



Beyond the Logic of ‘Open Doors’: Advancing Marketing for Social Inclusion from a Consumer Empowerment Perspective

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**BEYOND THE LOGIC OF ‘OPEN DOORS’: ADVANCING MARKETING FOR
SOCIAL INCLUSION FROM A CONSUMER EMPOWERMENT PERSPECTIVE**

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Session Overview

Recent marketing studies highlight that, despite legislative frameworks, such as USA's American Consumers with Disabilities Act or the UK's Code of Broadcast Advertising, introduced by policy makers to require recognition of consumer diversity (e.g., ethnoracial, ability/disability, gender and gender identity characteristics) and equality in provision of products/services by businesses and organisations, marketplace experiences of many consumer groups can leave them feeling mistreated, restricted in their decisions, vulnerable and disempowered. For example, Bone et al. (2014) uncover how subtly-imposed restrictions on service offerings and choices can lead minority consumers to feel 'rejected, shackled, and alone.' Luedicke (2014) and Johnson and Grier (2011) demonstrate how majority consumers interpret observations of minority consumption practices and targeted advertising as "a crumbling of their authority, a violation of equality rights" (Luedicke, 2014 p.109). Furthermore, even those marketing actions conceived with an intention of advancing consumer inclusion (e.g., by visually representing a consumer group with certain cultural characteristics) can mask rather than resolve the exclusion that some consumers experience in their lives (Kearney et al., forthcoming). Together, this research points to the need of going beyond conceiving inclusion as a passive concept equated with the logic of 'open doors' – e.g., that eliminating overt discrimination of consumers will result in all consumers feeling equally catered for. At the same time, a nascent stream of research (e.g., Ho et al., 2017; Demangeot et al., 2013; Baker and Mason, 2012) aims to advance conceptualisations and models of marketing actions drawing on concepts of empowerment and resilience. They conceive marketing actions and their outputs (advertising, product innovation, service provision process) as proactive transformative mechanisms that can encourage, support and enable consumers in developing skills for engaging with a) organisations to address their own unfair treatment, and b) other consumers, products/services and practices to leverage cultural difference as a source of enrichment. Being in its infancy, this research is predominantly conceptual in nature and lacks empirical insights from consumers with different cultural or other characteristics. Because inclusion is subjectively constructed on the individual level (Licsandru and Cui, 2018) and consistent with the 2019 AMS World Marketing Congress theme 'Enlightened Marketing in Challenging Times', we propose a session bringing together early findings of empirical studies that critically explore consumer responses to marketing actions exemplifying either the advancement or the inhibition of market inclusion. Through examining varied contexts and consumer characteristics, the session covers four topics:

- Cross and Lin note that olfaction (sense of smell) is often a subliminal, but important, tool used in evaluation of consumption options, and the choice of consumption and public venues are often influenced by sensitivity to smell. While consumer sensory sensitivity and identity is every bit as salient, compelling and inclusive/exclusive as racial, cultural or ethnic identity and sensitivity, the broader impact of varying levels of olfactory ability is often ignored or underappreciated by retailers. Marketers are fully aware of the power of scent on mood, emotions and purchase decisions and scent marketing today is a projected billion-dollar industry. Yet, marketers seem to be also woefully unconcerned about the frustration of consumers, who often feel alienated from the marketplace, recognising that while other sensory attributes (vision, hearing) can often be tempered and corrected via devices and treatment, their level of olfactory ability often cannot.
- Kipnis and colleagues examine the underlying drivers of responses towards non-diverse vs. abstractly-framed multicultural vs. concretely-framed multicultural advertising appeals among cultural majority consumers. Their findings point to the significant effects of multicultural appeals' framing on consumer perceptions of benefits of cultural diversity. Authors discuss directions for future research into the potential of marketing to promote appreciation of cultural diversity and inclusiveness without eliciting adverse, even if unintended, adverse effects.
- Kearney and colleagues consider the effects of exposure to advertising representations of disability on consumers with disabilities' perceptions of social inclusion vs. exclusion. Drawing on theory of ableism, they conceptualise the process through which conceptions of disability by marketers can emerge to encompass an 'ideal disabled consumer' stereotype which can be misaligned with the lived realities of disability, acting as a disempowering force on consumers with disability and informing their perceptions of marketplace exclusion.
- Vorster and colleagues critique multicultural marketing as a viable contributor to the nation-building agenda in post-colonial South Africa. Their study examines the historical evolution of advertising depictions of the Rainbow

Nation South Africa and draws on neo-institutional theory to propose a concept of intercultural marketing to reflect the living together (rather than co-existing) fabric of intercultural reconciliation.

Beyond the Logic of ‘Open Doors’: Sensory Identity and Inclusion in the Marketplace

Samantha N.N. Cross (Iowa State University) and Meng-Hsien (Jenny) Lin (California State University Monterey Bay)

Research on consumer identity often focuses on identity shaped by societal and cultural markers such as race, ethnic background, gender, religion, nationality, age, size, and the absence or impairment of physical or physiological markers related to mobility, hearing and vision (Baker 2006; Bone, Christenson and Williams 2014; Childers and Kaufman-Scarborough 2009; Peñaloza 1994; Wallendorf and Reilly 1983). Yet, researchers remain narrow in their evaluation of the breadth of consumer perceptions of their identity, often limiting individual identity to that which is visible, easily categorized and popular fodder for debate amongst members of society.

In the spirit of moving beyond conventional notions of identity and inclusion, this paper argues that consumer identity is shaped not only by the more visible markers others ascribe to us, but by any markers that we, as consumers, perceive as salient to our consumption preferences, experiences and usage, however complex these multiple facets of individual and social identity may be (Hogg, Terry and White 1995; White and Dahl 2007). One level of complexity often overlooked is that of sensory identity. We define consumer sensory identity as identity based on the manner in which consumers relate to external stimuli received through the senses and form internal perceptions of themselves in relation to others within the marketplace (Cross, Lin and Childers 2015). Our context is olfaction or sense of smell, with implications for consumer sensory identity as a wider identity construct.

It is clear that olfactory sensitivity has an overall impact on consumers’ perceptions of themselves and ultimately on how others perceive them – i.e. on consumer sensory identity. In addition, olfaction is a subliminal, yet important, tool used by consumers in their evaluation of consumption options. Marketers are fully aware of the power of scent on mood, emotions and purchase decisions (Nassauer 2014) and scent marketing today is a projected billion-dollar industry (Lewis 2014). This research thus examines the impact of olfactory sensitivity and consumer sensory identity on consumption choices and perceptions of marketplace well-being and inclusion. We ask the following research questions: 1) What is the role of olfactory sensitivity on consumers’ perceptions of their identity? 2) What is the impact of consumer sensory identity on decision making, consumption choices and perceptions of individual well-being and marketplace inclusion?

Our research questions are explored using two initial sets of survey data, supplemented with in-depth interviews and smell tests conducted with thirty-six participants. Interview participants fall into three groups, based on their self-reported level of sensitivity to smell – diminished, heightened and normal – which is validated during the interviews and with a separate cluster analysis. Participants range in age from 26 to 70 years old, 23 females and 11 males, with 10 to 13 participants in each of the three olfactory groups. Analysis of the interview data is based on a grounded theory approach, using an iterative back and forth process between the data and the literature to develop themes and generate theory about the influence of olfaction on consumption, identity, well-being and perceptions of inclusion.

Our findings reveal that olfactory sensitivity has a profound impact at both the individual and family unit level, in decision-making interactions within the home and within the wider marketplace and society. Perception of identity, decision roles, family member responsibilities, product preferences, and the choice of marketplace and public venues are influenced and constrained by sensitivity to smell. Individual variation in olfactory sensitivity can lead to annoyance, frustration and the blunt recognition that while other sensory attributes (vision, hearing) can often be tempered and corrected, an individual’s level of olfactory ability often cannot. Thus, consumer sensory identity in the marketplace is every bit as salient, compelling, potentially alienating and inclusive/exclusive as any other form of consumer identity.

Examining the effects of multicultural integrated advertising message framing on perceived benefits of multiculturalism

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Multicultural marketing – “marketing strategies designed to reach multiple consumer segments that are distinguished by cultural (or subcultural) characteristics” (Johnson, Elliott, & Grier, 2010 p.191) – is one of the fastest evolving areas of marketing practice within or across national boundaries, proclaimed by some as ‘Marketing 101’ (L.Robinson, Coca Cola North America, in Booker 2016). Many organizations adopt multicultural marketing as part of commitment to cultural diversity and inclusiveness citizenship agenda. At the level of marketing communications, this strategic shift takes the form of multicultural integrated advertising (MIA), defined as a type of advertising that aims to simultaneously engage consumers of diverse backgrounds through representations of multiple cultural cues (models, symbols, traditions, language, objects etc.) within the material of one campaign (Johnson & Grier, 2011; Johnson et.al., 2010). MIA is growing exponentially and evolving concomitantly with the dramatic rise in the socio-political volatility of intercultural relations recently observed across the globe (e.g., the Brexit vote in the UK, 2016; the increase in racist incidents since the 2016 election of Donald Trump). In fact, in the face of this volatility organizations appear to make a concerted effort to protect and promote the principles of cultural diversity through the voice of their brands. In 2016-2017 several brands released MIA campaigns delivering messages of cultural inclusiveness, equality and reconciliation (e.g., AirBNB – ‘We Accept’; Nike – ‘Equality Has No Boundaries’; Amazon – ‘Priest and Imam’). However, whether these campaigns have the desired positive or adverse effects remains open to debate in light of the evidence that heightened exposure to advertising portrayals of cultural diversity may lead to resentment by some consumers belonging to cultural majority groups (Johnson and Grier 2011). Such resentment is explained by cognitions of one’s ingroup’s cultural distinctiveness in the social order being threatened by culturally-different others (Danbold & Huo, 2015; Stephan et al., 2009).

We present findings of an experimental study examining the effects of different MIA appeals framing on perceptions of benefits of multiculturalism (a form of social order underpinned by the principle of all cultural forms having equal recognition – Morris, Chiu, & Liu, 2015) and attitudes to intercultural relations by consumers belonging to cultural majority of a given market. Because advertising integrates visual and non-visual (verbal and/or written) depictions of consumption situations as life scenarios, it enables multisensory mental simulation – a cognitive construction of experience or event whereby consumers can (re)live an encounter with a particular brand or engagement in a particular behavior (Chang, 2013; Escalas & Luce, 2003). Hence, we hypothesize that by mobilizing multiple cultural cues to convey a given organization’s or brand’s positive stance towards cultural diversity and inclusiveness, MIA campaigns encourage mental simulations of experiencing multiculturalism, and have a conditioning effect on consumer attitudes towards cultural diversity and intercultural relations. Recent social psychology research (e.g., Rios & Wynn, 2016; Yogeewaran & Dasgupta, 2014) indicates that framing of multiculturalism-related non-visual stimuli affects individuals’ stances on intercultural relations and perceived benefits of multiculturalism. Pro-multiculturalism scenarios framed in concrete (e.g., portraying multiculturalism as a practice of engagement culturally-different others) versus abstract (e.g., portraying multiculturalism as a generic idea) form can produce unfavorable outcomes among majority group members, such as increasing negative responses to cultural diversity and outgroup members. Thus, we investigated whether consumer responses to MIA reflect the effects of pro-multiculturalism message framing, whereby concrete depictions of cultural diversity elicit lower perceptions of benefits of multiculturalism and higher threat cognitions.

We employed a single factor, three-condition design whereby cultural majority (white) participants were exposed to all-white (control) vs. concretely-framed multicultural (depicting a diverse and engaged group of actors) vs. abstractly-framed multicultural (depicting a diverse but not engaged group of actors) visual appeals. Participants were 209 undergraduate students from a large U.S. university who completed the study for partial course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions – control (n=69), abstract (n=64), or concrete framing (n=76). Dependent variables included perceived benefits of multiculturalism, symbolic and prototypicality threat, and attitudes towards the ad and brand. We also tested the effects of an individual difference variable, cosmopolitanism (openness to engagement with people, experiences and things of different cultures). Findings reveal significant differences in reactions to appeals’ framing. We discuss how examining the effects of multicultural appeals framing on pro-diversity/inclusiveness sentiment can inform MIA designs that promote positive attitudinal and behavioral changes to cultural diversity and intercultural relations.

Why Multicultural Marketing is No Longer Enough for the Rainbow Nation: Conceptualising the Role of Marketing in Intercultural Relations in Post-Colonial Contexts

Lizette Vorster (Coventry University), Eva Kipnis (The University of Sheffield), Gaye Bebek (De Montfort University), Catherine Demangeot (IÉSEG School of Management)

One significant fallout of post-colonial development in Africa is intercultural tensions between groups descending from the colonisers and the colonised. Governmental approaches to addressing these tensions vary across Africa's nations. South Africa (SA) is aiming to resolve these tensions by more peaceful means of developing a Rainbow Nation (RN) building strategy, following the progressive dismantlement of the apartheid regime (Bornman 2011; Dlamini, Ballantine, & Ramanna 2016; Ng and Metz 2015; Petzer and De Meyer 2013). The RN ideology is underpinned by the principle of inclusivity to all cultural groups and building communities where cultural diversity is fully recognized and respected (Runhare & Mulaudzi 2012; Stewart & Ivala 2017). According to Sallaz (2010), SA legislation strongly encouraged marketers to cater to all the consumers in the marketplace.

Problematically, there is a growing consumer discontent and frustration with marketing efforts to engage with and reflect RN as a lived experience. That is, while SA marketers widely utilise multicultural marketing strategies (e.g., strategies designed to reach consumer audiences of multiple cultural backgrounds through integrating multiple cultural cues in one campaign), content of these campaigns often remains stereotypical and is perceived discriminatory by consumers. For example, consumers increasingly voice discontent with depictions of Black people dancing for everything from tea to cellular network signal (Dayimani 2015).

Prior research indicates that a key driver of consumer frustration with marketer efforts to act as catalysts of social transformation is the perceived disingenuity of marketing as a social function (Heath et al. 2017; Kipnis et al. 2012; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013). Indeed, operating in culturally heterogeneous markets delivers two major challenges to marketers: pressure to return on investment despite restricted budgets (Forbes 2018; Sinkovics 2016); and an expectation to engage with and reflect the social agenda in the marketplace they operate in (Dadzie et al. 1989; Kennedy 2016; 2017). Yet, given growing consumer expectations to accurately reflect their often complex, intertwined and fluid multicultural realities (Cross and Gilly, 2017) engaging with these challenges is a necessary condition for marketing to maintain relevance with its consumer audiences.

In view of the above, we examine whether and how SA marketing evolved as aligned with the evolution of RN building strategies and of the lived realities of individuals and groups negotiating co-living in culturally diverse post-colonial contexts. Drawing on neo-institutional theory, we conceptualise three historical stages of this evolution whereby regulative, normative, and cultural cognitive components of intercultural relations assume different prominence. Next, we conduct a systematic review of SA advertising with a view to examine how marketing tools and practices aligned to reflect these differences. Based on our findings, we offer a conceptual model to depict the interplay between the ideological and lived facets of intercultural relations in post-colonial SA, and propose that for marketers to continue serving as brokers between ideologies and lived experiences of nation building a different concept of marketing – intercultural marketing – is necessary

Examining implications of marketing (mis)representation on wellbeing of consumers with disabilities

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Consumers with disabilities are often considered susceptible to experiencing social vulnerability as a result of marketplace exchanges since the majority of products, services and spaces they encounter historically did not accommodate for impairments (Baker 2006; Baker et al. 2005). Consequently, interest in the role of marketplace (non)accommodation experiences in PWD' perceptions of social inclusion (or, inversely, exclusion) is growing. Extant studies (e.g., Dennis et al. 2016; Falchetti et al. 2016; Mafatlane et al. 2015; Elms and Tinson 2012; Bromley and Matthews 2007; Baker et al. 2007; Kaufman-Scarborough 2000) have so far predominantly focused upon experiences stemming from PWD' experiences of physical non-accommodation in the marketplace, such as lack/restriction of wheelchair access or of provision for visual impairment in store designs. Aiming to extend this evolving body of research, this paper presents early findings of a study examining whether and how experiences of (mis)representation of PWD in advertising, as a symbolic form of non-accommodation, affect PWD' perceptions of inclusion/exclusion.

While portrayal of PWD in advertising narratives is growing (for example, Maltesers, Aldi, McCain in the UK and Nike, Samsung, Toyota in the USA released campaigns featuring PWD across 2017-18 alone), its' effects on PWD wellbeing are little understood. A handful of studies (e.g., Kearney et al. forthcoming; Bolt 2014; Duncan and Aycock 2005) argue that PWD representations, even those conceived with genuine positive intentions, can perpetuate or exacerbate exclusion perceptions by consumers with disabilities if reflecting subtle yet harmful stereotypes related to disability. An example that received wide criticisms by disability researchers, activists and media commentators is the supercrip stereotype, defined as a plot of someone 'overcoming' or 'fighting' their impairment to achieve unlikely success (Silva and Howe 2012), often associated with narratives on Paraspport athletes. Disability studies argue that, although representation of Paraspport athletes can be considered a positive development in normalizing the disabled body, supercrip framed narratives act as a disempowering force as experienced by ordinary PWD since they perceive that to be included in the society they are held to a standard unattainable to some (Brittain 2016; Campbell 2008). The need for narratives representative of varied lived experiences of disability has found expression in 'nothing about us without us' ethos formulated and promoted by disability activists. Hence, we propose that to develop theories and practices that can inform empowering representations of PWD in the marketplace it is necessary to: 1) examine the processes through which subtle PWD stereotypes emerge; and 2) gain insights from consumers with disability on whether and which alternative narratives can counteract these stereotypes.

In our study, we draw on theory of ableism (Wolbring 2011, 2008) and the concept of 'ideal body type' (Schroeder and Borgerson 2005) to conceptualise the drivers of subtle forms of PWD stereotyping and explore them in the context of advertising representation. The concept of ableism broadly encapsulates socio-cultural construal of a particular human body characteristic (impairment, gender, racial/ethnic belonging) as a 'diminished state of being'. Construed through the lens of ableism, disability is conceived and perceived as a condition divergent from ideal body type and restricting one's ability to lead 'normal' life. Further, ableism brings into the fore the notion of disability as a hierarchical and multidimensional concept whereby a given body's ability is determined as characterised by a type of impairment construed as more or less adherent to expectations of 'normal' (for example, wheelchair use vs intellectual impairment) and other characteristics (gender, race) construed as diminished. This perspective explains that ableist conceptions of disability can be internalised by both non-disabled and PWD, informing emergence and acceptance of 'ideal disabled body' stereotypes, and – in the case of PWD – self-evaluation against these conceptions (Campbell 2008). Consequently, ableist stereotyping of PWD in the marketplace can be viewed to constitute representation of an 'ideal disabled consumer' – e.g., a body characterised by impairments that least prevent 'normal consumption' and other 'least diminished' characteristics. We conducted a qualitative exploratory study in the UK and USA designed to focus on the effects of exposure to advertising representations of PWD on consumers with disabilities perceptions of their social inclusion/exclusion. Through a systematic search of advertisements featuring PWD released in the last 10 years we identified six video advertisements, seeking to achieve variation by type of impairment and narrative of disability portrayal. Next, incorporating these advertisements as visual elicitation prompts we interviewed consumers with disabilities to elicit their perceptions of whether and how representations of disability in the advertisements align with their experiences and relate to their feelings of inclusion/exclusion in the PWD community and the wider society. Finally, we invited our participants to provide alternative narratives for disabled body representations in advertising. As the study is ongoing, in this session we intend to present our preliminary findings.

About presenters

Dr. Samantha N. N. Cross is an Associate Professor of Marketing in the Debbie and Jerry Ivy College of Business at Iowa State University. Her research examines how diverse entities, identities, perspectives and beliefs co-exist in consumers, households and society. She incorporates innovative multi-method approaches in her research, which has been presented in several national and international forums. She has received several awards for her research, including the Jane K. Fenyo Best Paper Award for Student Research, the ACR/Sheth Foundation Dissertation Award and the Best Paper in Track Award at the American Marketing Association (AMA) Winter Conference. Her work has been accepted for publication in top marketing journals, including the Journal of Marketing, the International Journal of Research in Marketing, the Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, the Journal of Advertising, the European Journal of Marketing, the Journal of Business Research and Consumption, Markets and Culture. Dr. Cross received her Ph.D. in Marketing from the University of California, Irvine; her M.B.A. in International Business from DePaul University and a B.Sc. in Management Studies from The University of The West Indies.

Eva Kipnis is a Senior Lecturer in international marketing at Sheffield University Management School. She holds a PhD in marketing from Durham University for which she earned the Best Thesis Award. Eva's research interests lie at the intersection of consumer behavior and branding, comprising three strands: 1) multicultural consumer identities and cultural branding; 2) brands in illicit markets; and 3) political resistance brands and marketplace-mediated consumer resistance. Her work has appeared in the Journal of Business Research, Marketing Theory, Consumption, Markets & Culture, Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, Journal of Marketing Management and others.

Catherine Demangeot is an Associate Professor of Marketing at IÉSEG School of Management, Paris. She received a PhD in marketing from Aston Business School. Her research interests lie in the area of consumers' interactions with multicultural or virtual environments as well as the strategies they may deploy and the competences they may acquire. Her research has appeared in the Journal of Public Policy and Marketing, Psychology & Marketing, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Marketing Management and others.

Dr. Meng-Hsien (Jenny) Lin is an Assistant Professor of Marketing at California State University Monterey Bay. Her research interests include studying individual difference factors in the context of sensory marketing, advertising, and focuses on the mediating role of emotions in these relationships, by using a multi-method approach, including the use of behavioral experiments, survey research, neuroscience and in-depth interviews. Dr. Lin's work has been published in European Journal of Marketing, Journal of Advertising, Journal of Consumer Affairs, Neuroscience and Journal for the Advancement in Marketing Education. Dr. Lin received her PhD in Marketing and MBA from Iowa State University.

Chris Pullig is a Professor and Chair of Marketing at Hankamer School of Business, Baylor University. His research focuses on marketing's role in promoting pro-societal causes, and marketing and branding in the global marketplace. His research has appeared in a variety of journals including the Journal of Marketing, Journal of Consumer Psychology, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Journal of Retailing, Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Public Policy and Marketing and others.

Shauna Kearney is the final year PhD student at Coventry University, UK. In her research Shauna theorizes and examines the role of ableism in the marketplace inclusion/exclusion experiences of people with disabilities, in the context of 2012(UK) and 2016 (Brazil) Paralympic Games. Her empirical study (in progress), based on a conceptualization integrating ableism with socio-spatial theory of marketplace inclusion examines whether and how para-sport events create a lasting legacy to improve wellbeing of consumers with disabilities. Applying intersectional research approach, she also examines potential impact of different types of impairment and other cultural characteristics (gender, race/ethnicity) on the overall experience of para-sport events.

Lizette Vorster is a final year PhD student. Her research draws lessons from marketers' versus consumers' visions of rainbow nation building agenda of South Africa post-apartheid, to identify lags in marketing's institutional vision for representing 'lived multicultural'. Using a sociosemiotic multimodal analysis approach, she examines rainbow nation representations and meaning-making from both perspectives and builds on socio-cognitive legitimacy strategies within neo-institutional theory. Her work argues that multicultural marketing is not sufficient in addressing expectations of consumer spheres where non-optimal lived realities necessitate developments in intercultural interactions and community development and multiple cultural creolization processes occur. She proposes intercultural marketing as a developmental direction to engage consumers and cultivate synergistic marketplace interactions.

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