard and seen. The red carpet then turned black for the 2018 Golden Globe Awards as a show of female solidarity (BBC News, 2018). The celebrities who attended the event utilised their attire to convey a statement about gender equality; "the idea was to replace the red-carpet fashion discourse with one about gender parity and workplace safety," making black a symbol of unity (Ambás and Sádaba, 2021, p.229). It showcased a wave of solidarity against the dark side of the industry that has been tormenting and sexually harassing women for years. The

stance taken was also a movement towards equality for women and a step towards bridging the monetary gap between the two genders.



(source: WGLI, 2018)

**Figure 4 Celebrities wearing in black in the 2018 Golden Globe Awards**

When confronted with horrors, fashion has played a significant role in amplifying the voice of women. The visual communication through fashion sends across a powerful message for the issue in relevance, and with its large social scope, it has been a big ally for the women who play a pivotal role in bringing change. It is a tool that has helped communicate the women's agenda without their vocalisation. The tide of societal change brought about by fashion is not new, but with the rise of social media over the past several years, its influence has continually increased. Designers use their platforms mindfully and convey their stance on the problematic issue through their clothes, designers like Maria Grazia Chiuri sent down slogan t-shirts down the catwalk stating slogans like, “We should all be feminists” and “future is female”. Not only did these slogan-bearing outfits resonate with the fashion mongers, but it also received instant acceptance on social media. Not only is it documented, but it also symbolizes for inclusivity and unity amongst women across the globe. Clearly, fashion has been a constructive means of self-expression for several centuries, and a large number of digitally connected audiences today utilise fashion's power appropriately.

### *2.1.2.3 LGBTQ+ Movement: Sexual Identity*

Throughout about 150 years of homosexual social movements (roughly from the 1870s to today), activists struggled to address the very different concerns and identity issues of gay men, women identifying as lesbians, and others identifying as gender variant or nonbinary. However, the tendency to generalise lesbians and gay men as one homogeneous segment in marketing activities may undermine its inclusivity. Along with Internet activism burgeoned, transgender activism and the use of language that questions binary gender identification gained prominence in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Transphobia, cissexism, and other language (such as "hir" and "them") became standardised, and more openly trans adolescent and adult characters appeared in cinema and television programmes. Therefore, the varied forms of inclusivity such as sexual identity and gender could coincide and advocate more inclusion for people.

Many marketers find it difficult to reach the GL segment because, while there is a plethora of gay and lesbian magazines such as *The Advocate* and *Out*, as well as thousands of web sites and local publications, special interest media outlets designed for homosexuals are not widely read by a substantial number of the GL population. Thus advertisers, especially of national and global brands, are currently faced with the dilemma of deciphering how to market products to homosexuals who exist within the mainstream market that is dominated by the needs, wants, and lifestyles of heterosexual consumers. Advertisers increasingly need to reach both the homosexual and heterosexual markets without alienating either group. In the fashion industry in particular, many companies are not targeting gay and lesbian consumers directly but are instead trying to reach this audience through advertising in the general media, often mixing gay and lesbian imagery with heterosexual imagery in crossover ads (Seckler, 2006).

As with any niche market, the Gay/Lesbian (GL) population wants to purchase brands that especially target them. Nearly 70% of gays and lesbians feel that ads with gay/lesbian themes are more likely to persuade them than ads without such themes, and 68% say they are more inclined to purchase products whose advertising features gay/lesbian themes (GL Census, 2005). According to Paul Willcocks (2004), "They want to do business with companies that respect them as members of a particular community and demonstrate this commitment openly." In exchange for brand loyalty, the GL segment expects advertisers to actively support the community and promote broad social acceptance (Dossi, 2006).

#### *2.1.2.4 Body Positivity Movement: Physical Appearance*

Body positive movement, which is part of the fourth feminism wave, argues that no matter what size you are, it is your right to feel beautiful and stylish. Beauty is not being defined as a pattern anymore but as freedom. In fact, social media users are increasingly adopting hashtags strategically spread by various movements, thus fluidising the protest into daily life. The use of such technologies is gradually making it possible to connect entire communities or social groups across cultural and national boundaries, reaching and raising awareness among a much wider public than was possible in the past (Lopez, 2021). For example, the hashtag #fatacceptance is now used daily to accompany self-portraits shared on Instagram by young women claiming the right not to be discriminated against because of their physical appearance, even if they are not directly involved in the body positivity movement.

On Instagram, alongside the traditional fashion photographs published on the accounts of various brands or traditional fashion magazines, it is possible to come across portraits or self-portraits published by emerging ordinary users who are helping to challenge the beauty ideals. Scaraboto and Fischer (2013), for instance, described how the emerging actors such as 'fatshionistas' (fashion bloggers who participate in the fat-acceptance movement) challenged the fashion industry and fostered the creation of a market niche (plus-size clothing) by depicting it as a missed opportunity for brands. This necessitates that marketers constantly adjust their strategies and find the right way for their brands to contribute to the discourse surrounding social change.

#### *2.1.3 Some Under-representations throughout Social Movements: Age and Disability*

In the 1960s, the civil rights movement took shape, and disability advocates seized the chance to unite with other minority groups to demand equal treatment, equal access, and equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities (Newman, 2020). Similar to many other civil rights movements, the struggle for disability rights has challenged negative views and stereotypes, rallied for political and institutional reform, and advocated for the self-determination of a minority community (Newman, 2020). Later in 1972, the passage of the 1972 Rehabilitation Act was the first time in history that the civil rights of people with disabilities were safeguarded by legislation. However, in the fashion industry, the understanding and application of inclusion is still restricted to colour, gender, and sexual orientation, but rarely to an individual's age and ability (Farra, 2021). The fashion industry, once populated by numerous tailors, now appears

to be largely composed of fast production manufacturers and retailers catering principally to mass consumerism (Linden, 2016). In other words, mass-produced, ready-to-wear clothing meant to fit "the majority" of the people (Loker, 2007). As they participate in meaningful daily activities, such as going to work, playing sports, or engaging in leisure activities, or attending social gatherings, many persons may find clothing and garment-related activities to be problematic.



(source: Farra, 2021)

**Figure 5 Independent labels like Chromat design clothes for people with disabilities**

It is uncommon to imagine how a designer's collection would appeal to someone with limited arm mobility or how a new trouser would function for someone with a prosthetic limb (Farra, 2021). Chromat's display at New York Fashion Week in 2021 was a highlight. McCharen-Tran introduced a new line of swimsuits especially for trans women (Farra, 2021). It's yet another achievement for a designer who has been committed to body acceptance in every aspect since 2010, both in terms of casting models from diverse origins, sizes, ages, and abilities and in terms of designing garments that function for a variety of body types (Farra, 2021). By 2026, the market for adaptable apparel is anticipated to reach \$400 billion (Farra, 2021). Visualize increased efforts to address the needs of persons with impairments.

## 2.2 Theoretical Foundations Concerning Inclusivity

### 2.2.1 Definitions and Dimensions of Inclusion, Inclusivity, and Inclusive Marketing

Being inclusive become social imperatives for fashion marketing, can be traced throughout social movements. As inclusivity can be manifested into different forms in social movements, it is crucial to uncover how this conception has been defined and studied in academic research. Some associated notions such as inclusion, inclusive marketing should be interpreted and understood with inclusivity. Social inclusion as a contributory factor to social sustainability, it is necessary to explore social sustainability in the marketing field in ahead of defining social inclusion. Then, the overlapping relations between inclusion and inclusivity can be elucidated.

#### 2.2.1.1 Social Sustainability in Marketing

Lim (2016) proposed the framework of ‘The five dimensions of sustainability marketing’, to encapsulate sustainability marketing as including economic, environmental, social, ethical, and technological aspects to sustainability. Nonetheless, this conceptualisation continues to remain inadequate to define the practical implications of sustainability marketing (Kemper and Ballantine, 2019). To advance the knowledge on how to enact or practice sustainability marketing, Kemper and Ballantine (2019) offers three key conceptualisations: auxiliary, reformative, and transformative sustainability marketing by discourse analysis. Table 1 is derived from Kemper and Ballantine (2019)’s discourse analysis to encapsulate different focuses and perspectives in each conceptualisation.

**Table 1 The three conceptualisations of sustainability marketing**

(source: derived from Kemper and Ballantine, 2019)

CONCEPTUALISATION	FOCUS	PERSPECTIVE(S)
<b>Auxiliary Sustainability Marketing (ASM)</b>	Focus on change within existing structures or arrangements by including environmental, social, and economic impacts of production and consumption.	ASM perspective includes integrating sustainability throughout the whole marketing mix.
<b>Reformative Sustainability Marketing (RSM)</b>	Focus on promoting sustainable lifestyles, and to demote certain harmful or undesirable products or services.	RSM acknowledges that current consumption levels are unsustainable, reflecting on either inequity between developed and developing nations or the limited resources.

<b>Transformative Sustainability Marketing (TSM)</b>	Focus on changing institutions that inhibit a transition to a sustainable society.	In TSM views, sustainability marketing needs positive collective actions together with sustainable production practices.
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The conceptualisations of sustainability marketing in the literature shows differences in sustainability views and the role of marketing in contributing to sustainable development (Kemper and Ballantine, 2019). These conceptualisations that are present in the literature can help future studies to identify which concept they adhere to and guide brands on how they can integrate sustainability within their marketing activities. Yet, looking into current marketing activities, the five dimensions of sustainability referred by Lim (2016) are not integrated equally with marketing activities. While the majority of attention has been paid to the issues of environmental sustainability arising from product lifecycle, the exaggerated focus on the environmental attributes of sustainable products and services may fail to make consumers buy into them due to the associated inconvenience, higher costs, and lower performance. Furthermore, the lack of efforts to communicate inherent values and benefits derived from ecological features of sustainable products with consumers lead to only niche consumer segments, while the majority of consumers remain unknown the denotation of sustainability for them as individuals (Lim, 2016).

In other words, priority has been given to economic and environmental sustainability in mainstream sustainability debates, but meanwhile, social sustainability is largely neglected in marketing practices (Gazzola et al., 2020). This review takes the perspective from ASM which views sustainability as a multi-dimensional conception (i.e., environmental, social, and economic) rather just environmental issues. Social sustainability is widely discussed in the field of planning and defined as which “blends traditional social policy areas and principles, such as equity and health, with emerging issues concerning participation, needs, social capital, the economy, the environment, and more recently, with the notions of happiness, wellbeing and quality of life” (Woodcraft et al., 2012, p.14). As the social dimension is complicated and overwhelming, social sustainability is more difficult to achieve unlike the environmental and economic dimensions (Benaim and Raftis, 2008). That is to say, the primary causes hinder social sustainability are the subjectivity embedded within definition and lacks measurable indicators in practices.

Kolk (2016) argues that social sustainability is not about ensuring that everyone's needs are met. Rather, it aims at providing enabling conditions for everyone to have the capacity to realise their needs. Correspondingly, Mensah (2019) takes from a people-centred perspective, provides a pathway to achieve social sustainability, which "people are not subjected to conditions that undermine their capacity to meet their needs (p.10)". Hence, if there is anything impeding this capacity, it is considered a barrier that needs to be addressed for individuals (Pierobon, 2019). The continuous progress of overcoming barriers can be regarded as social sustainability (Pierobon, 2019).

However, the definition of social sustainability is not clarified in the fashion marketing context. The conceptual guidance for brands to achieve social sustainability in practices is scarce. In the fashion industry, the axis of sustainability is illustrated as environmental, social, and economic as well (Jang et al., 2012). The void on the conceptualisation of social sustainability in marketing research impels a synthesis of some preliminary perceptions from practices by exploring the manifestations of this conception. Jang et al. (2012) studied consumer participation for social sustainability in addition to environmental and economical sustainability through in-depth interviews with brands' marketers on developing social content to establish brands' sustainable competitiveness. In this research, social content is coined as 'the marketplace of active consumer participation with abundant experience and knowledge about the product due to marketing tools, such as social networking sites' (Jang et al., 2012, p.63). The authors defined social sustainability in fashion marketing as consumers' participation in social content.

Thus, regardless of the discipline, conditions which enable people's participation, underlie the concept of social sustainability (Benaim and Raftis, 2008). According to this broad academic context of social sustainability, the following discussion leads to why creating conditions to enable people's participation is crucial for fashions brands in the marketplace.

#### *2.2.1.2 Importance of Social Inclusion for Marketing Literature*

Drawing on an interdisciplinary theoretical background, Dempsey et al. (2011) identified social inclusion is a contributory factor to achieve social sustainability in marketing. Social inclusion can contribute to positive conviviality among varied groups in a society by fostering greater belonging, respect, and social involvement, as well as promoting the health, happiness, and life satisfaction of vulnerable persons (Correa-Velez, Gifford, and Barnett, 2010; Simplican et al.,

2015). On the other hand, social exclusion can have a number of negative effects on an individual's behaviour, including increased aggressiveness (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, and Stucke, 2001), decreased cognitive performance (Baumeister, Twenge, and Nuss, 2002), decreased sensitivity to pain and emotional insensitivity (Baumeister, Brewer, Tice, and Twenge, 2007), a decrease in prosocial behaviour (Twenge, et al (Richman and Leary, 2009).

In the field of marketing communications, excluding consumers from the target market through under- or misrepresentation in marketing communications can damage the reputation of the represented groups, transmit prejudicial and non-inclusive messages (Bennett, Hill, and Oleksiuk, 2013; Tadajewski, 2012) and affect individual self-perceptions, self-esteem, and social status (Bennett, Hill, and Daddario, 2015; Johnson and Grier, 2012). This, in turn, can motivate consumers to revolt against and be frustrated about the brand that poses the exclusionary threat (Kipnis et al., 2012), and cause loss in consumer buying power and market share (Bennett et al., 2013). On the other hand, consumers who feel part of a brand's target market display more favourable attitudes towards marketing communications of that brand (Puntoni, Vanhamme, and Visscher, 2011), and interpret it as acknowledgement and recognition of their presence in the broader society (Lamont and Molnar, 2001).

#### *2.2.1.3 Research Gap 1: Lack of Measures to Evaluate the Inclusiveness of Marketing Activities*

While policy makers are calling for a more inclusive society and advocating for equality and integration of underrepresented groups, scarce research has investigated the conceptualisation of social inclusion as a key factor in providing effective and fair representations of diverse people in marketing communications. For example, in a special issue of Journal of Public Policy and Marketing on marketing and social inclusion, no study clearly defines the core concept of social inclusion and investigates how marketing communications affect social inclusion despite the considerable merits in this special issue (Henderson and Williams, 2013). Moreover, numerous studies have addressed the importance of self-congruity in advertising settings, but this stream of research has yet to be extended into understanding how social inclusion interacts with self-congruity and the effectiveness of marketing communications.

Extant literature encapsulates social inclusion mainly in terms of objective measures such as not at risk of poverty and deprivation (Engsted, 2013), proper living standards, access to education, work opportunities, housing, services for good quality health and marketplace, and

being involved in the society (Eurofound, 2015; Hamilton, 2009; Williams and Windebank, 2002; World Bank, 2007). However, these objective measures have not been applied in evaluating the inclusiveness of marketing activities. While objective dimensions of social inclusion represent important conditions for individual's feeling of being included, Licsandru and Cui (2018) define the construct of subjective social inclusion as a multi-dimensional construct comprising of acceptance, belongingness, empowerment, equality, and respect, to constitute the consequential subjective feeling of social inclusion. In this research, Licsandru and Cui (2018) initiate a framework of inclusive marketing to investigate effects of multi-ethnic embedded marketing communications on self-feelings of social inclusion by ethnic consumers.

According to Licsandru and Cui (2018)'s framework of inclusive marketing, inclusive marketing can be defined as marketing promoting equality and diversity. Extending from Licsandru and Cui (2018)'s empirical research, this review uses the term of inclusivity instead of inclusion to indicate the inclusiveness of branded content on social media. When inclusion put more emphasis on self-feelings from the consumer perspective, this review aims to fill in the gap of no objective measures being applied to evaluate the inclusiveness of marketing activities by demonstrating some conditions of social media content for consumers feel to be included into brands' marketing activities.

#### *2.2.1.4 Research Gap 2: Limited Research into Diverse Individual Characteristics Influencing Consumers' Perceived Inclusion*

To be inclusive is to be open to people's differences and make sure everyone feels included and respected (Dimitrieska et al., 2019, p. 114). It is also about empowering people for who they are and value their unique characteristics. A diverse group is a mix of people with different and unique characteristics (Dimitrieska et al., 2019, p. 113). In addition to ethnicity, which has being well studied in the research stream of ethnic marketing, current social trends leading to greater consumer diversity and generates more factors, such as age, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, cultural background, disability and other individual characteristics influencing self-feelings of inclusion in marketing communications, need brands to be considered (Gazzola et al., 2020; Puntoni et al., 2011). Although these individual characteristics have been researched at different levels, a comprehensive understanding on how these diverse individual characteristics are depicted in marketing activities is scarce.

As Schroeder and Borgerson (2005) point out, exclusion in the form of leaving out certain consumer segments from the target market is one of the two main potential consequences of misrepresentation in ethnic marketing communications. As being exclusive could miss out on potential customers, being inclusive can lead to higher revenues by attracting a diverse consumer group (Fink et al., 2003, cited in Cunningham and Melton, 2014, p. 37). This means that if a company focuses on inclusive marketing, people can, except for being respectful and accepting of people's differences, also reach higher profits and success (Dimitrieska et al., 2019, p. 115). Hence, it is crucial to understand how different forms of inclusivity in promotional messages can enhance the consumers' perceived inclusion, and how fashion brands could reach the optimal market more effectively by facilitating more inclusive communications in markets of increasing diversity.

#### *2.2.1.5 Research Gap 3: Lack of Understanding into How Inclusivity Interacts with Social Media Content*

Early in 2009, researchers suggested that consumer engagement with media context is an important antecedent to some marketing outcomes such as usage, affect and responses to communication messages (Calder et al., 2009). As social media is inherently participatory and relationship-centric, consumer engagement with contents on social media naturally leads to the cultivation of meaningful relationships for brands (Tsai and Men, 2013). For instance, social media users can engage with brands by expressing their likes or dislikes, commenting on the brands' feeds, and sharing with their personal connections. Moving to the mid-2010s, as brand awareness and loyalty were insufficient to sustain the brand and customer relationship, practitioners in marketing have been seeking consumers' emotional commitment to brands (Kozinets, 2014). Thus, many researchers who studied consumer engagement with brands have focused on an individual's psychological state of mind through exploring their cognitive, affective, and behavioural experiences with a brand at first.

However, when consumers are increasingly empowered due to the possibility to share, create and interact with contents on social media (Cheung et al., 2019), some scholars have noticed the deficiency of existing concepts to demonstrate the experiential and social dimensions of consumer engagement with brand. Gambetti et al. (2012) suggested the necessity to include consumer-to-consumer interactions and participation of brand-related contents into the consumer brand engagement concept, as it does not happen isolated in individuals' mind. Therefore, in the social media marketing context, the essence of this dynamic and process-

based concept are experiential and social aspects in addition to its cognitive, emotional, and affective dimensions. It is noted that Hollebeek et al. (2014) drew attention to the social media context as well and emphasised the need to rethink or redesign branded content facing consumers to enhance consumer engagement.

Fashion brands witness a rising trend of addressing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in the marketing campaigns. With an increasing consumer activism on social media, addressing the needs of non-target consumers become more relevant to brands. However, the content characteristics on social media which may cause consumers' senses of inclusion or exclusion is relatively missing in academic research. Drawing from the conceptual paper on subjective social inclusion (Licsandrua and Cui, 2018), this literature review looks at how different forms of inclusivity interact with social media content and understand whether the expressions of different forms of inclusivity can be salient marketing communication factors.

#### 2.2.2 Academic Theories Relevant to Research into Inclusivity

This section explicates three theories essential to explaining research into inclusivity in the field of marketing.

##### 2.2.2.1 *Social Identity Theory*

Social identity theory (SIT) is defined as “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value or emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). In other words, individuals' self-concepts are defined by their affiliations with social groups or organisations. Marketing research based on this theory indicates that brand community members engage in collective behaviour, to extol the virtues of their favourite brands and to assist other brand identifiers (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006; McAlexander, Schouten, and Koehn, 2002; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). The interaction between customers who identify with the same brand or competing brands is the explicit subject of brand community research. Thus, the emphasis is on the collective self or public self, i.e., the self that is embedded in a collective (a brand community) or society as a whole (Triandis, 1989). Identity represents the subjective component of a role. Marketing research based on identity theory focuses on how individual customers perceive a product as “me” or “not me” (Kleine, Kleine, and Allen, 1995) and how they behave in agreement with the most salient identity (Arnett, German, and Hunt 2003;

Bolton and Reed 2004; Oyserman, 2009). Thus, identity theory is more concerned with individual behaviour and the private self (Triandis 1989).

For the focus of this review, social identity theory provides a theoretical explanation from consumers' perspective. To be specific, it can help to interpret why consumers are willing to be included and what they are looking for in marketing communications besides products information.

#### *2.2.2.2 Theory of Tokenism*

Tokenism can be defined as a form of discrimination whereby minorities (such as members of racial and ethnic groups and women) fill roles usually reserved for dominant group members (LaPointe, 2019). Tokenism can take place in a variety of settings and can have a multitude of setbacks for culture. Meaningful inclusion is all about dedicating space, dialogue, care, and action to concepts that previously have not been seriously considered (Mashburn and Papalia, 2019, p.25). This argument criticises some efforts of institutions, such as employ marginalised representatives only in advertising, as these institutions treat inclusivity as figurative and tokenistic gestures on the basis of institutional benefit. Therefore, authentic inclusion is meant to necessitate a transformational effort toward publicness, emerging from naming and addressing foundational barriers responsible for the vast inequities between those with access and those without (Mashburn and Papalia, 2019, p.22).

Regarding one of objectives in the critical review, the theory of tokenism provides a theoretical foundation to evaluate and criticise the inclusivity of marketing activities. It gives a guide to scratch the surfaces of inclusive practices and advocate for more authentic inclusivity, as argued by Mashburn and Papalia (2019).

#### *2.2.2.3 Consumer Culture Theory*

Although both SIT and CCT highlight the impacts of individual characteristics, CCT relates these to a more specific context, that is, consumer-brand relationship. Consumer engagement with branded content is a significant outcome for building inclusive social media contents, which has been discussed in the importance of inclusion for marketing literature (section 2.2.1.2). By illuminating theory-generating phenomena, consumer culture theory (CCT) deploys bottom-up approach to inquiry a small number of consumers in-depth rather top-down as in positivist research which aims to achieve presumably universal and generalisable insights

(Arnould and Thompson, 2005). CCT has advanced academic research on how consumers engage with social media contents by forming brand relationships similar to human relationships (Bajde, 2014).

From a CCT perspective, the consequences of consumer brand engagement are contingent on the focal consumer's characteristics, including ethnicity, gender, age, social class, and geographic location (Hollebeek and Belk, 2021). CCT research attempt to measure consumer engagement by combining these contextual factors. Additionally, it points out the role of consumer attachment to brands on consumer brand engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Consumer attachment implies that when the objects provide meaning are central to their sense of self, consumers tend to attach themselves to objects and then incorporate them in the extended self (Koles and Nagy, 2021). In other words, CCT research would not attempt to measure consumer engagement, or to relate engagement to any specific factors in disregard of these combined contextual factors.

These identified consumer characteristics coincided to the forms of inclusivity has been fought for throughout social movements. Thus, like SIT, CCT *explains why the depicts of consumer characteristics can potentially include more diverse consumers into consumer-brand conversations. Thus, to examine the inclusiveness of branded content on social media (objective x:), CCT is employed to*

#### *2.2.2.4 Uses and Gratification Theory*

The meaning of gratifications should be clarified at first to understand uses and gratification theory (UGT). The term of gratifications is to describe specific types or dimensions of intrinsic needs recognised by social media audience (Cheung et al., 2019). UGT takes a functionalist perspective on mass media communication and advocates that people use the internet to fulfil their content-oriented (informational) needs, relationship-oriented (social) needs, and/or pleasure-oriented (hedonic) needs (Jahn and Kunz, 2012; Islam et al., 2018). These needs are the dimensions underlying UGT, and studies may explore single or multiple of them. The main objective of uses and gratification theory is to explain the psychological needs that shape why people use a specific type of media and that motivate them to engage in certain media-use behaviours for gratifications (Luo, 2002). It is presumed in UGT that users are actively involved in media usage and interact highly with the chosen media (Luo, 2002). Since the rapid growth of social media requires the higher level of consumer interactivity, the application of

uses and gratification theory can give the explanations for consumer motivations and associated behaviours (Ko et al., 2005). For this reason, UGT is still applicable for exploring consumer brand engagement on social media with a focus on associations between motivational factors and social media usage.

In accords with social media context for this review, UGT complementing with CCT can explain the influences of content characteristics on social media and then how inclusivity may interact with these characteristics to exert an influence on consumer perceived inclusion and associated engagement with branded conten.

### **2.3 Summary: Interplay Among Inclusivity, Social Media, and Fashion Marketing**

To explore the impacts of social media exerting on social movements for addressing inclusivity and then jointly on fashion marketing, it is necessary to understand this term “social media” itself and how it evolves from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. The term “social media” refers to “tools for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable communication techniques, such as web-based, mobile technologies, to turn communication into interactive dialogue” (Coulson, 2013, p.1). The terms Web 2.0 and user-generated content (UGC) are often used interchangeably with social media to emphasise their unique characteristics which allow audiences to create content (Dooley et al., 2014; Mandiberg, 2014) and interact with one another (Dooley et al., 2014), as well as with organisations (Ashley and Tuten, 2015).

The degree to which social media platforms allow for two-way opinion exchange and information sharing is referred to as interaction (Dessart et al., 2015; Kim and Ko, 2012). This enables customers to discuss particular items or companies with like-minded people on social media platforms (Muntinga et al., 2011), which is potentially more effective than conventional media such as print, television, and radio (Bowen, 2015). Consumers' capacity to interact is also a motivator for them to develop UGC (Fischer and Reuber, 2011), perhaps boosting their brand loyalty and purchase intent (Hajli, 2015). Posting material that is relevant to their target social media users fosters debate and strengthens consumer-brand ties (Manthiou et al., 2013). As a result, marketers' promotion of social-media users to join in debates on social media platforms is justified (Zhu and Chen, 2015). All of those unique features of social media offer interactive opportunities that allow marketers to build ongoing relationships with consumers (Ashley and Tuten, 2015; Sashi, 2012).

According to data from Statista (2021), brands' investment on social media marketing has been expected to rise from 112.7 billion pounds in 2021 to 168.4 billion pounds in 2025. There are two prominent factors that can explain this massive increase in brand investment on social media platforms. Firstly, consumers use social media platforms extensively to assist with their purchase decision-making processes (Veirman and Hudders, 2019). Secondly, consumers become more reticent about the content provided by brands, as they are exposed to a multitude of marketing tactics, typically in the form of sponsored posts on social media (Müller and Christandl, 2019). Social media offer brands a cost-efficient way to reach wide audiences without any geographic barriers (Bhimani et al., 2019). Extensive research shows that social

media are more powerful channels than traditional media in building intimate relationships with consumers because of their enhanced popularity among audiences (Bannor et al., 2017), interactive nature and their capacity to facilitate the development of consumer networks (Westberg et al., 2018). Despite the significance of social media to marketing, various scholars highlight a lack of knowledge of how to effectively communicate via social media (Overbey et al., 2017).

The revolution triggered by social media has, in fact, intensified the link between social movements and the media. As McAdam and Snow (1997, p.18) defined, social movement is a "collective acting with some degree of organisation and continuity outside of institutional channels for the purpose of advancing or resisting change in the group, community, or world order of which it is a part". From this perspective, social movements can only succeed when they successfully manoeuvre within certain sociocultural circumstances (Vaisey, 2009). Instagram is increasingly being used in many activist initiatives and related campaigns to promote diversity and inclusion (Arens, 2020). This change has been linked by scholars, to the practices of self-representation implemented on social media by users. Compared to the mass media, social media have facilitated the organisation of protests and, at the same time, granted them narrative autonomy in intersectional approach. Thus, social media offers new potentials for social movements that have encouraged their use.

Social movements can exert an influence on marketing practices by mobilising a variety of disparate groups and interests; and emphasising or downplaying particular parts of social reality (Benford and Snow, 2000; Nicolls, 2008). Facing the political consciousness, consumer activism and social media penetration, brands are under intense pressure to demonstrate their efforts on inclusive operations (Kent, 2019). As white, cis-gendered people are no longer the only acceptable face in the fashion industry, fashion brands need to address their concerns on inclusivity in different ways. Among those different forms of inclusivity, such as gender, sexual identity, brands' inclusive practices of racial inclusivity are most visible on the runways, which long ago became marketing exhibitions for most major brands.



(source: Saltzman, 2019)

**Figure 6 Models on the runway in Milan**

In the current culture of accountability where activism is shaping the zeitgeist, the fashion industry has turned on checkboxes for race, body, gender, and other forms of inclusivity for promoting consumer engagement with brands (Campbell, 2019). The wide use of social media and the shift of cultural and political landscape, incorporates the conversations in once deprived communities into the mainstream and eliminates the scepticism on whether the current interest of the fashion industry in inclusivity is just a fad (Campbell, 2019). Globalised brands need to cater to the increasingly diverse consumers and no longer able to perpetuate one standard of beauty. This trend can be seen explicitly in fashion designs. For example, retailers like H&M experiment with modest fashion lines or sections, targeting at the Muslim market and other consumer who prefer to avoid the dominate mainstream fashion such as the plunge necklines and the cropped tops (Kent, 2019). Online retailer 11 Honoré explored inclusive sizes through a fashion show featuring plus-size models (Kent, 2019). In addition, there's growing awareness of the needs of consumers with mobility or health challenges, as brands including Nike and Tommy Hilfiger have designed special adaptive collections and products. The potential global market for adaptive clothing, which is specifically designed to consider the needs of people with disabilities or health conditions, is estimated at nearly £215.8 billion (Webb, 2021).

In brief, the social, political, and technological shifts create pressure for fashion brands to operate more inclusively accommodating more diverse consumers. Consumer activism and social media penetration can explain why inclusivity is a must-have for brands' future development. As the prevalence of social media implies an unprecedented inflection point to improve inclusivity (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2017), it is worthwhile for brands to consider the mechanism of addressing inclusivity on social media. This means how to make use of social media contents can address inclusivity, in what way these inclusive contents can impact consumers, and what outcomes can create for brands.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

This chapter starts with research philosophy including ontology, epistemology, and axiology, and then is followed by research strategy of this review.

#### **3.1 Research Philosophy**

This section gives a brief explanation of the review's philosophy. Research philosophy serves as a foundation for developing the new ideas and knowledge (Saunders et al., 2016, cited in Biedenbach and Jacobsson, 2016, p. 140). It provides researchers the general principles of theoretical thinking, a method of cognition, perspective, and self-awareness, all of which are used to obtain knowledge of reality and to design, conduct, analyse and interpret research and its outcomes (Moon and Blackman, 2014). Social science research can only be meaningfully interpreted, when there is clarity about the decisions that affect the research outcomes (Moon and Blackman, 2014). Every researcher needs to make certain core assumptions concerning what constitutes reality (ontology), what is the nature of knowledge (epistemology), and how can knowledge be acquired (methodology) when conducting research (Remenyi, Williams, Money, and Swartz, 1998). Thus, this section demonstrates three scientific assumptions encompassing both conscious and unconscious considerations: ontology, epistemology, and axiology (Biedenbach and Jacobsson, 2016, p. 140).

##### **3.1.1 Ontology**

Ontology is the study of being (Crotty, 1998), and is concerned with the philosophical question of what actually exists in the world about which humans can acquire knowledge (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Ontology helps researchers recognise how certain they can be about the nature and existence of objects they are researching (Moon and Blackman, 2014). Realism and relativism represent two polarised perspectives on a continuum between objective reality at one end and multiple realities on the other (Burr, 2018). To illustrate, realist ontology relates to the existence of one single reality which can be studied, understood, and experienced as a 'truth'; a real world exists independent of human experience. Meanwhile, relativist ontology is based on the philosophy that reality is constructed within the human mind, such that no one 'true' reality exists. Instead, reality is 'relative' according to how individuals experience it at any given time and place (Moon and Blackman, 2014).

The ontological position of the critical review is historical realism. Historical realism is the view that reality has been shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values (Guba and Lincon, 1994, p. 110). It complies with the focus of this review on inclusivity and inclusive marketing, which advocates marketing activities for more underrepresented and marginalised people. Realities are socially constructed entities that are under constant internal influence (Burr, 2018). In this review, these varied individual identities are assumed to shape people's interpretation of reality, and this is what this review intends to explore. In addition, the review looks at the influences of social media, on which people are empowered to interact with each other. This research context corresponds with that reality is constructed through the interactions (Burr, 2018).

### 3.1.2 Epistemology

Epistemology relates to all aspects of the validity, scope, and methods of acquiring knowledge and is concerned with the philosophical question of “how do we gain knowledge of the world?” (Hughes and Sharrock, 1997, p. 5). Epistemology is important because it influences how researchers frame their research in their attempts to discover knowledge (Moon and Blackman, 2014). The choice of epistemology is depended on how researchers view the relationship between a subject and an object. In the case of subjectivism, the view of reality is something imagined and exists inside the human's mind, and that knowledge is personal. In that view, study focuses on people's individual and subjective understanding and experience of the world (Moon and Blackman, 2014). By contrast, the objectivist approach holds the belief that reality is something external and concrete and thereby exists outside the human mind (Cunliffe, 2010, p. 3). In addition, the constructionist believe that the reality is constituted by interplay between subject and object, that is, subject constructs the reality of object.

Overall, the objectivist approach would be to focus on “structures, actions, behaviours, systems, and/or processes” while with a subjectivist approach focuses on “how people give meaning to, interact with, and construct their world” (Cunliffe, 2010, p.3). In this thesis, social constructionism is applied as the epistemology stance. Social constructionism is a theory of knowledge in sociology and communication theory that examines the knowledge and understandings of the world that are developed jointly by individual interactions. In the view of social constructionist, the meaning people make is affected by their social interpretation of the thing (Crotty, 1998, p. 53). It occupies epistemological bridge between objectivism and subjectivism (Moon and Blackman, 2017). This review will have more of a constructionist

approach since it is intended to explore different forms of inclusivity in social media marketing and its impacts on consumer responses.

As discussed formerly, this theory assumes that understanding, significance, and meaning are developed within interactions with other human beings. It complies with the aim of this review is to explore the interplay between different forms of inclusivity, consumers, and social media content rather opinions or experiences of a particular consumer segment. Therefore, the subjectivist and objectivist approach are not suitable. As a critical review of exploring the impacts of inclusivity on consumer engagement with branded content, both empirical and non-empirical articles are included rather limited to quantitative or qualitative research papers. Interplay exists within people and between people and social environment. Through this critical review, the multi-dimensionality of inclusivity and its impacts are demonstrated by synthesising the relevant research papers. These papers can either generalise an environmental phenomenon or capture subjective thoughts and opinions of people. Additionally, as discussed in section 2.2.1, inclusivity is derived from social sustainability and related to interactions between individual characteristics and social settings. Thereby the epistemological perspective of knowledge as something constructed by subject and object interactions is more accurate.

### 3.1.3 Axiology

Axiology is the assumptions about the value of things in the research process, including ethics, aesthetics, and religion (Ellaway et al., 2019, p. 1229). It is the relation between objective facts and subjective value (Starosta and Chen, 2003, p. 63). In research, axiology is always present when it comes to the researchers' assumptions and decision making (Biedenbach and Jacobsson, 2016, p. 152). Researchers often attempt to be objective, but according to Hiles (2008) there is no value-free science. Decisions during the research process will be made based on the researcher's assumptions of what is best, and thereby the research will be value driven. There is no exception for any study. As illustrated in section 1.1, the choice of topic on inclusivity and social media marketing is based on what I think is an important and worthwhile issue. The choices I have made and will be making in this study will be based on my assumptions. In the literature screening process, I will have to make decisions about what is valuable to include in this review. With the aim to explore different forms of inclusivity in social media marketing and its impacts on consumer responses, my critical evaluation will be a part of the review. As said before it is almost impossible for the researchers to not affect the study with their own values.

## 3.2 Research Strategy

This section compares the systematic, narrative, and critical approaches of conducting literature review to justify why the critical approach is most appropriate for this thesis. Then, the procedures of conducting a critical review are explicated. Whitemore and Knafl (2005) delineate the process of a critical review including: a problem identification stage, a literature search stage, a data evaluation stage, a data analysis stage, and a presentation stage. Chapter 1 and 2 identify the research problem as how the different forms of inclusivity can influence consumer responses to branded content on social media. As the presentation of findings is in Chapter 4, the remainder of this chapter focuses on the rest stages of conducting a critical literature review, that is, the literature search, data evaluation and analysis stage.

### 3.2.1 A Critique of Different Literature Review Approaches

Table 2 compares the approaches to conducting literature review from four aspects: purpose, type of analysis, potential contribution, and limitation. It is derived from Snyder (2019)'s evaluation on three broad types of literature review methods: the systematic review, the semi-systematic review, and the integrative review. According to their discussion, the semi-systematic review can be generalised into narrative review, and in like manner the integrative approach implies the critical approach(Snyder, 2019; Torraco, 2016a; Torraco, 2016b).

In this table, "purpose" implies the aim of researchers to conduct a specific type of literature review; "type of analysis" is the analytical requirements for processing the selected literature. As for "potential contribution", it can be interpreted as the expected outcomes of literature review. Meanwhile, "limitation" explains what practical factors such as the nature of project, the scope of research questions and the researcher's skills, need to be considered in determining the literature review approach. Next, these measures are used for justifying which approach is more applicable to the review.

**Table 2 Approaches to conducting a literature review**

(source: author's own)

APPROACH	PURPOSE	TYPE OF ANALYSIS	POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION	LIMITATIONS
<b>Systematic Review</b>	Identify all empirical evidence that fits the pre-specified inclusion criteria to answer a particular research question or hypothesis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative analysis, such as meta-analysis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine the constancy of an effect across studies and provide the research agenda on specific effect for future studies.</li> <li>Discover the study-level or sample characteristics which exert an effect on the studied phenomenon (Davis et al., 2014).</li> </ul>	The systematic approach requires a narrow research question, and it might not be feasible or suitable for all types of projects (Snyder, 2019).
<b>Narrative Review (Semi-Systematic Review)</b>	Overview a topic by looking at how research within a selected field has progressed over time or how a topic has developed across research traditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative analysis, such as thematic analysis, content analysis, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Detect themes, theoretical perspectives, or common issues within a specific research discipline or methodology.</li> <li>Identify components of a theoretical concept (Ward, House, and Hamer, 2009).</li> <li>Map a field of research, synthesize the state of</li> </ul>	The semi-systematic review process requires more development and tailoring to the specific project. There are fewer standardised steps to follow. Thus, researchers need to develop their own standards and a detailed plan to ensure the appropriate literature is accurately covered to be able to answer their research question

			<p>knowledge, and create an agenda for further research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide an historical overview or timeline of a specific topic.</li> </ul>	and be transparent about the process (Snyder, 2019).
<b>Critical Review (Integrative Review)</b>	Assess, critique, and synthesize the literature on a mature and/or new research topic in a way that enable new theoretical frameworks and perspectives to emerge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No specific and strict standard but requires being transparent and document the process of analysis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advance the knowledge base.</li> <li>▪ Emerge a new conceptual model or theory.</li> </ul>	The critical approach requires more skills of the researchers, as there are even fewer standards and guidelines on which to rely for developing a strategy (Torraco, 2016a)

Snyder (2019) suggested that the research aim, and objectives can always determine which approach is most appropriate to a specific literature review. Thus, the purpose of different literature review types needs to be compared and then match with the established aim of this thesis at first. Based on Table 2, most critical literature reviews intend to address mature topics and/or new topics (Torraco, 2016a; Torraco, 2016b). Referring to this literature review which aims to explore the different forms of inclusivity in marketing literature and its impacts on consumers responses to branded content on social media, inclusivity is a relatively new topic in marketing while social media marketing is a mature research branch. In addition, according to Table 2, what differentiates a critical review from the other two approaches is the focus on enabling new theoretical frameworks and perspectives to emerge. This focus is consistent with the objective 3 (section 1.3), which intend to propose a framework to advance the research on exploring the relationship between inclusivity and social media marketing. Therefore, the critical approach can be pertinent regarding the research aim and chosen topics.

Next, the systematic review needs to summarise answers to a specific research question or hypothesis, but this does not comply with this research context in which the conception of a certain topic (i.e., inclusivity) is fragmented and lacks established research streams for attaining answers. Similarly, it is not applicable to undertake the narrative approach to demonstrate the progression of inclusivity and social media marketing due to the unknown relationship between these subjects. Furthermore, regarding the scope of literature search and analysis, a critical review can summarise both empirical and theoretical literature to provide a more holistic understanding of a particular phenomenon and avoid the over description (Carnwell and Daly, 2001; Whittemore and Knafl, 2005). In this thesis, the particular phenomenon is the failures of marketing campaigns caused by inconsideration of inclusivity. Accordingly, inclusivity as an emerging topic with undefined conceptions makes the systematic and narrative approaches less relevant to this review.

In brief, Table 2 synthesises three main approaches to conducting literature review. Based on Table 2, the research aim, and context should be decomposed and referred to determine which approach is more appropriate for this review. Considering that inclusivity is a newly emerging research topic in marketing and its association with social media marketing is unidentified, the critical approach fits better for this literature review. Above all, its emphasis on proposing a conceptual model corresponds with the research objective as well.

### 3.2.2 Procedures of Critical Review

Critical review differs from systematic reviews and meta-analyses due it allows the inclusion of multiple methodologies to capture the context, processes, and subjective elements of studies addressing a problem (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005). The procedures of conducting critical review usually start with a clear statement of the problem and purpose of the review (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005). Once the problem statement and purpose are clear, the literature search is directed by keywords in relevant databases and other sources using inclusion and exclusion criteria to maintain the focus of the search. Research questions can also shape the breadth of the search. Then, data are evaluated by coding the methods of studies, theoretical foundation, and relevance of findings. Finally, the thematic topics and relationships regarding variables, concepts, and outcomes are identified through the data analysis (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005). The following sections present the processes undertaken by this critical review.

#### 3.2.2.1 Literature Search

Snyder (2019) notes that a critical review requires researchers to collect literature more creatively, as the purpose is not to cover all studies on the topic but rather to merge standpoints and insights from different research fields. In the case of mature topics, the purpose of using a critical approach is to outline the knowledge base, to critically review and potentially reconceptualise, and to expand on the theoretical foundation of the specific topic as it evolves (Snyder, 2019). As for newly emerging topics, the purpose is to create preliminary conceptualisations and theoretical models, rather than review old models. In this critical review, inclusivity, inclusive marketing, and social media are the identified topics, namely, the literature search and selection process consist of two divisions.

As its origins from the phenomenon of brands' marketing efforts which irritating consumers on social media, the search starts with literature on social media marketing. Consumer responses to social media marketing is a mature topic. It witnesses an increasing amount of research on this topic since 2010 (Barger et al., 2016). To capture the breadth of literature in relation to inclusivity and inclusive marketing, and ensure sufficient time parameters to access studies from the origin to the present, the time span of literature search is set on the year of 2011 until August, 2022 (Torraco, 2016b). In light of the previous literatures on inclusivity and inclusive marketing, this literature search for journal articles uses popular scholarly work

databases including Web of Science, Science Direct and Google Scholar (Barger et al., 2016; Schreiner et al., 2019; Bilro and Loureiro, 2020).

The search is conducted by multiple keywords due to the scarcity of inclusivity research in marketing literature, that is, inclusive marketing, inclusive advertising, diversity advertising, CSR advertising, emotional advertising, gender stereotypes, stereotypes advertising, femvertising, LGBTQ advertising, gay advertising, race advertising, age advertising, disability advertising. As aforementioned, this review is inspired by the failures of some marketing campaigns on appealing consumers. The case studies and articles related to the missteps of brands are firstly searched on platforms including Business of Fashion, Drapers, and WGSN. At this step, NVivo is employed to capture all relevant texts for conducting word frequency analysis. These articles give an insight into inclusivity in the fashion industry and reveals the historical origins of inclusivity issues in society, which helps to find relevant research mirroring practices. Thereby, the articles that include these keywords in their title, keywords, abstract or text are all included in the output (Tasci, 2021).

As for inclusivity which is a newly emerging topic in the marketing research, the intention is to conceptualise inclusivity fitting to marketing context and initiate a theoretical framework including this construct. The research on inclusivity in field of marketing is very scarce, the preliminary understanding needs to be established from other disciplines such as urban planning, sociology, and also industry reports. In other words, the searching keyword like "inclusivity and marketing" does not present sufficient samples for this critical review. The insights from industry reveal cues of keywords for collecting literature.

### *3.2.2.2 Literature Evaluation and Analysis*

From the collection of relevant sources, duplicate items are eliminated as the first screening phase, and this leads to 164 journal articles between 2011 and August 2022 being yielded. The second screening phase involves a more detailed look at the relevance of a publication for the research questions (Schreiner et al., 2019). The titles, abstracts and perhaps the full text are examined in detail as the presence of inclusivity research is fragmented. In second phase of screening, the studies do not consider the marketing context, or the studies do not focus on any form of inclusivity are excluded. Consequently, only the articles that explored or investigated inclusivity in the marketing context are retained for further analysis. Any articles mention this construct haphazardly without a deep discussion are excluded by reviewing titles and abstracts.

The remaining 33 articles are used as basis for a backward and forward search. The reference lists of these pivotal articles are examined to identify additional relevant studies. Owing to this, two more keywords: discrimination and exclusivity are identified. The succeeding process are analogous to former steps: search by keywords in recognised databases, eliminate duplicate records, and assess titles and abstracts. At last, the final list of 42 journal articles on inclusivity and inclusive marketing is established the data set for this literature review.

While the literature search process may not have yielded an exhaustive list of items and may have missed some noteworthy studies, it can provide a representative sample for development of a critical review of the published literature (Davis, 2018). In this thesis, the database containing selected articles are imported from Mendeley to NVivo where the variables including authors, year of publication, topics, contexts, methods, key conceptions, primary findings, contributions, and limitations, are coded as nodes to map and cluster the works. While there is no strict standard of data evaluation and analysis in a critical review, the general aim at this stage to critically analyse and examine the literature regarding its relevance and connection (Snyder, 2019). Accordingly, these nodes are retrieved to gather all the relational contents for the critical synthesis on inclusivity, inclusive marketing, and social media. Through the text analysis on NVivo, some clusters of keywords emerge race, racial identity, ethnic identity, gender, feminism, body shape or size, LGBTQ+, age and disability. These keywords are categorised into thematic topics leading to further review.

## **4 CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

This chapter will consist of an analysis and discussion of the findings of previous research on inclusivity and inclusive marketing, together with what has not been found in existing research. The first research stream is the different forms of inclusivity manifested in marketing, including racial identity, gender and feminism, sexual identity, and some missing issues such as age and disability. The second research stream is the

### **4.1 Different Forms of Inclusivity in Marketing Literature**

This section delineates different forms of inclusivity manifested in marketing literature (research objective 1), in relation to its impacts on consumer responses (research objective 2), to build a holistic understanding on this conception.

#### **4.1.1 Racial Identity**

Racial identity can be a sensitive topic in society, the majority of research indicates that people of colour have been underrepresented in advertising historically (Mayo et al., 2005, cited in Shinoda et al., 2020, p. 634). People of colour have a long history of being exposed to racism and discrimination that cannot simply be summarised in a critical review. In this review, the focus is on the portrayals of diverse racial identity and its impacts on consumers. As Shinoda et al. (2020, p. 637) argue, the lack of diversity in skin colours and races in marketing is problematic as this contributes to perpetuating biased beauty standards. Therefore, the representation of racial diversity in marketing can help to revert the once dominant, white-centred marketing and somehow improve consumers' perceived inclusion (Mayo et al., 2005, cited in Shinoda et al., 2020, p. 634).

There are around 13 studies elucidating various findings on the portrayals concerning racial groups in marketing executions. The vast majority of these examinations consisted of content analyses of advertisements carried in media such as magazines, television, and posters where the number, nature of portrayals and/or changes in the images over time were analysed and discussed. Collectively, these studies looked at thousands of advertisements and promotional materials. In addition, a few studies referenced other types of visual marketing approaches such as images on product packaging and labelling (Davis, 2007; Merskin, 2001) and visual representations at marketing events and exhibits (Crais and Scully, 2009; Davis, 2007; Gordon-Chipembere, 2011). It is notable that there is no research on the portrayals of racial diversity

in social media posts. This contextual factor is surprisingly not studied individually or comparatively with any other type of media.

Research interest in marketing portrayals concerning people of colour intensified starting in the late 1960s after the Civil Rights Movement. This impact leads to that the majority of the articles regarding the portrayals of racial identity in marketing are concerned blacks or African Americans. A comparative study examining black models and themes in white versus black-targeted magazines showed that social themes such as sex and romance were more prominent in magazines which cater to black audiences; in contrast, ‘everyday’ items rather than luxury items were more likely to feature black models in white-targeted magazines (Davis, 2018). In addition, Pankiw et al. (2020) disclose that luxury brands are found to use more white models (as opposed to models with diverse physical appearances and interracial/black ethnic/racial origin) in their marketing campaigns (Pankiw et al., 2020), as their self-identities are perceived to more compliant with the key and desirable attributes of luxury brands such as idealised beauty, hedonism, status and sophistication (Gram, 2007; Hung et al., 2007; Martin, 2012; Sternadori and Abitbol, 2019). Correspondingly, according to Strebinger et al. (2018), white models are seen as more suitable when it comes to luxury brand advertising in eastern countries, providing some preliminary support as to the alignment of luxury values with less diversity.

This stream of illustrates the variation in inclusivity between non-luxury and luxury brands. It remains unexplored how consumer respond to the intended exclusivity of certain brands. Knowing the fact that consumers prefer to see their own race on the models in marketing campaigns (Jones, 2010, p. 45), whether this finding differs depending on brand image or other brand-related characteristics is unknown. In addition, compared to men, women of colour have been underrepresented in “the mainstream cultural, political and economic scene” (Shinoda et al., 2020, p. 649). Research shows that the female models in advertising in Brazil do not correspond with the real population when it comes to age, body type and skin colour/race (Shinoda et al., 2020, p. 648). In a survey made by United Nations’ Un-stereotype Alliance, 71% of non-white women in the United Kingdom expressed their feeling of underrepresented in advertising in interviews (Unstereotype Alliance, 2021).

Notably, a theory employed in the aforementioned racial identity studies is “tokenism”. Tokenism could be when non-white people are portrayed as stereotypes, with an emphasis on

their differences, compared to white people (Torngren and Ulver, 2020, p. 5). Those who are the subject of tokenism are always reminded of their differences and that they must present themselves in particular ways to be worthy of success. Shankar (2020) criticised that marketing activities subject to tokenism is not authentic inclusive marketing, as inclusive marketing is not about dividing people into racial groups, but to reach out to different people in society. A diversity strategy to make race an unmarked category could be to reshape and objectify bodies and speakers (Shankar, 2020, p. 114).

Responding to blurring the difference of physical appearance, there emerges a few research focus more on ethnic identity rather than racial identity calling for inclusivity by multi-ethnic marketing (Licsandrua and Cui, 2018; Licsandrua and Cui, 2019). The process of ethnic identity development and negotiation can be best understood from the perspective of the social identity theory. Tajfel (1981, p. 255) defines social identity as “that part of the individual's self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance of that membership”. Ethnic identity is one aspect of one's social identity, involving a process of self-identification with an ethnic group with whom the individual shares similar ethnic characteristics. Thus, the ethnic group is a category of self-designation (Harrison, Thomas, and Cross, 2015) rather than a category to which ethnic individuals are assigned automatically by others.

In consistent with this concern, Licsandrua and Cui (2018) proposed framework of inclusive marketing explains the potential effect of multi-ethnic embedded marketing communications on self-feelings of social inclusion by ethnic consumers. Their series of research including another exploratory interpretivist study of ethnic targeted marketing communications (Licsandrua and Cui, 2019). Both research draws on social identity theory and highlighted the significance of multi-ethnic embedded marketing communications, as it provides a more effective access for the ethnically diverse consumers in the modern society and can potentially be a viable solution towards enhanced wellbeing and lower prejudice. Instead of focusing on differences between ethnic groups and individualising them in marketing communications, the authors argue that marketing messages could benefit from more "normalised" portrayals without conspicuous subcultural signifiers, focusing on individuals as "whole persons whose cultural or ethnic background is only a part, if any, of their sense of selves" (Park, 2010, p.464; Licsandrua and Cui, 2018).

Overall, these studies on the racial identities in marketing related literature employing consumer identity theory and theory of tokenism highlight the importance of racial diversity in invoking positive consumer responses by enhancing self-identification and self-congruity.

#### 4.1.2 Gender and Feminism

To elicit more findings and implications on this topic, the reviewed articles in the former section are not limited to fashion contexts due to the scarcity of relevant research. This section continues the review and shifts to another form of inclusivity-gender and feminism. Compared to the other forms, research on the portrayals of gender and feminism in marketing with fashion context is more copious. There are three thematic topics in relation to the gender equality and feminism manifested in marketing literature: 1) gender stereotypes, 2) femvertising, 3) size and body shape.

##### *4.1.2.1 Gender Stereotypes*

Gender stereotypes are consequently based on the beliefs that certain characteristics, attributes, and behaviors differentiate the different genders” (Eisend, 2009). This quote can be placed within all stereotypes, for example, the stereotypes connected to ethnicity and origin, sexual orientation, age, etc. Stereotypes are often used in advertising, which could be explained by the fact that they “offer a way to simplify and systemize information and help make sense of the world” (Akestam, 2017a, p. 796). Stereotypes are not necessarily portraying people in a negative way, but since they are oversimplifying people, they do not represent the real people (Knoll et al., 2011).

A study made in Brazil found six stereotypical roles that women in advertising are usually portrayed as: housewife, trophy, sexual object, sexually powerful, professional, and object of beauty (Middleton et al., 2020, p. 685). Women as “sexual objects” was the one most appearing in the study (Middleton et al., 2020). It seems like half-naked women can feature in any advertising campaigns without any necessary correlation with the product. Historically, women in advertising have been shown in decorative roles as well as family-oriented roles, while men have been presented in more independent and professional roles (Grau and Zotos, 2016, p. 761), as well as tough, athletic, and masculine (Holt and Thompson, 2004). As recent research has shown, the gender portrayals are changing. For example, there is a shift of the portrayal of men to “softer” and more family-oriented roles (Goedecke, 2021). However, as the gender

portrayals are shifting, women are now often portrayed as the perfect figure as attractive, loving wives and mothers as well as have a top career (Antoniou and Akrivos, 2020).

In addition to the fact that stereotypical gender roles often are outdated and makes it difficult for people to identify with them, there are also a lot of people who “do not fit within the rigid ‘male’ and ‘female’ category” (Antoniou and Akrivos, 2020, p. 84). In addition to the previously described effects of stereotyped advertising on individuals, it can also harm a brand's profitability (Drake, 2017). A study conducted by Akestam et al. (2021, p. 78) reveals that stereotyped portrayals in advertising might negatively impact sentiments toward the marketing campaign and the company, as well as purchase intention. To combat stereotypes in advertising, it may be possible to depict individuals in contexts that are unrelated to their social category (Akestam et al., 2021, p. 65). For instance, what is deemed associated with a social category in terms of "physical qualities, role behaviours, occupational position, or psychological traits (e.g., depicting fewer skinny women or less muscular males)" (Akestam et al., 2021, p. 65).

#### *4.1.2.2 Femvertising*

In 2014, SHE Media invented the term "femvertising" to refer to advertising that empowers women and challenges female gender norms (Femvertising Awards, n.d.). Akestam (2017a, p. 796) define femvertising as “advertising that challenges traditional female advertising stereotypes”. It relates to corporate social responsibility (CSR), in which the business advocates for gender equality (Abitbol and Sternadori, 2016, p. 118). Femvertising has been demonstrated to improve sales (Castillo, 2014, quoted in Abitbol and Sternadori, 2016, p. 118), while avoiding gender stereotypes and instead empowering girls and women (Abitbol and Sternadori, 2016; Ciambrello, 2014). Femvertising has demonstrated its ability to influence consumer attitudes and increase consumer relationships (Drake, 2017, p. 597).

Hainneville et al. (2021) established six consumer-perspective dimensions of authentic femvertising: transparency, consistency, identification, diversity, respect, and defying stereotypes. First, the brand's use of femvertising must be transparent (Hainneville et al., 2021, p. 4). This includes no alterations to bodies or the texture of skin. It also includes depicting women in ordinary settings, such as demonstrating how the items are utilised in daily life. Next, consistency is the brand uses femvertising in a manner that is compatible with their brand identity (history, beliefs, etc.) and other communications. Additionally essential for the

credibility of femvertising is the ability of consumers to identify themselves with the advertising (Hainneville et al., 2021, p. 5). The brand uses femvertising in a manner that is compatible with their brand identity (history, beliefs, etc.) and other communications. Additionally essential for the credibility of femvertising is the ability of customers to identify with the advertising (Hainneville et al., 2021, p. 5). The diversity dimension entails normalising diversity, i.e., the inclusion of all types of people without staging. Respect is a key aspect for consumers, such as when a brand respects women by avoiding sexualizing them in advertising, for instance. Lastly, confronting stereotypes is exactly what it sounds like: challenge the standard media stereotypes that have existed for a long time. It might be anything from beauty standards to personality and ability-based preconceptions about women (Hainneville et al., 2021)

However, a criticism of femvertising is when brands feature women with bodies that are regarded "outside the traditional beauty standard" in advertisements and make a statement about the attractiveness of all bodies (Hainneville et al., 2021). According to the participants of Hainneville et al. (2021)'s study, displaying a plus-size model in an advertisement should not be a statement; rather, it should be as normal as displaying any other body shape.

#### *4.1.2.3 Size and Body Shape*

Traditionally, the fashion industry was mainly focused on people of "normal size". Options for people of large sizes have been relatively limited (Jess, 2021). However, in recent years, consumers began to demand more from brands and cannot tolerate body shaming or insensitivity in culture. This change in consumer perception has a critical impact on fashion marketing: while consumers become more active in conversations on social media, brands need to act on their overlooked and unsatisfied consumer base (Luzon, 2019). It was discovered that promoting an ideal body type had a negative impact on customer self-esteem and behaviour but advertising a body positive campaign has a positive impact on consumer self-esteem and behaviour (Bethell, 2020). Societal perceptions of what characteristics constitute physical attractiveness often materialise through images depicted in the media. For females, a thin ideal has been representative of physical attractiveness for decades (Sypeck, Gray, and Ahrens 2004).

According to Cohen (2019), women who watched positive body images on social media reported much higher body appreciation and overall happiness than women who viewed photos that related to the thinness ideal (Brathwaite et al., 2021). It has been widely documented that

exposure to the thin-ideal has a negative impact on young women in the form of lowered self-esteem and body satisfaction (D'Alessandro and Chitty 2011; Pounders, Rice, and Mabry-Flynn 2017). When individuals get more positive body messages, they begin to perceive themselves better by comparing themselves to these postings, rather than when they see 'ideal' bodies, according to Geerkens (2019). In addition, a growing number of consumers and activists are using the powerful social media platforms to call for more inclusivity of female body shapes and sizes. As a result, brands and media outlets have recently begun featuring models with diverse body sizes. While prior research has examined how the female body is portrayed in the media, research on consumer responses to shifting female body ideals portrayed in the media is lacking.

In a culture where the dominant thinking is that a person should not be ashamed of his or her body and strive for perfection, seeing one's physical features as not only totally acceptable but also absolutely natural, sends a more inclusive message (Yeboah, 2020). The number of persons who are classified as 'plus size,' or overweight or obese, is on the rise (Department of Health, 2021). According to the literature, many characteristics of contemporary design may prevent plus-size persons from participating in activities in daily settings (work, transport, leisure). Physical obstacles to inclusion might be considered a type of stigma (Lewis et al., 2011), compounding the situation and its impact has been noted (Foresight, 2017). While the research acknowledges the necessity to adapt to a heterogeneous population in terms of anthropometry, size, and form (Masson et al, 2019), it seldom considers the emotional and social components of plus-size people's relationships. Because of its inherent exposure, 'plus size' is a touchy subject that is impacted by the social environment in which user-product interactions occur. The environment's design seems to add to the stress felt by those who are directly or indirectly stigmatised because of their weight (Brewis, 2020).

Therefore, many brands are joining the body positive movement by promoting inclusivity in a variety of ways. One example of brand adaptation could be Nike's recent marketing campaigns are aimed at empowering women and engaging them in sports and recreation (Liu, 2021). Their promotional materials feature people of different backgrounds, skin colors, and gender identities. This can also be seen on their in-store mannequins, which now include an oversized body, further contributing to their diversity (Jess, 2021). The rise in body positivity campaigns has enabled and allowed more people to shop with brands that can help them accept themselves

as they are. Social media has embraced the idea and awareness that skinny is not the only body standard in existence (Pascual, 2020). Notedly, it has been widely documented that exposure to the thin-ideal has a negative impact on young women in the form of lowered self-esteem and body satisfaction (i.e., D'Alessandro and Chitty 2011; Pounders, Rice, and Mabry-Flynn 2017).

#### *4.1.2.4 User-centred Fashion Design*

According to the former discussion, it is widely recognised by certain groups of fashion consumers that the experience of fashion can be limiting with regard to available options for example in sizing. There is increasing demand for fashion and clothing that meets the needs of a greater proportion of society, built upon practices that by design are more inclusive of diversity, particularly with regard to fit for a wider range of size and body shape. Two papers in this issue highlight how fashion design research might solve such difficulties in women's clothes by identifying more user-centred design approaches and processes that concentrate on particular features (Hudson and Hwang, 2020). The introduction of three-dimensional (3D) design solutions has proven to be a major enabler in the design process.

These two articles are concerned with the integration and benefits of 3-dimensional technologies to facilitate new apparel design and development processes. Hudson and Hwang (2020) in their research of applying of 3D Prototyping to promote size-inclusive design practices for plus-size apparel develop a four-stage design process, that applies both virtual and physical 3D prototyping of garments. The research, based on a survey of plus-size women's needs, analysis of store offerings and professional evaluation, promotes size inclusivity to reduce stigmatisation through practical exploration integrating 3D design technology and aesthetic considerations, in the process demonstrating potential for mass customisation to meet the needs of this user group. In contrast, Song, et al. (2021) take a quantitative approach to analyse how women's upper body posture changes with age, and the implications for apparel design. They utilise a EU database of 3D body scan data to analyse 47 body measurements across a range of four age groups between 40 and 69. This enabled the authors to classify 423 scans and through statistical analysis of principal components compare and identify key posture changes specifically related to age.

#### *4.1.3 Sexual Identity*

LGBTQ+ is an abbreviation for the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer-segment (and others) who have long been underrepresented in marketing (Elliot, 2013; Grau and Zotos,

2016). In recent years, there has been a rise in advertisements featuring LGBTQ+ individuals (Muller, 2015). Previous research reveals that LGBTQ+ customers are aware when a brand includes LGBTQ+ individuals in its advertising (Tuten, 2006, p. 86). The utilisation of LGBTQ+ themes in mainstream media and support for homosexual causes appear to consumers to be of utmost relevance for a brand to be LGBTQ+ inclusive (Tuten, 2006). When marketing to LGBTQ+ individuals, brands may be concerned about reducing their straight market (Grau and Zotos, 2016). According to Wilke (2007), if a gay is featured in a commercial for a product, 24% of heterosexuals are less likely to purchase the item. This is known as "gay window displays" (Um, 2016, p. 463).

However, other research demonstrates that the use of LGBTQ+ themes in advertising did not repel heterosexuals (Tuten, 2005). Tuten's (2005) research demonstrates that while gays and lesbians respond favourably to companies' gay-friendly advertising, heterosexuals do not react at all, indicating that the practise of gay-friendly advertising will solely benefit businesses. According to the research of Read et al. (2018, p. 193), commercials portraying same-sex couples may garner more positive responses than those featuring heterosexual couples. In addition, according to market studies, many young people, regardless of sexual orientation, appear to choose brands that support the LGBT community above other brands (Synder, 2015). In addition to their high purchasing power, gay consumers are well-known for their affluence, which encourages marketers to target this demographic (Um, 2016). However, there is little research on transgender persons in advertising because they are not prominently featured in company marketing. As simply showing one homosexual couple in an advertisement is insufficient, as they do not represent the LGBTQ+ population as a whole, it should serve as a signal to firms that strive to be inclusive in their advertising.

#### 4.1.4 Other Under-representations: Age and Disability

Research shows that 18-49 are the ages of people mostly represented in advertising (Robinson et al., 2021, p. 503). Furthermore, when many elder people are represented for certain products such as cleaning products and painkillers aiming for a specific age group, young adults are mostly seen in fashion advertising (Kohlbacher et al. 2014; Robinson et al., 2021, p. 504). As Kohlbacher et al. (2014, p. 264) argued that brands try to match their models with the target audience they are aiming, it could be interpreted that cleaning products and painkillers are the only products seniors need. However, it is a great simplification of target audience. When seniors have started to shop online, it could be beneficial for companies to target some elder

age group and include them in advertising to promote their e-commerce. The lack of positive representation of elder people in advertising seems to affect their physical and mental health (Robinson et al., 2021, p. 506), which should be considered for brands to convey their consciousness to elder consumers. This is supported by research which shows that the representation of seniors affects their purchase intention (Robinson et al., 2021, p. 509). Since brands can create a better brand image to improve consumer attitudes (Abitbol and Sternadori, 2016), the inclusion of elder people should be valued.

Zhang, Gill, and Andrew (2022) employ design ethnography research within an inclusive design agenda in their study on developing apparel design guidelines for older women in China. Research methods comprised both interviews and visual wardrobe studies with 27 women in Beijing, aged between 55 and 70, to determine their clothing preferences in terms of style, fabrics, fit, functionality, and aesthetic elements, amongst others. The authors develop a framework illustrating design strategies considering four areas: wearability, aesthetics, self-consciousness and social surroundings, a model that contributes new findings to expand previous studies, especially in relation to body shape.

In addition, there are three studies demonstrated that individuals with physical limitations have trouble locating ready-to-wear apparel that meets their daily needs (Chang, et al., 2009; Na, 2007). In Mazer et al. (2015)'s research of improving the accessibility of a shopping mall, the interviewee who is a member of rehabilitation community argued that unmet clothing needs were significant barriers to the participation of people with disabilities. Adapted clothes may be part of the solution to the difficulties faced by individuals with a physical handicap and may promote their maximum involvement. Idealistically, it is crucial to comprehend how to handle the issue of inclusion for disabled and elderly individuals by enhancing present clothing designs and making adapted clothing more accessible and mainstream.

## **4.2 Discrimination and Exclusivity in the Marketplace**

With a focus on different forms of inclusivity manifested in marketing literature, to avoid being tokenism or falling into so-called green-washing and calling for authentic inclusivity (as discussed in Chapter 2) it is worthwhile to uncover what factors may exclude consumers and generate negative consumers' attitude. Discrimination aimed against consumers was another identified theme in the inclusive marketing literature. There are three studies focus mostly on marketing strategies that have an impact on quality of life, such as contentious goods and services that are aimed at particular racial groups or how minorities are treated in the marketplace (Moore, Williams, and Qualls, 2016; Qualls and Moore, 2020; Whittler, 2021).

Moore, Williams, and Qualls (2016) noted that marketing to minority customers frequently centred on goods like menthol cigarettes, but they questioned whether this targeting was driven by racism or by statistics on the black consumer market's consumption patterns. Some marketing strategies promote ideas of lower socioeconomic standing in the marketplace and exploit ethnic minority populations. Consumers of means, however, display actions meant to lessen these occurrences. This finding parallels Whittler's (2021) research which questioned whether there would be a white backlash to the use of black models in marketing. These studies essentially demonstrated that highly prejudiced whites were likely to have unfavourable opinions regarding the usage of black models (Whittler, 2021). However, the in-group prejudice argument tended to explain how race affected how consumers saw marketing efforts, as people from a particular ethnic or cultural group were more likely to favour individuals from their own group (Qualls and Moore, 2020).

Together, these three research imply that there are a number of components to the practises that make up market discrimination and not being inclusive in the marketplace (Moore, Williams, and Qualls, 2016; Qualls and Moore, 2020; Whittler, 2021). As only one research specifically looks at fashion context, the research on exploring marketing factors generating exclusion of consumers in fashion context is scarce.

## **5 CONCLUSIONS, ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTION AND LIMITATIONS**

Chapter 5 starts with consolidating the main findings of critical review, and then the conceptual framework is presented as one of academic contributions. Both theoretical and practical implications are given for future research and practices.

### **5.1 Conclusions**

Given that marketing theory informs marketing practice, the study of inclusivity is a relevant topic with implications for both marketing scholarship and practitioner activities in the global marketplace. Moreover, as sensitivities and debates concerning escalate worldwide, the topic is particularly timely for leading new directions of inclusive marketing. The purpose of critical review is not to identify new facts or findings but synthesise the facts and findings of past research resulting in advancement of knowledge and theoretical frameworks (Torraco, 2016a; Snyder, 2019). Therefore, this review consolidates the manifestations of inclusivity in inclusive marketing practices to exemplify the significance of addressing inclusivity for brands. It identifies that some forms of inclusivity such as gender and feminism and racial identity are comparatively well researched than the other two dimensions of sexual identities and age. In addition, the missing issues of disability inclusiveness has not been studied in any inclusive marketing research.

As noted, the 42 articles in the data set concerning two main research strands: the different forms of inclusivity in marketing literature, the discrimination and exclusivity in the marketplace. There are four key findings after critical review. Firstly, a major conclusion is that an abundance of the research and theory development came from Western scholars and this finding indicates a lack of interest in the topic by non-Western scholars, also a lack of acknowledgement of inclusive marketing practices in non-Western societies. Secondly, inclusivity and inclusive marketing have been appeared in some research, but the dimensions of inclusivity have not been defined in any research. There are four key thematic topics (i.e., racial identity, gender and feminism, sexual identity, and age) related and discussed inclusivity in different degrees without a comprehensive framework in relation to consumer-related constructs such as brand attitudes. Thirdly, regarding certain thematic topics of inclusivity, the research is not balanced. While there is majority of recent research focusing on gender and feminism, research on racial identity in marketing is more outdated and shift to ethnic identity

with an emphasis on cultural differences rather than physical appearance. In addition, there is very few studies addressed age and disability inclusivity in marketing literature.

To conclude, it is crucial to understand how the portrayals of inclusivity in branded content can influence consumers' senses of inclusion through facilitating more inclusive conversations in this increasingly diverse market (Licsandru and Cui, 2019; Simon and Tossan, 2018). However, the emerging context of social media for addressing this problem remain unexplored. In other words, the content elements on social media which cause consumers' senses of inclusion or exclusion is relatively missing in academic research. Few research considers inclusivity as a social media content characteristics and further studies its relationship with brand-related consumer constructs, such as consumer brand engagement, consumer brand loyalty and consumer retention.

## **5.2 Academic Contribution**

In general, the purpose of critical review is not to identify new facts or findings but synthesise the facts and findings of past research resulting in advancement of knowledge and theoretical frameworks (Torraco, 2016a; Snyder, 2019). Thus, this critical review, with the aim to explore how different forms of inclusivity can be better incorporated into marketing theory and practice in the social media context, it consolidates different forms of inclusivity manifested throughout history and exemplify them as dimensions of inclusivity. In addition, it provides a conceptual overview of the main issues that need to be addressed, including the lack of consistent conception of inclusivity and inclusive marketing, the lack of recognition of inclusivity presence in social media contents, etc. Moreover, it identifies that the issues of gender stereotypes and feminism are comparatively well researched than other forms of inclusivity.

While previous research on inclusive marketing has focused on gender stereotypes and femvertising, and there was a lack of research build a holistic understanding of multi-dimensionality of inclusivity and its impacts on consumer responses. This critical review fills these gap by connecting some debated topics such as gender equality, femvertising, racial diversity, LGBTQ+, and age inclusiveness into the bracket of inclusivity. It contributes to the theoretical field of marketing, specifically inclusive marketing. The following sections introduces the conceptual framework derived from critical review and illustrates three directions for future research. Then, to complement with theoretical implications, implications for marketing practices are given.

## 5.2.1 Theoretical Implications

### 5.2.1.1 Initiating a Conceptual Framework for Inclusive Marketing

With a focus on the different forms of inclusivity in marketing literature, this critical review discusses relevant theoretical foundations of inclusivity conception and synthesises relevant findings and implications for research and practice. As demonstrated formerly, inclusivity seeks to appreciate and understand different identities and cultures and create a more representative visual culture on social media (Fish, 2016), and inclusive marketing can be defined as the conscious creation of an advertising campaign that respectfully includes and considers the complexity of the individuals who make up the target audience (Pittaway, 2020). This critical review concludes five main forms of inclusivity in current marketing literature after reviewing 42 empirical and non-empirical papers. Surprisingly, there is no research pay attention to the emerging context of social media for addressing inclusivity issues, while there are only two research initiate conceptual framework related to inclusive marketing. The following discussion illustrates these two frameworks respectively and then explains how they associate with the conceptual framework of this critical review.

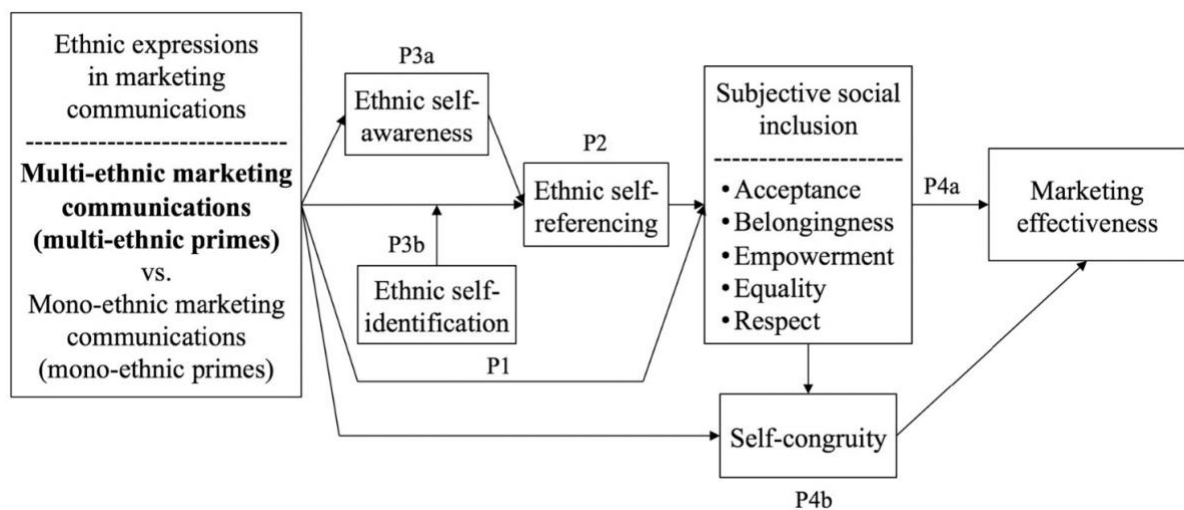


(source: Burton, 2000)

**Figure 7 Integrating ethnicity into marketing theory and practice: a conceptual overview**

Figure 6 illustrates one of the two framework related to inclusive marketing (Burton, 2000). In this paper, Burton (2000) examines reasons for this lack of research in ethnicity including

various ways of conceptualising ethnicity, identity, and acculturation; the complexities of undertaking market research with ethnic minorities; the appropriate use of various promotional strategies; and whether or not products and services need to be developed or adapted for the ethnic minority market (Burton, 2000). Correspondingly, through examining various forms of inclusivity in this critical review, these aforementioned reasons lead to the deficiency of inclusivity research. Therefore, the initial framework considering one form of inclusivity, is inspired by the business struggles in developing strategies targeting ethnic minorities and starts with understand the ways that ethnicity and identity can be conceptualised. In this framework, a second step is to operationalise ethnicity in order to determine the needs of consumers through the use of appropriate market research techniques, and at a third level are strategic and tactical factors associated with the use of the 4Ps, 7Ps and relationship marketing.



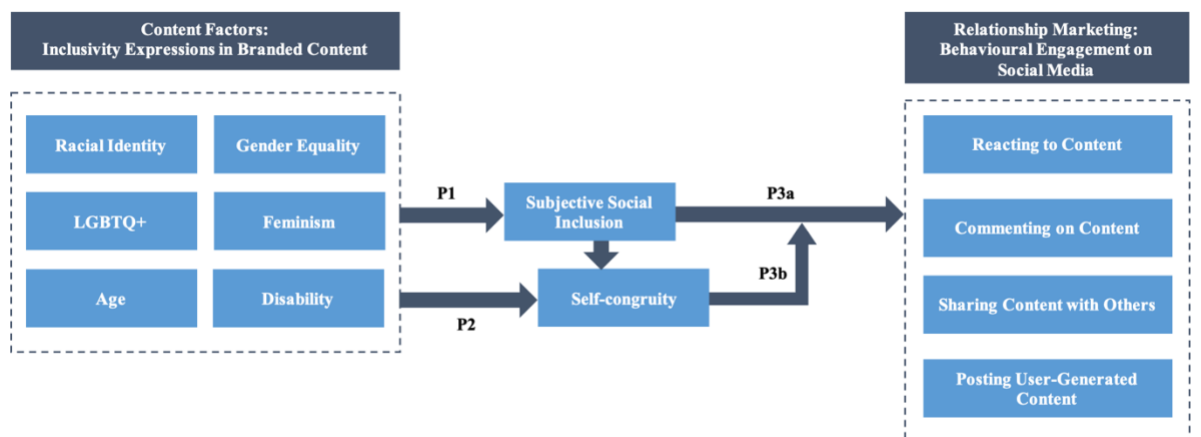
(source: Licsandrua and Cui, 2018)

**Figure 8 Theoretical model of inclusive marketing**

The other theoretical model relevant to inclusive marketing is developed by Licsandrua and Cui (2018) (Figure 7), with a focus on subjective social inclusion, which is a pioneer in coining and defining this term in inclusivity research. The proposed framework of inclusive marketing explains the potential effect of multi-ethnic embedded marketing communications on self-feelings of social inclusion by ethnic consumers, as well as the intervening effects of ethnic self-referencing, ethnic self-awareness, ethnic self-identification, and self-congruity. This definition of subjective social inclusion and particularly the five individual dimensions could be used in further research to develop a measurement scale of subjective social inclusion, which can assist policy makers and researchers alike to identify the included and non-included individuals, and to estimate the impact of inclusive actions employed.

Burton's framework (2000) uncovers a thinking process to introduce a new idea into marketing theory and practice. Regarding this critical review, the strategic and tactic issue facing brands is to engage consumers on social media, which is caused by the increasing branded content which ignites consumers' scepticism towards advertising intent and content relevance. The increasing consumer awareness of advertising persuasive intent in the branded content, not only leads to consumers' activated resistance to advertising messages and also causes the likely incredibility to brands (Stubb and Colliander, 2019). While the opinion of other consumers is more credible to consumers due to the perceived absence of advertising, brands should rethink how to open up their boundaries and engage with wider range of consumers to enhance the relationship between brands and consumers. In other words, brands should consider the impact of inclusivity as a content characteristics on engaging with consumers (Schreiner et al., 2019).

Referring to Licsandrua and Cui (2018)'s framework, it guides researchers to look at salient marketing communication factors that have direct impact on the perceived level of subjective social inclusion, such as product category, language, slogan, degree of inclusivity embeddedness. As this critical review explore various forms of inclusivity besides ethnicity, the adaptation of the current conceptual framework can be considered at different dimensions: gender, LGBTQ+, age and disability. In the following, this review proposes a conceptual model for future research in inclusive marketing in Figure 9, drawing from above frameworks.



(source: author's own)

**Figure 9 Conceptual framework of inclusive marketing on social media**

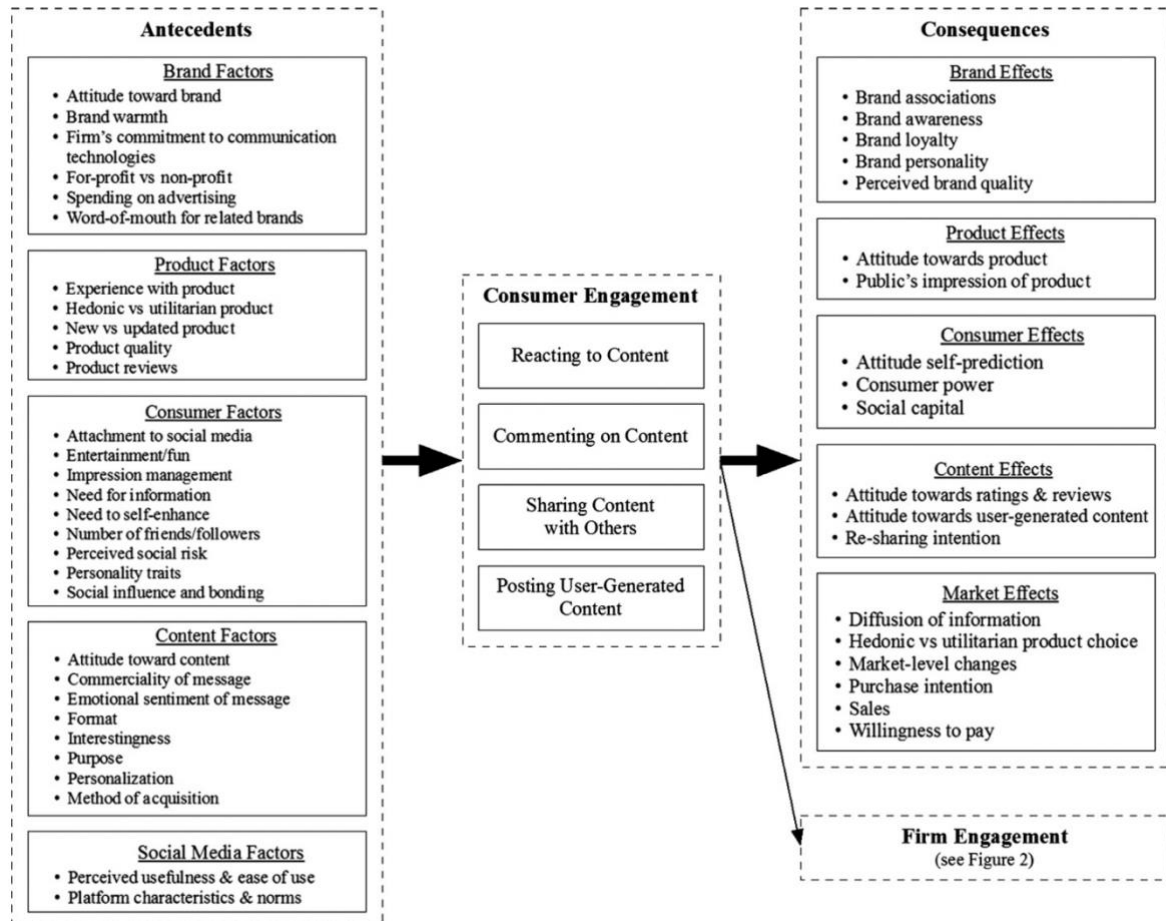
In Licsandrua and Cui (2018)'s research, by portraying cultural symbols or individuals of diverse ethnicity together, multi-ethnic primes may enable the mental connection between individuals from otherwise disparate cultural groups and induce a superordinate identity in the minds of the ethnic and mainstream individuals, which can enhance the perceived inclusiveness

in the society. This is in line with the common in-group identity model from social psychology, which postulates that building a common group identity decreases intergroup conflict through reduction of group boundaries and transformation of “us” and “them” in an overarching “we” (Dovidio, Gaertner, and Saguy, 2007; Gaertner, et al., 1993). Besides racial or ethnic identity, this critical review synthesises several forms of inclusivity: racial identity, gender and feminism, sexual identity, age, disability and other issues, which can also be portrayed in branded content to address concerns about inclusivity. According to the cultivation theory, media portrayals influence the self-perceptions and social relationships of individuals (Bailey, 2006). Individuals continually determine whether they are accepted, respected, and acknowledged by others based on cues offered by the media and advertising (Baker, Gentry, and Rittenburg, 2005; Tsai, 2011). Thus, when an individual is consistently excluded from marketing communications, there is a strong likelihood that he or she may experience sentiments of non-acceptance. Furthermore, Tsai's (2011) study shows that in striving for self-esteem and social inclusion, minority consumers seek self-validating meanings from the symbolic messages in the market place. Thus, it can be postulated that social media marketing communications embedded with inclusivity expressions may represent an effective means of exerting a positive effect on subjective social inclusion.

***P1. Inclusivity expressions in branded content are likely to exert a positive effect on subjective social inclusion.***

In the context of marketing, self-congruity is understood as the degree to which a brand's expressions coincide with the viewer's self-concept (self-concepts are the personal identities which people may attach certain identities to marketing campaigns to detect the relevant messages) (Hong and Zinkhan, 1995; Sprott et al., 2009). In addition to ethnic identity, consumers' self-concept contains other self-concept characteristics (e.g., sexual identity, age, disability, etc.) (Licsandrua and Cui, 2018). Numerous studies have shown that people's self-concept contains cognitive generalisations about the self (self-schema), and “external stimuli compatible with self-schema would be readily attended, encoded, comprehended and retained, in comparison with those stimuli that do not fit with it” (Hong and Zinkhan, 1995, p. 57). Research on self-congruity shows that high levels of congruence between advertising content and consumers' self-concept lead to positive effects on a variety of consumer responses such as brand loyalty, brand attachment and cognitive elaboration (Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak, and Sirgy, 2012; Malär, et al., 2011; Sirgy, et al., 2008). According to these studies, it is foreseeable

that individuals exposed to marketing communications assess the content's deeper-level symbolic meanings and peripheral cues (Petty et al., 1983) to assess the congruence of the communication imagery with their own self-concept in a wider range of characteristics. In other words, inclusivity expressions in branded content can manifest into different forms in social media marketing and provide a wider range of expression stimuli for self-congruity.



*P2. Inclusivity expressions in branded content are likely to exert a positive effect on self-congruity.*

(source: Barger et al., 2016)

**Figure 10 Antecedents and consequences of consumer engagement on social media**

As discussed before, content created by brands and their collaborators has become a critical touchpoint to the building of relationships with consumers (Rosenthal and Brito, 2017). On social media consumers can respond with liking, sharing or commenting to branded content on social media (Gummerus et al., 2012; van Doorn et al., 2010), and these brand-related behavioural responses become powerful indicators of brand popularity and have been shown to affect purchases and loyalty (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015; Kumar et al., 2016; Swani et al., 2017). Barger et al. (2016) synthesise the impacts of various content elements in social media

on consumer responses and emphasise the significance of building effective communications through contents. According to Sprott et al. (2009)'s empirical findings, consumers can create associations between brands and their self-concepts and this association may affect consumer responses to marketing activities. Hence, deriving from Barger et al. (2016)'s framework of "antecedents and consequences of consumer engagement on social media" (Figure 10), this critical review seeks to introduce the multi-dimensional construct of inclusivity into content factors. In this framework, consumer engagement is defined as a set of measurable actions that consumers take on social media in response to brand-related content, including reacting to content (e.g., likes, hearts), commenting on content, sharing content with others, and posting UGC (e.g., product reviews, posts about brands).

When inclusivity expressions in branded content can enhance individuals' feeling of being included in the society, this feeling of social inclusion is more likely to open the consumer's cognitive and emotional channels for positive attitudes towards the products, brands, and other marketing efforts (Zhou et al., 2012). Thus, it is perceivable that both self-congruity triggered from inclusivity expressions and subjective social inclusion will facilitate more consumers' behavioural responses on social media, such as liking, commenting, and sharing. This complies with the social media communication model advanced by Swani and Milne (2017), which recognises that there are many reasons that motivate consumers to engage with brands (Lovett et al., 2013) and that marketers can leverage these psychological motivations to stimulate pro-brand behaviours.

***P3a.*** *Subjective social inclusion has a positive influence on behavioural engagement on social media.*

***P3b.*** *Self-congruity mediates the effects of inclusivity expressions in branded content and subjective social inclusion on behavioural engagement on social media.*

#### ***5.2.1.2 Future Research Direction 1: Exploring if inclusivity can be an emerging advertising message appeal***

An advertising message appeal refers to the approach used to attract the attention of consumers and to influence their feelings toward the product, service, or cause (Percy and Rossiter, 1992). Moreover, message appeals are used to help consumers form and change attitudes, and to persuade them to purchase. Researchers have also referred to advertising message appeals as advertising execution styles (Cutler, Thomas, and Rao, 2000), or creative strategies employed in advertising to enhance consumer motivation, opportunity, and ability to process information

from an advertisement. These strategies are related to both product attributes and how the advertising is presented. Knowing what makes one advertising appeal more effective than another in a specific context is essential for advertising results.

Two approaches that have been widely acknowledged and compared in advertising research are the storytelling message appeal and the informational message appeal (e.g., Polyorat, Alden and Kim, 2007). Storytelling advertising, also called narrative advertising (Brechman and Purvis, 2015; Eunjin, Ratneshwar, and Thorson, 2017), utilises an advertising format that conveys a commercial message through a story (Escalas, 1998). Story advertising often include emotional appeals that are designed to establish a favourable selling climate (Brechman and Purvis, 2015). On the other hand, informational advertising typically conveys a commercial message through arguments and explanations (Eunjin et al., 2017), with the objective of providing valuable facts to recipients (Cutler et al., 2000). Therefore, a storytelling message appeal is subjective from the perspective of the storyteller, often contains emotions and feelings, uses drama and narratives to tell the story to transform readers emotionally to the point of greater product acceptance, and is expressive and evaluative in its communication. In contrast, an informational message appeal often contains facts and arguments, uses objective presentation, and can be instrumental or rational in its communication.

Research has indicated that there are differences in how consumers are influenced by these appeals. Zebregs and colleagues (2015) found that statistical evidence has a stronger impact on beliefs and attitude, whereas narrative evidence has a stronger influence on intention. While these different message appeals have been widely examined in traditional advertising contexts, no previous research has recognised new message appeals existing in brands' social media content. As discussed in previous sections, being inclusive is a social imperatives for brands. It is inevitable for brand to take a stand on social issues when they consider inclusive marketing. According to Vredenburg et al. (2020), consumers want brands to take a stand on socio-political issues and in return brands can gain authentic activism. However, it is unknown how consumer relate these social stands to brands' advertising. Will consumers perceive inclusive statement as an advertising? Or Does inclusive statement influence their attitudes towards brand and lead to subsequent purchase behaviour?

#### *5.2.1.3 Future Research Direction 2: Exploring how consumer perceive the authenticity of inclusive advertising*

Through critical review, studies about the authenticity of inclusive advertising through a consumer perspective have been done before, but mostly connected to femvertising (Abitbol and Sternadori, 2016; Haineville et al., 2021). Abitbol and Sternadori (2016, p. 122) show that femvertising sometimes get criticised for staged feminism, for example, due to the main mission with the business in not gender equality. Haineville et al. (2021) also discovered different dimensions of femvertising which can enhance the authenticity, challenging stereotypes, embracing diversity, and expressing respect. This study indicates that these dimensions could be used for assessing the authenticity for inclusive advertising overall, not just femvertising. It highlights that inclusive marketing, especially femvertising, is not always consumed suspiciously. To better interpret inclusivity in marketing, it is worthwhile to consider consumers' perception on inclusive content and avoid suspicious green-washing or fem-washing in future research.

#### *5.2.1.4 Future Research Direction 3: Exploring what excludes consumers from engaging with brands*

For future research, the relationship between inclusivity and social media marketing should be captured in both empirical and non-empirical research to expand on the theoretical foundation of inclusivity in marketing area. Although social media empowers consumers to interact efficiently with brands, engaging with consumers on social media is beyond pushing communications to consumers to expect their engagement with branded content (Barger et al., 2016). This implies marketers should not only understand what motivates consumers to interact with branded content but also recognise what prevent consumers from engagement. Consumers' avoidance towards advertising content makes it challenging for advertisers to capture their attention. This critical review synthesises the positive impacts of different forms of inclusivity on consumers. Therefore, for future research, whether inclusivity can potentially mitigate the negative impacts of advertising intent in brands posts can be explored.

### **5.2.2 Managerial Implications**

In the past decade, the fashion industry's campaign for inclusion has grown at an exponential rate (Sinha, 2021). Social media has been demonstrated to have a substantial impact on how people perceive social and cultural norms, and beauty standards (Grabe et al., 2018). People who are willing to feel good about themselves and be featured on the platform of their daily

life. Thus, on social media platforms, brands should and are expected to create more inclusive dialogues to engage with consumer by incorporating some inclusive features. This critical review discussed multiple forms of inclusivity for fashion brands to consider when create marketing campaigns. In addition, as discussed in the section 4.1.1, marketing activities subject to tokenism is not authentic inclusive marketing, as inclusive marketing is not about dividing people into racial groups, but to reach out to different people in society. Facing consumer activism on social media, being inclusive is not just recognise various ethnicities, races, cultures, skin tones, body kinds, and backgrounds and make a statement on particular issues. It is more of fostering an atmosphere that recognises, embraces, and accepts a variety of techniques, styles, viewpoints, and experiences. Consumers are looking for items that are tailored to them, as well as brands that are inclusive and transparent. Colour, texture, form, and size are all used in the fashion business to produce a distinct combination of cultures and origins. The difficulty of inclusivity isn't only about ensuring that historically underrepresented groups are represented. It's also about establishing a space where "we" can be everyone.

### **5.3 Limitations**

The sample of critical review may reflect biases inherent within the databases from which they were derived including a reliance on English language materials. In addition, this review is limited to the timeframe of literature search. Thus, the collection of definitions and descriptions of inclusivity from the extant literature is not exhaustive and may be strengthened through meta-analysis techniques. Although this paper advances understanding of different forms of inclusivity in marketing literature, empirical testing of the conceptual model is necessary to provide evidence for the plausibility and soundness of the proposed model. The conceptualisation of inclusivity in marketing research needs further scrutiny, may be through empirical tests that could provide empirical support for the definition and multi-dimensionality.

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