

Chapter 14

Racing Toward Inclusion: AI-Driven Decision-Making for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Formula 1 Marketing

Mitrajit Biswas

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0409-867X>

O.P. Jindal Global University, India

ABSTRACT

F1 or Formula 1 used to be an underdeveloped sport, but now, it has grown to be a globally appreciated brand with more than 200 countries encompassing an audience. Despite its sponsorships, technological innovations, and elite status, the sport has faced critiques and controversies pertaining to its lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion. F1 has been and continues to be, marketing a brand image that exudes exclusivity, and having an audience that is mostly dominated by white male drivers and male heads that run the socioeconomically European framework, has been easily alienating to more marginalized parts of the world. Campaigns like “We Race as One” have been seen as an attempt of inclusivity, but the intention behind them seems more like an attempt to placate the opposition by most critics. On the other hand, artificial intelligence has ushered in a new era of automated self-engaging marketing where exclusion is tailored for exclusivity.

INTRODUCTION

The changes that Formula 1 (F1) is undergoing are phenomenal. It used to be considered a sport that only a select privileged class appreciated, specifically that of Europe. However, it is now considered to be a form of entertainment, with a staggering

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500 million people tuning in from 200 countries (Mason, 2020). Its international calendar and cutting-edge technology is something that attracts several sponsors as well. Despite its rapid expansion, comments regarding F1 exclusivity, inequality and lack of diversity still remain. At the same time, the advent of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies is disrupting the way industries in global business marketing and brand management. AI systems use algorithms to review massive quantities of data that enable machine learning, predictive analytics, and automation to gain personalization, strategic and operational efficiencies and insights (Davenport et al., 2020). Therefore, Formula One, a brand that relishes its speed, precision and innovation, is bound to embrace AI. However, the use of AI in F1 marketing must confront issues of ethics. DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) must be considered seriously.

In this chapter, the use of marketing strategies involving AI and DEI alongside F1 will be analyzed. The first section attempts to place the evolution of the marketing of Formula 1 to the case of sport branding history and along with]. This section then considers the newly developed scholarship and states the ethical and business case arguments for the case of inclusivity. The third section investigates the growth of the use of Artificial Intelligence in marketing, and particularly the use of Artificial Intelligence in the sport business. The last section attempts to integrate all the above issues and examines the possible consequences of the use of AI in the context of Formula 1. The use of exclusionary and inclusive patterns concerning exclusion and includes transformation to AI tools.

FORMULA 1 MARKETING: FROM NICHE SPORT TO GLOBAL BRAND

As stated in ‘F1 marketing - a neglected area of marketing practice F1 sponsorships and branding’ posted by Mason in 2020, the practice of F1 marketing shows the evolution of the sport from a niche activity to a worldwide form of entertainment. From the very beginning, the focus of the branding strategy has emphasized the sport’s prestige, advanced technology, and luxurious qualities. This promotional strategy is still evident in the sponsorships attracting brands such as Rolex, Heineken, and Emirates and more recently, sponsors from the crypto and technology domains. These brands are aimed at the sponsors of F1 and the motorsport fans who perceive the sport as a sign of luxury and social stature. F1 branding targets an affluent and sophisticated audience, predominantly male, in the upper to middle class range.

The criticisms associated with this form of branding are well known. It is within this context that the absence of f1 fans belonging to the working class is striking as the F1 calendar covers more than just Monaco and Singapore and also spans Abu Dhabi and Miami. On and off the track, silence about women, people of color,

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