


Chapter 1

A Cross–Regional Analysis of Diversity and Inclusion in Marketing for Global Generation Z

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines how marketing strategies targeting global Gen Z segments conceptualize, implement, and evaluate diversity and inclusion (D&I) across different regions. The chapter gathers relevant theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and empirical findings about inclusive marketing through the synthesis of contemporary academic literature and practitioner insights. Special attention is paid to the differences between developed and emerging markets when it comes to Gen Z expectations, illuminating both shared generational values and culturally specific interpretations of inclusion. In addition, the analysis examines Gen Z's disapproval of performative activism, stressing the significance of genuineness, transparency, and consistency in brand messaging and organizational practice.

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The incorporation of cross-cultural viewpoints helps this chapter identify essential challenges and opportunities for marketers who are trying to engage Gen Z through credible D&I initiatives.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global marketplace has seen the rise of Generation Z (Gen Z), which is commonly described by those born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, as an influential and values-driven consumer group (Tarnanidis et al., 2026c; Velinov, 2025). Gen Z demonstrates heightened awareness of social justice, equity, and inclusion, as demonstrated by their unparalleled racially and ethnically diverse nature, increased openness to gender identity and sexual orientation, and deep immersion in digital technologies (Konishi et al., 2025; Mandania et al., 2025; Sardashti & Calantone, 2022). Marketing is no longer a peripheral or symbolic branding practice, as these attributes have elevated Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) to a central strategic concern. The constant exposing has enhanced their understanding of social inequality, cultural diversity, and systemic injustices in various societies. Gen Z customers place a high value on representation, equity, and inclusion, deeming these values as essential in establishing relationships with brands (Choi et al., 2025). Gen Z is a diverse global market, not a single uniform market. It is instead formed by regional, cultural, economic, and social contexts (Whitwam, 2025).

Racial justice, gender equality, disability inclusion, and LGBTQ (diverse community of people whose sexual orientations and/or gender identities differ from traditional heterosexual) representation are often prioritized by Gen Z consumers in Western markets like North America and Europe. In contrast, parts of Gen Z in places like Asia, Africa, and Latin America may place emphasis on economic inclusion, affordability, cultural authenticity, digital access, and possibilities for social mobility (Marti, 2025). In spite of regional variations, global Gen Z groups have a similar expectation of transparency, ethical behavior, and meaningful social engagement from brands operating in an interconnected market (Shepperson et al., 2025). Gen Z uses a critical lens to evaluate brand authenticity, unlike previous generations. This generation expects brands not only to showcase diversity in marketing communications but also to embed inclusion into their organizational practices, product development, employment policies, and corporate governance (Estanyol et al., 2025). Social media platforms, where Gen Z actively voices approval or criticism, quickly expose and reject superficial or performative approaches to D&I. Gen Z requires sustained action for inclusion instead of symbolic gestures (Ochis, 2024). There are three objectives in this chapter.

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