

Bias and Stigma: Race, Ethnicity, Accessibility, and Activism in the Marketplace

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INTRODUCTION

As we discussed in the last paper, we touch upon racial bias in the marketing mix and how it is having a changing effect on advertisement as a whole. We point out how advertisements display time and time again, how much they lack representation, people of color in the marketing world. We focus on how the people behind the advertisement do not consider people of color, in reference to making less products that are custom to people of color. Which is so trying and overdue for people of color, due to the fact that they are constantly fighting for their respect that they are way overdue. It is only logically that marketers use people of color to advertise as they make up half of the population. Why? Would you not advertise people that can relate to your soon to be consumer. So many companies demonstrate the fact that they disregard people of color and only focus on Caucasians.

As we further investigate these ongoing issues, it is important to understand the severity of this discrimination act against people of color. We are going to touch upon how this topic affects so many different cultures, backgrounds, and more importantly how a group of people are subject to one confined product. We will discuss how advertisements and commercials are confined to one social group. Different ethnicist groups will discuss how they are impacted. We will bring light to the fact that some ads even change colors and different shades to portray something they are not. The world of fashion, beauty and cosmetic play a huge role on how racism is but at large on public display. Caucasians play a huge role in this discrimination against people of color, and they reflect how most advertisements are controlled. Please consider all of these topics as they will play a huge role in consumer behaviors.

As mentioned in the first TCR, advertisers are able to target ads to certain ethnic groups. Ethnicity is defined as, the fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition. Being able to pick and choose which ethnic groups see your ads leaves room for a lot of issues. The issue I would like to focus on is that of division. Ethnic identities are usually defined by different cultural aspects such as: “language, cuisine , religious beliefs and practices, styles of dress, shared historical experiences and even distinct, urban neighborhoods or rural areas' '(RaceandEthnicity.com). In current times, these topics often come with a lot of attention in Politics. Extreme beliefs and prejudices often discriminate against certain ethnic groups. Allowing advertisers to use online marketing tools that can include/exclude certain ethnic groups allows for a high chance of increasing division. As far as news media, news sites can promote certain pieces to different groups. This can promote different ideas and narratives to different groups only causing an increase in division. Marketers will do what it takes for their clicks and this is just one of the issues that comes with the ability to target based on ethnicity.

In order to combat this as being a possible issue, online marketing tools must eliminate all features that allow for ethnic targeting. If all ethnic groups have the same chance of seeing the ad, this problem is eliminated. Marketers can focus on other segmented targeting options like those who like sports, fashion, traveling, ect. This leaves the ethnic group behind a person and their interests out of the target. Instilling some sort of policy that prohibits ethnic targeting in advertising would eliminate prejudices within the targeted ad industries. Products, services, and news media would be promoted with a more level playing field providing all ethnic groups with the same opportunities.

Race(cj) In terms of marketing, exclusion of people of color is evident in the shades of makeup that are advertised, and the models that are shown wearing them. Put simply, makeup is not advertised or made to include those with darker skin tones. As a result, buyers of color often have to purchase multiple shades of a product and mix them, which requires them to spend more money than customers with fairer skin (Wilson & Malcolm, 2019). From a purely capitalist standpoint, these actions make sense. Making people of color shell out more money to achieve the same effect as seen in those with lighter skin generates more profit. Morally, this is extremely wrong. Unfortunately, discrimination like this is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to racial-bias in the cosmetics industry.

Even models, who are meant to display products to consumers, are not free from racial discrimination. One famous model named Nykhor Paul reports that even at professional fashion shows, she needs to bring her own makeup because the makeup artists at the shows do not have anything that matches her dark skin tone (*Racism in the Makeup Industry*, n.d.). Not having products that are designed for people of color causes the standard of beauty to be centered around light skin tones. As a result, customers of color receive the message that they are not beautiful or deserving of products meant for them, which is damaging and can harm their self image. This is by design, because a distorted self image leads customers to purchase products marketed to correct the insecurity. This is a way to double profits from people of color by creating a problem (the view that lighter skin is more beautiful) and then sell the solution (skin lightening products that also contain hazardous chemicals (Cullen, 2021).

Disregard for morality in favor of profits is not surprising, though it is concerning. However, cultural factors also play a role in this. Colonialism has been ingrained in the United States since its inception. A system designed by Caucasian people, for Caucasian people,

naturally excludes people of color (Fenoglio, 2017). The only way to combat this is to involve people of color in the design process of cosmetics. Including their perspective can combat discrimination, even when the discrimination is done unknowingly. Being raised in a system that naturally includes Caucasian individuals causes privilege which is often so internalized that it is acted on unknowingly. Regardless, whether this discrimination is intentional or not, it is wrong and must be fixed. The logical way to fix it is to create more inclusive work environments that broaden the perspectives of everyone involved and foster racial equity in the workplace and cosmetic market.

In an ever changing and progressive world marketers need to adapt their methods in order to be more inclusive in their advertising campaigns. Consumers have begun to shift more in the direction of caring how a company is active in the community and what they are doing to make the world a better place for everyone in it. Major companies such as Apple, Target, and Facebook have pledged \$50 billion to African American communities since George Floyd's murder in June of 2020. Some companies have yet to actually have that pledge money materialize where as "Other companies, such as Target, have spread their investments out over a number of years. The Minneapolis-based retailer pledged in April to spend \$2 billion with black-owned businesses by the end of 2025" (Quiroz-Gutierrez, 2021). Which brings into question whether some companies legitimately want to help out minority communities or if they are just saying this to have good publicity. Amazon is one of the companies who along with donation pledges have pledged to increase the number of minorities and women employees in their ranks.

Companies need to understand that diversity is not a trend and that they cannot afford to not include minorities in their advertising campaigns. "One of the most important commitments

brands can make is ensuring their products and services are authentically serving the Black community. According to a Nielsen report, Black buying power was \$1.3 trillion in 2018” (Mallick, 2021), some major companies make pledges or promises to give back to minority communities, but many fall short of doing this and they need to realize the mistakes that they are making. Some companies have decided to actually make a change like Aunt Jemima retiring their racist caricature and Barbie who has expanded their products to include so many more different skin tones for their Barbies. JP Morgan has committed \$30 billion to racial equality and to do this they are promoting and expanding affordable housing for minority communities. Another major company being Sephora has dedicated 15% of their shelves to black owned companies to help promote black business and help them get more into the marketplace.

Companies are also pressed with needing to leverage their innovative efforts towards accessibility in the marketplace to be competitive in the modern business environment, as accessibility is something that may be essential in products for some, and become ‘delighters’ when available to general customers who enjoy the features. We are able to most clearly see benefit from companies doing this when the features are aimed at increasing inclusivity. 25% of Americans have some form of disability, as well as 15% of the world population has a disability; Defined as the mismatch between their impairment and the factors in the available environment. For marketing individuals, it is worth noting that the disability marketplace is far from monolithic, and as such means that catering to the needs of the individuals can be difficult. The most intentional ways to create positive change for groups with disabilities is ensuring products are designed around inclusivity, and actually using a product or feature should be easily unearthed.

One of the most influential companies in regards to disability activist efforts, as well as general inclusion of accessibility features is Apple. The firm has utilized their technologies since the Macintosh era to make interaction with devices easier for all, and easier for some through easily activated and customized VoiceOver, VoiceControl, Siri accessibility, as well as Text to Speech. One of the most consistent throughlines is that while groups may not feel directly let down when there is a lack of support in a product's accessibility features, there is a strong sense of brand alignment when a company or product *does* serve this market's needs. One of the biggest difficulties marketers face is the amount of layers within this market as each disability can be unique with its challenges, so the approach of Apple (features that take advantage of other uses for the devices hardware and software) is able to cast as wide a net as possible in hopes of improving the usability for all.

In Conclusion race plays a huge role in how the marketing world operates when advertising something to its consumers can only portray one certain social group. This affects how people portray their own race and ethnicity groups. They prove this concept right, when having a model demonstrate darker skin tones then normal, making this highly inappropriate. They prove to us time and time again they only care about the money coming in and the click bait they are gaining. They do not expend anyone else's needs or feelings beside their pockets. What companies don't realize is that if they market to a large range of clients, they will tell more money they will have because it fits what everyone needs. As the years go on, more generations fighting norms and breaking them, have been forcing business to operate differently so they can present to all humankind. We see facebook doing a huge jump to change gears, and reaching into their pocket to make a difference under their name/brand. Since the uproar, we see a positive increase in more mortality owned businesses popping up left and right. We also see more and

more people supporting these local businesses, shifting the consumer behavior overall. As the years go on we will continue to see more diversity through the marketing industry and see a positive change for the better.

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