Chapter 7

Digital Marketing Through a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Lens:
Embracing a New Paradigm for Success

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ABSTRACT

Digital marketing has become an integral part of modern business strategies, enabling organizations to reach a wide and diverse audience. However, the lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within digital marketing practices has limited its effectiveness and hindered its potential to connect with diverse consumer groups. This chapter explores the concept of digital marketing through a DEI lens, emphasizing the significance of diversity in campaigns, content creation, and overall marketing strategies. By acknowledging and incorporating DEI principles, organizations can enhance their digital marketing efforts and foster a more inclusive and representative online presence. Embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion in digital marketing is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic advantage. By adopting a DEI lens, organizations can unlock new opportunities, strengthen their brand reputation, and build meaningful connections with diverse audiences in the digital landscape.

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital content plays a pivotal role in both our personal and professional lives. Although traditional marketing methods like print, billboard, and television ads still have their place, most businesses nowadays rely heavily on digital content to build and promote their brands (Burgess et al., 2023). However, a company's success or failure can hinge on the creation and distribution of potentially offensive digital content (Robner et al., 2021a). Consumers today seek out brands that they can connect with, just as they would in the physical world. They want to see their values and identities reflected in the marketing of

products and services they wish to purchase (Robner et al., 2021a; Madera, 2013). Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in digital content is critical not only to increase lead generation, social media engagement, and consumer base but also to protect businesses from experiencing unexpected and potentially irreversible setbacks (Arsel et al., 2022).

Fundamentally, DEI in marketing is about celebrating and supporting people from diverse backgrounds through content. DEI is crucial in marketing because it promotes inclusivity and helps consumers identify brands that align with their values. According to Chaudhry (2023), more and more customers are looking for brands that embrace diversity and support various identities. While many businesses claim to prioritize DEI goals, they need to go beyond mere lip service and integrate diversity and inclusion ideas into their everyday practices and digital marketing content.

The first step in any marketing effort is to identify the target audience and tailor the offer to meet their unique demographics. Over time, the process of identifying the target group has evolved with the help of technology. These days, marketers have access to a vast amount of customer data, thanks to marketing automation systems, tools for tracking and analyzing customer behaviour, and customer data platforms. With big data and innovative techniques for data processing and analysis, marketers can now leverage cutting-edge audience segmentation models with predictive capabilities based on AI algorithms. This technology allows marketers to estimate future consumer purchase trends based on a range of factors such as browser cookies, mobile location data, internet surfing history, social media activity, brand preferences, and online purchasing behaviour (Arsel et al., 2022).

Most brands recognize that their target audiences are made up of consumers from diverse cultural backgrounds, religions, educational levels, socioeconomic statuses, genders, sexual preferences, and physical and mental disabilities (Burgess et al., 2023). This is something to be proud of, as brands that value DEI are better able to facilitate effective interactions between customers of different cultures (Madera, 2013). The ultimate goal of any marketing strategy is to establish a positive brand reputation (Chaudhry, 2023). It's essential to have a brand that consumers can connect with, view positively, and feel good about. Incorporating DEI principles into digital marketing helps ensure that a brand communicates with the broadest possible audience while also helping existing customers forge stronger ties to the brand.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) have a significant impact on a brand's customer base as well as its employees. According to Madera (2013), having diversity in leadership enables a brand to better reflect the ideals of its target market, create a more diverse workplace, and allow customers to identify with the brand's personalities. As the current generation starts to control the vast majority of consumer spending, DEI in digital marketing is anticipated to become an essential approach for both marketers and companies. Without it, businesses will be powerless to interact with consumers in a way that motivates them to become loyal consumers and potential brand ambassadors, as noted by Robner et al. (2021a). Therefore, it's time to start emphasizing DEI in long-term planning and begin implementing empirically supported techniques. Doing so would be a wise investment that will yield results over the long term for any brand.

2. BACKGROUND

Marketing has historically leveraged diversity and inequality to segment the market, but as society becomes more aware of the negative impacts of racial and income inequality, discrimination becomes less acceptable (Chandy et al. 2021; Johnson & Chichirau 2020; Rust 2020). As a result, discussions about

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