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Moving Towards a More Effective Consideration and Application of Diversity in Marketing

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Moving towards a more effective consideration and application of diversity in marketing

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ABSTRACT

Across many fields, diversity has received significant attention from scholars and practitioners in recent years due the role it plays in facilitating an open-minded society and the anticipated outcomes for organisations. Despite significant interest, the marketing literature in diversity remains complex, fragmented and arguably less developed than in other disciplines. Particularly, literature has largely overlooked diversity, failing to consider its multidimensional nature, focusing on singular dimensions. Similarly, extant discourse lacks a solid definition of diversity and its place within marketing. Additionally, there is a lack of understanding behind the different ways brands can integrate diversity in to their marketing efforts, and how we may categorise different approaches. It is well noted that consumers are increasingly sceptical of brands who are seen as simply chasing the business case of diversity, and research often follows suit, focusing on brand-related outcomes, despite scholar attention signposting the importance of social impact of brands integrating diversity. Considering these factors, this thesis focuses on the need to better understand the nuances and intricacies of diversity beyond the existing singular focus of specific types, and to discover the differing social impact of approaching diversity. The research within this thesis centres on diversity approaches within marketing and delves into how marketing decisions can contribute to connectedness in audiences.

The variable of connectedness was chosen due to the critical and increasing need to understand the social impact of diversity initiatives. The importance of being connected is well recognised due to its implications on wellbeing and contributions to a less segregated society. Despite this, diversity scholars have given scant attention to these social impacts in the examination of diversity and its related concepts.

To address these knowledge gaps, this research presents three distinct but interrelated papers. The first paper outlines an account of marketing diversity initiatives and their role in building connectedness with audiences. Aware of divergent success and reactions from audiences, a thorough review of a wide literature examining diversity is used to constitute a framework for effective diversity initiatives. In doing so, we propose three factors essential for success in terms of establishing audience connectedness: a) how marketers tactically approach diversity, with emphasis on which and how many diversity characteristics are represented and the visual/non-visual cues utilised to signal diversity; b) how these actions are perceived by audiences; and c) the level of belief congruence achieved. The following of the explicated framework assist marketers in resonating with a broader audience. Namely, the importance of an intersectional approach is stressed, explicating how audiences have many identities, all of which can lead to oppression in one form or another. Thus, failure to represent multiple identities may instigate tokenism. The results suggest that audience and marketers factors must converge to build connectedness, providing a comprehensive list of research propositions and exemplars to highlight this.

The second article explores differing manifestations of brands approach diversity, addressing the variance observed in literature and practice. Through a typology and model approach, supported through a literature background and practical exemplars, findings show that there are four types of brand approaches to diversity. These types are categorised on the basis of their level of depth and order of entry, underpinned by intersectionality, tokenism and order of entry theories. The paper delineates these types with a set of propositions which indicate their capability of enhancing connectedness, additionally providing a comprehensive future research agenda. This paper contributes to the diversity literature by being the first to formulate a typology to constitute a Brand's Approach to Diversity within the boundaries of level of depth and order of entry.

Building on these insights, the third article employs a survey methodology to empirically examine the impact of perceived diversity on audience's connectedness, outlining to critical mediator mechanisms of belief congruence and self-congruence. The findings illustrate that in order to connect with a diversity initiative, audiences must see similarities between their identity and beliefs, providing marketers with two routes of connecting. Importantly, we instate how multidimensional considerations of identities and beliefs are important, as they provide higher degrees of similarity and more opportunities to connect and reduce disconnectedness. The findings illustrate both the bright and dark side implications of diversity marketing practices. As such, the article provides insights into how audience reactions are not static, but unique, and marketers must understand align their diversity initiatives with audiences in order to connect sufficiently.

In summary, this research offers unique and meaningful theoretical and practical implications by emphasising the importance of building connectedness in audiences, providing a framework to categorise different approaches to diversity, as well as understanding factors within audiences which impact their disposition to (dis)connect.

STATEMENT OF PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Refereed Journal Articles

Burgess, A. J., Wilkie, D. C., & Dolan, R. (2021). Towards successful diversity initiatives: the importance of building audience connectedness. *Journal of Marketing Management, 37*(1-2), 144-161.

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Refereed Conference Papers

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Academic Conference Presentations

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Doctoral Colloquia and Research Presentations

Burgess, A 2019, 'Towards successful diversity initiatives: the importance of building audience connectedness', University of Adelaide Doctoral Colloquium, University of Adelaide, 1-3 December, Adelaide, Australia.

Burgess, A. J., (2020). University of Adelaide Marketing Students Society: A Talk with Amelie Burgess, University of Adelaide, 24 Aug, Adelaide, Australia.

Burgess, A. J., (2021). 'A Typology of Brand Approaches to Diversity' Research Day, University of Adelaide, 2 Feb, Adelaide, Australia.

Burgess, A. J., (2021). 'Diversity in advertising: Is that me I see?' Research Day, University of Adelaide, 2 Dec, Adelaide, Australia.

STATEMENT OF DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint award of this degree.

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CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

Background

Diversity in marketing has received significant scholarly attention in recent years, with academic conversations intensifying in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and critical social movements (e.g., Black Lives Matter; Francis & Robertson, 2021). These events have provided specific opportunities for marketing research and practice to uncover discrimination within marketing as well as how to move towards more successful approaches to diversity. With the concept of diversity proliferating into the marketing discourse, significant insights have revealed the role marketing plays in (de)constructing equality or discrimination (Grier et al., 2019; Kipnis et al., 2021). Defined broadly as the heterogeneity of identities within populations (Harrison & Sin, 2006), diversity can also be used as a strategy implemented to improve the experiences, representation and outcomes of groups that face inequality (e.g., ethnic/racial minorities and women; Byrd, 2018; Callahan et al., 2018; Leslie, 2019). In an attempt to resolve inequality in marketing practices, several major brands have integrated diversity marketing activities, for example, Dove, Nike and Unilever (Sobande, 2019; Sternadori & Abitbol, 2019; Kipnis et al., 2021). The extent of academic attention on the diversity marketing concept is apparent in prominent journals, including the *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, *Journal of Service Research, European Journal of Marketing*, and *Journal of Consumer Research,* increasing their publications and calls for papers involving the highly topical and emerging concepts underneath diversity marketing. For marketers, diversity practices assist in connecting better with audiences, leading to positive evaluations of the brand (e.g., positive reactions to advertisements) and generating societal effects (e.g., instigating a more inclusive society; Åkestam et al., 2017).

Current Diversity Research in Marketing

Diversity Marketing

Themes of diversity and inclusive marketing practices are defined as *"actions in marketing research, education, and practice that proactively and consistently promote advancement of diversity and inclusion for all marketplace participants"* (Kipnis et al., 2021, p.144). In marketing mix practices, diversity is seen as brands recognising consumers have multiple, overlapping identities — and reflecting these identities in the brands activities such as products and advertising (Rosa-Salas & Sobande, 2022). Diversity marketing and its related themes, such as brand activism, have increased in marketing research and can be attributed to rising social movements, changing diversity sentiment within consumers and the increasing emphasis of marketers wishing to contribute to social good (Sobande, 2019). Movements such as Black Lives Matter, Me Too, Times Up and Pride have drawn scholarly attention to marketing's role in (de)constructing marketplace inequality (Francis & Robertson, 2021; Kipnis et al., 2021; Prothero & Tadajewski, 2021). The Marketing Science Institute, an extensively comprised network of leading academics and marketing professionals, announced diversity in marketing as a Tier 1 research priority in 2020 (MSI, 2020). Additionally, several global research and consulting companies (e.g., Deloitte, KPMG and Kantar) have paid significant attention to the concept (Brodzick et al., 2021; Tezcan, 2021; Poole, 2021). Attention from both practitioners and scholars is due to the significant and wide-reaching positive and negative impact of diversity in marketing. While widely diversity marketing can contribute to advertising effectiveness, increased customer access, satisfaction and authenticity perceptions, there are also links to increasing important social impact (Kipnis et al., 2021; Åkestam et al., 2021). For example, authors posit how diversity marketing can contribute to a less segregated and more inclusive society and enhance well-being through influencing attitudes towards diversity and improving the experiences of marginalised groups (Kipnis et al., 2021; Åkestam et al., 2021).

However, research into diversity marketing is limited, offering singular focuses (e.g., ethnic advertising; Licsandru & Cui, 2019) that fail to represent diversity's broader and complex nature, as explained in the following section.

Singular Focus of Diversity

Initial research into diversity marketing primarily focused on singular dimensions and their representation in advertising (e.g., Eisend & Herman, 2010; Johnson & Grier, 2011). For example, Licsandru & Cui (2019), Åkestam et al. (2017) and Eisend and Herman (2010) all view specific forms of diversity (e.g., sexuality) and reflections in advertising. While the stream of diversity marketing through a singular lens persists (e.g., Lilejadal et al., 2020; Sternadori & Abitbol, 2019) and is worthy due to its simplicity and specific insights into types of marketplace discrimination, many scholars recognise that at times this approach may fail to encapsulate the complex, rich and broad conceptual nature of diversity (Carathathis, 2014; Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1989; Kipnis et al., 2021; Schroeder & Borgerson, 2005). For example, solely focusing on gender when examining stereotypes in advertising may ignore the severity and differing experiences of gender stereotypes and related discrimination for women that belong to multiple marginalised identities (e.g., race, sexuality or social class). Literature communicates that gender stereotypes will be experienced differently by people who belong to a marginalised gender group as well as other marginalised identity groups (Gopaldas & Siebert, 2018; Sobande, 2019). As such, a singular focus on identity when discussing diversity representations might reaffirm and exacerbate marketplace inequalities (Gopaldas & Siebert, 2018).

The myopic focus on a single dimension, such as ethnicity, can significantly impact our understanding of oppression and inequality perpetuated by contexts as it obscures the relevance and intersection of other identities, ignoring and over-simplifying the dynamic nature of

diversity. Thus, more recent conceptualisations have emerged in marketing which sees diversity manifest as a multidimensional concept (Gopaldas & Siebert, 2018; Kipnis et al., 2021). Conceptualisations of diversity are fragmented, likely due to different theoretical perspectives and scopes of investigation. Albeit, recognition of diversity as a stand-alone and broader concept is lacking in the literature, with most studies investigating elements of diversity underneath different strategies (e.g., brand activism, corporate social responsibility and cause-related marketing; Sobande, 2019; Sternadori & Abitbol, 2019).

Moving Towards Multidimensional and Broader Perspectives

Authors such as Kipnis et al. (2021) have identified that diversity research in marketing suffers from fragmentation with a need to evolve towards broader, rather than singular, conceptualisations and considerations of diversity. Recent research demonstrated an emerging evolutionary shift of diversity research in marketing through incorporating more holistic and multiple perspectives (Kipnis et al., 2021; Grier, 2020; Gopaldas & Siebert, 2018). Many of these articles address pitfalls in diversity strategies and research investigation, responding to the need to examine multiple rather than specific dimensions of diversity across multiple brand actions (e.g., Kipnis et al., 2021; Gopaldas & Siebert, 2018). For example, Kipnis et al. (2021) note many researchers focus on singular dimensions of diversity (e.g., gender), rather than considering multiple of these dimensions (e.g., gender, race and sexuality). A hallmark of diversity research has been the introduction of intersectionality to move towards broader and more multidimensional consideration of diversity dimensions (Gopaldas & DeRoy, 2015). Intersectionality is defined as the interaction between multiple categories of difference that recognise individuals' diversity and experiences, and ultimately how they contribute to discrimination within society (Crenshaw, 1989). While intersectionality can be used to understand oppression and engage in research (Gopaldas & DeRoy, 2015), it provides usefulness in applying its philosophy into marketing practice (Sobande, 2019). When taking

this view, it is clear to see that current research and industry practices would benefit from taking intersectional and broader understandings of diversity to move towards more successful and less discriminatory diversity marketing practices.

Social Implications of Diversity in Marketing

Whilst most commonly scholars argue the business case for diversity (e.g., Licsandru & Cui, 2019, Oakenfull, 2013; Khan et al., 2015), through focussing on brand outcomes such as advertising effectiveness, purchasing and increased profits, researchers are beginning to invite and encourage diversity marketing investigations to uncover its social impact (Kipnis et al., 2021). One main social impact receiving increasing attention is the notion of connectedness (e.g., Liljedal et al., 2020; Åkestam et al., 2017). Connectedness is defined as the extent to individuals' feelings of comfort and closeness with a brand and the people depicted in its actions (Lee & Robbins, 1995; Åkestam et al., 2017).

Feelings of connectedness shape how individuals engage with others in new social settings by influencing how individuals perceive the environment and behave accordingly (Lee & Robbins, 1998). Rather than focusing on direct social inclusion (i.e., belonging to marginalised or non-marginalised groups), connectedness considers the acceptance and rejection of diversity initiatives from the totality of the audience (Åkestam et al., 2017). Connectedness is a social effect that marketers frequently describe as desirable for their brands because it is thought to lead to a more inclusive, less segregated society and audience (Åkestam et al., 2017). Further, during the COVID-19 pandemic, connectedness emerged as a critical variable marketers had a duty of instilling and maintaining with audiences (Kirk & Rifkin, 2020). When achieved, it can instil a sense of well-being and representation of people in more resonant, authentic and relatable ways (Åkestam et al., 2017). While research links diverse portrayals to increasing connectedness, these studies often focus on singular dimensions of diversity (e.g., Åkestam et

al., 2017; Liljedal et al., 2020). Yet, increasing multiple forms of diversity and representation may present more paths for audiences to connect (Licsandru & Cui, 2019).

Despite these advances, research is yet to uncover why and what transpires if audiences fail to connect with diversity initiatives. Extant research suggests that audiences might disconnect, potentially posing a dark side of marketing practice (Huang et al., 2018). Disconnectedness is defined as feeling distant, no relation, estranged, or not participating with people in marketing practices (e.g., advertising; Nisar et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2018). When disconnectedness is evident adverse reactions may transpire, such as anger, radicalisation, protestation, loneliness and depression (Gozansky et al., 2021; Zortea et al., 2020). These behaviours may also have further detrimental implications, such as leading to extremist beliefs (e.g., white supremacy or activism; Costabile et al., 2021). For brands, this may see audiences reject diversity initiatives and potentially leave harmful comments against the brand and specific marginalised groups. In practice, diversity initiatives have instigated disconnectedness within audiences. For example, in 2019, Gillette's "Best Men Can Be" campaign resulted in polarising reactions amongst audiences. While some connected with the diversity initiatives, evidenced by their positive feedback, some said the initiatives 'emasculates men' and 'drives a war against masculinity', even going so far as to degrade the feminism movement (Hsu, 2019). Social media commentary indicated that some audiences decided to switch to other competing razor brands.

While the nascence of connectedness is increasing in marketing research, there remains a lack of insight regarding how marketers may achieve connectedness rather than disconnectedness within audiences. Some authors emphasise the relevance of identity congruence, such as people resonating with their ethnicity being depicted in an advertisement (Yoo, 2020). Yet, authors have begun to find but struggled to explain why audiences that do not belong to the minority groups targeted responded positively to the diversity marketing effort (Lee & Kim, 2017;

Nichols & Raska, 2020; Yoo, 2020). This insight is critical as mainstream marketing efforts reach a broad range of audiences, and their reactions need to be studied together to understand diversity marketing's impact on general audiences. What is clear is that audiences are increasingly becoming supporters of diversity, showing a fairer understanding of people's differences and such demands regarding diverse portrayals are no longer limited to coming from marginalised groups (Åkestam et al., 2017; Licsandru & Cui, 2019). Furthering the research gaps, insights that exist into building connectedness with diversity initiatives are predominantly from the perspective of specific forms of diversity initiatives (e.g., LGBT advertising). As such, there is a lack of generalisable findings for broader diversity initiatives. These results have little relevance for practice as brands begin to refrain from approaching singular forms of diversity due to accusations of tokenism. Many brands diversifying their marketing practices during the Black Lives Matter movements failed to connect with audiences after falling short of addressing intersectional issues. Thus, studies that address specific facets of diversity may only answer part of the broader diversity picture.

Justification of Research

Traditionally, diverse portrayals in marketing have been seen mainly to generate brand-related benefits (e.g., Khan et al., 2015; Sternadori & Abitbol, 2019). While of great importance, this narrow view of the potential effects of diversity marketing efforts has been criticised (Åkestam et al., 2017; Kipnis et al., 2021). Scholars note that to understand the implications of diversity marketing, its social impacts on audiences need to be considered (Åkestam et al., 2017; Kipnis et al., 2021). Despite authors noting the social impact diversity marketing may have, these findings typically only view diversity from a singular dimension (e.g., gender, sexuality or ethnicity; Liljedal et al., 2020; Åkestam et al., 2017; Licsandru & Cui, 2019). Yet, taking such an approach fails to understand the true meaning behind diverse portrayals, how broader

diversity influences social impact, resolving multiple marketplace inequalities, and resonating with broader audiences more effectively.

The focus of this thesis is to expand the understanding of diversity in marketing and the role it plays in (de)constructing the social impact of connectedness. In doing so, it contributes to the conceptualisation of diversity in marketing and a deeper understanding of broader, rather than singular, recognitions. As such, the thesis integrates theories and notions founded in sociology, management and psychology to transform marketing's understanding and application of diversity. Applying theories like intersectionality, tokenism and identity-congruity in a marketing context, our findings suggest that marketers must recognise diversity's multi-faceted nature through intersectionality, as singular recognitions may contribute to tokenism and a lack of connectedness in audiences (Carasthathis, 2014; Gopaldas, 2013). The four types of brand approaches to diversity are theoretically underpinned by intersectionality, tokenism and order of entry theories. These theories suggest that brands are influenced by market dynamics when approaching diversity, often following a bandwagon effect (Mirzaei et al., 2022; Silver et al., 2021). Marketers may often approach diversity in falsified manners and unintentionally contribute to marketplace discrimination (Kipnis et al., 2021). Importantly, diversity is not a one-size-fits-all approach, with audiences' self-identity and beliefs needing to be congruent with the diversity present within marketing activities for them to connect.

Research Objectives

This research seeks to expand our knowledge of the complexities and nuances surrounding diversity marketing beyond the focus of singular dimensions and brand outcomes, considering the multidimensionality of diversity practices and their evident social impact. Furthermore, this research aims to develop a deeper understanding of effective diversity practices and the relevant mechanisms at play. This leads to the following research objectives:

1. Develop and revise the understanding and conceptualisation of diversity in marketing practices
2. Theoretically understand the different ways brands integrate diversity practices
3. Understand and emphasise the importance of building connectedness in audiences
4. Delineate how actions with marketing practice may impact connectedness in audiences
5. Identify the mechanisms within audiences that contribute to enhancing connectedness

Collectively, the objectives of this thesis seek to provide a better understanding of the concept of diversity within marketing, with a particular focus on how this constitutes connectedness within audiences. This thesis will also provide more insight into how audiences connect with diversity initiatives in unique ways by examining their internal congruence factors, thus offering novel contributions to industry and practice.

Research Context

Due to the gaps present within the literature, a broader approach to the research context was taken. Rather than focusing on specific product categories, within the first study, it is identified that diverse portrayals in marketing practices (e.g., products and advertising) are not limited to particular categories (e.g., beauty brands and motor vehicles all have evidence of approaching diversity through marketing initiatives; Sternadori & Abitbol, 2019). The papers in Chapters Two and Four focus primarily on marketing communications due to their role in influencing popular culture (Harrison et al., 2017). However, the paper in Chapter Three uncovers the role and diversity efforts apparent across a brand's broader marketing mix, answering emergent gaps in research (Kipnis et al., 2021).

Research Framework

Three academic papers were formulated to appropriately address the research questions and respond to growing academic interest. This thesis employs conceptual and quantitative research techniques to explore the research objectives presented in Section 1.3. The first two studies employ conceptual approaches through literature reviews, exemplars, theorising and deductive reasoning. Conducting conceptual research first allows researchers to become familiar with the phenomenon and gain contextualised findings into its operation (Jaakkola, 2020). Following this, the paper in Chapter Three conducts a quantitative inquiry into the audience perceptions of diversity initiatives using the insights gained from the preceding conceptual methods (Desphande, 1983). A short description of each paper is presented below:

The paper in Chapter Two takes a conceptual approach through a literature review and case examples to propose a framework of how diversity initiatives might achieve success through audience connectedness. The framework includes three characteristics of such initiatives: the marketer's approach to diversity, the audiences' perception of diversity, and the level of belief congruence. When all three factors converge, diversity initiatives in advertising can evoke a sense of audience connectedness. The research developed a conceptual framework and a series of propositions that hypothesise the relationship between marketer and audience factors that compete and contribute to audience connectedness.

Drawing on the first paper, the paper in Chapter Three responds to scholar concerns regarding the fragmented nature of diversity studies in marketing (Kipnis et al., 2021; Demangeot et al., 2019). To address pitfalls in literature, the paper classifies different brand approaches to diversity and their social impact. While the paper in Chapter Two focuses on marketing communications and diversity at a tactical level, Chapter Three seeks to understand the broader implications of diversity across the marketing mix, from a branding philosophy perspective of

diversity. The second paper, contained in Chapter Three, undertakes a conceptual approach outlined by Jaakkola (2020) as theory synthesis, typology and model. It undertakes an overview of key literature studies to identify complexity and disparities in literature. Then, exemplars are used to highlight a particular instance or narrative of the phenomenon; exemplars are highly characteristic examples of a specific type of phenomenon (Anker et al., 2021). Exemplars are particularly conducive to informing conceptual studies as they offer a tangible context against which the theoretical constructs and their interrelations can be explained (Smith & Zarate, 1990). The exemplars have been chosen because they are characteristic of the key elements of BATD – order of entry and level of diversity. Then, deductive reasoning is used to put forth propositions based on the literature regarding each boundaries ability to achieve connectedness.

The paper contained in Chapter Three draws on a quantitative methodology through a survey to empirically identify and demonstrate audience factors that build connectedness in diversity initiatives. In this case, quantitative techniques through a survey yield quantifiable results that are presented as objective, reliable, and valid findings (Sutrisna, 2009; Healy and Perry, 2000). In particular, the paper examines the propensity of audiences connecting based on their belief and self-congruence, providing confirmatory findings from papers one and two. While previous research focuses on self-identity congruence (e.g., the similarity of ethnicity towards the ethnicity of those in the ad), this study takes a multidimensional approach to self-identity to align better with the complexity of audience identities, presenting a better opportunity to connect with multiple, rather than singular, identities. Additionally, the final paper positions that belief congruence between a diversity advertisement and audiences is important in building connectedness. The control variables within the study put forth a supplementary that older and more conservative audiences may be more likely to disconnect with diversity marketing practices. Thus, we address a gap in research that has struggled to explain why audiences (dis)connect with advertisements regardless of their identity (e.g., ethnicity and sexuality).

Research Contributions

This research informs and evolves our understanding of diversity marketing beyond unidimensional, industry and brand outcomes focuses apparent in the existing diversity marketing discourse. Despite recognising the importance of multiple forms of diversity in the marketing literature (Gopaldas & DeRoy, 2015; Kipnis et al., 2021; Schroeder & Borgerson, 2005), few scholars have incorporated these perspectives into their study. Hence, the broader theoretical contributions of this thesis stem from the emphasis on the importance of multidimensional diversity and connectedness as factors that should not be ignored or overlooked in diversity research. Indeed, this thesis offers unique evidence of the core and necessary factors within diversity approaches and audiences to establish connectedness and positive impact.

Diversity scholars have recognised the need to consider the social impact, rather than the business case, for brands integrating diversity (e.g., Kipnis et al., 2021; Åkestam et al., 2017). Yet, most studies within diversity marketing literature focus on brand and business-related outcomes. This thesis offers a unique and new perspective of diversity marketing by positioning connectedness as a central variable that marketers must understand and strive for. It thus contributes to a better understanding of the (un)intended social consequences marketers may have when engaging with diversity-related activities. We confirm that diversity activities impact connectedness and devise key considerations marketers must understand to build connectedness. Further, we examine these effects from a general audience perspective, recognising the relevance and reach contemporary diversity marketing efforts have.

The field of diversity in marketing scholar work is still dominated by unidimensional studies, despite growing recognition about the importance of considering multidimensionality (e.g., Kipnis et al., 2021; Gopaldas & DeRoy, 2015; Sobande, 2019). As such, the diversity marketing

field is often oversimplified and not generalisable across different contexts. Significantly, no studies recognise the umbrella term nature of diversity, a prevalent and evident perspective in other research streams (e.g., management; Byrd, 2018). Thus, another central contribution of this thesis is the departure away from singular foci, to a broad and more multidimensional investigation and conceptualisation of diversity, mainly through understanding and integrating intersectionality. Moreover, two conceptual frameworks are formulated which offer important contributions to diversity marketing literature and practice by identifying the mechanisms that contribute to building connectedness in audiences and how we must classify different approaches to diversity.

Lastly, the literature provides little insight regarding the polarising reactions from audiences. For example, in 2019, Gillette released a commercial titled 'The Best Men Can Be' tackling toxic masculinity. While some audiences heralded their approach, others engaged in negative word of mouth and brand switching; some even criticised the falsified and contradictory actions of the brand. While literature suggests this may be based on identity threat (dissimilarity with audiences), these reactions are being observed by audiences from all walks of life. We aim to contribute to this complexity by positioning that factors within audiences demand brands to take original approaches to diversity. In particular, diversity strategies will connect differently to different audiences. Thus, we must move away from a one-size-fits-all approach.

Overall, these three papers conceptually and empirically contribute to a holistic understanding of diversity within an advertising and branding context. This thesis considers diversity as a multidimensional and evolving concept that can be integrated across the marketing mix, emphasising the importance of understanding the social impact marketers can have. Hence, diversity, its meanings and manifestations are explored in more depth to understand what is causing variance in audiences connecting with diversity actions by brands. This thesis contributes to the literature by illustrating convergence between marketers' actions and

audience reception, the differing types of approaches to diversity and the factors within audiences that contribute to the social impact and thus success of a diversity approach in marketing.

Thesis Overview

The thesis began with an introduction to the research and an explanation of the papers contained in this chapter. The chapter provides an overview of the research objectives, framework, context and contributions. Chapters Two, Three and Four include the body of this thesis, each chapter containing one of the three academic papers. The paper presented in Chapter Two was published in a special issue titled "#MeToo and beyond: inequality and injustice in marketing practice and academia" in the *Journal of Marketing Management*. The article presented in Chapter Three received a revision and resubmission opportunity at the *European Journal of Marketing*. Chapter Four contains the third paper, which has received an invitation to submit to the *Australasian Journal of Marketing* special issue "The Implications of Something Different: Bright Side, Dark Sides and the Unexpected" following submission to the ANZMAC conference in 2021. All papers have been formatted differently in order to adhere to the respective author guidelines at each journal. The thesis concludes in Chapter Five with a discussion of the overarching research contributions, practical implications, limitations and comprehensive future research directions.

CHAPTER TWO. Towards successful diversity initiatives: the importance of building audience connectedness

Statement of Authorship

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Principal Author

Name of Principal Author (Candidate)	Amelie Burgess
Contribution to the Paper	Literature review, conceptual development, formulation of conceptual framework and wrote the manuscript
Overall percentage (%)	70%
Certification:	This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research candidature and is not subject to any obligations or contractual agreements with a third party that would constrain its inclusion in this thesis. I am the primary author of this paper.
Signature	Date 23/12/2021

Co-Author Contributions

By signing the Statement of Authorship, each author certifies that:

i. the candidate's stated contribution to the publication is accurate (as detailed above);

ii. permission is granted for the candidate in include the publication in the thesis; and

iii. the sum of all co-author contributions is equal to 100% less the candidate's stated contribution.

Name of Co-Author	Dr Dean Wilkie
Contribution to the Paper	Supervised and contributed to the conceptual development and framework. Assisted with editing and revising manuscript.
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Contribution to the Paper	Supervised and contributed to the conceptual development and framework. Assisted with editing and revising manuscript.
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Please cut and paste additional co-author panels here as required.

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Towards successful diversity initiatives: the importance of building audience connectedness

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Abstract

The past decade has seen an increasing number of diversity initiatives undertaken by brands in an attempt to connect with consumers. While audiences view some initiatives positively, some evoke controversy or backlash, indicating that they have not been successful. Without clear research-based directions for designing diversity initiatives though, marketers continue to struggle. Therefore, this article proposes a framework of how diversity initiatives might achieve success through audience connectedness. The framework includes three characteristics of such initiatives: the marketer's approach to diversity, the audiences' perception of diversity, and the level of belief congruence. When all three factors converge, diversity initiatives can evoke a sense of audience connectedness. Through leveraging audience connectedness, marketers can devise and achieve initiatives that target, reach, and resonate with broader, rather than limited audiences.

Introduction

Social movements such as #MeToo, #TimesUp, and #BlackLivesMatter encourage continued attention to diversity issues, including by marketers and brands that seek to undertake diversity initiatives to connect with society and their consumers (Licsandru & Cui, 2019). Ideally, diversity initiatives reflect attempts to be more inclusive and avoid excluding anyone from access to critical resources, including those associated with consumption (Åkestam et al., 2017; Crenshaw, 1995). However, diversity in marketing also prompts some debates about its

authenticity. Notably, though 90% of brands claim to be passionate about diversity, only 4% are perceived as diverse by consumers (Aird, 2019) – a discrepancy that suggests there are unsuccessful executions of diversity initiatives. Even when brands seek to integrate and portray a variety of demographic identities in both internal and external communications and processes (Cunningham & Melton, 2014), disingenuous versions can evoke consumer scepticism, as well as backfire and lead to enhanced discrimination, by reinforcing negative social norms and imposed inequalities on vulnerable groups (Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2009; Harrison et al., 2017). That is, if audiences continue to be exposed to stereotypical, problematic themes and messages in marketing communications, such ideas may increasingly influence their social judgements and enhance the spread of discriminatory beliefs (Harrison et al., 2017).

To achieve successful diversity initiatives, audience connectedness may be a critical factor (Åkestam et al., 2017; Oakenfull et al., 2008). It refers to a sense of belonging or being valued that is sparked in the audience from some form of communication, such as advertising (Åkestam et al., 2017; Russell & Puto, 1999). If audiences instead feel disconnected, they likely reject the message, as well as the marketer or brand that shares it. To establish a feeling of connectedness, we posit that three factors are critical. First, the *marketer's approach to diversity (MATD)* is the outcome of an extended, controllable decision-making process to develop the initiative and signal the brand's commitment to diversity. Among the various decisions involved in this process, we focus on two that appear highly relevant to establishing audience connectedness: the number of diversity characteristics represented (unidimensional or multi-dimensional; Gopaldas & DeRoy, 2015) and how diversity is signalled (visual or non-visual cues; Cunningham & Melton, 2014; Harrison et al., 2017). Second, we focus on the extent to which audiences perceive diverse attributes to be present in the advertising context (*perceived diversity*). Third, the depiction needs to be congruent with the audience's beliefs, which we measure as *belief congruence*. If any of these factors is absent, diversity initiatives might lead to audience disconnection, rather than connection, and increase the risk of negative outcomes

of the initiative. But if all three factors occur together, it should encourage audience connectedness.

To establish these links, we start with a review of multidisciplinary literature related to the growing importance of diversity. By integrating the findings from this cross- disciplinary literature review with intersectionality and tokenism theories, we derive a framework to explain the role of the three factors; we also offer several propositions for encouraging further conceptual and empirical investigations into diversity initiatives. Finally, we offer some recommendations for practitioners implementing diversity initiatives and suggest some research avenues.

Background

Discussions of equality, often associated with efforts by minority groups or people exposed to discrimination to mobilise and exercise their rights and freedoms, highlight discrepancies in treatment across groups of people, often based on demographic characteristics (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1995). Efforts to achieve equality also tend to identify the need to recognise and respect the diverse identities that humans embrace (Licsandru & Cui, 2019). Brands and marketers accordingly adopt diversity initiatives, in which they acknowledge the reality that people differ in their identities and feature different attributes in societal contexts (Shore et al., 2009), ideally in an attempt to increase open-mindedness and eliminate bias or discrimination (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). In prior efforts to understand diversity in contemporary branding contexts (Licsandru & Cui, 2019; Williams et al., 2008), many studies investigate either the initiatives undertaken by a particular actor (e.g., a brand) or the subjective perceptions evoked in a given context (e.g., among the audience of a marketing activity), as Table 1 indicates. However, the focus and key ideas presented in diversity studies also have evolved, from emphasising a single characteristic to integrating multiple characteristics (e.g., disability,

sexuality, age, social class, culture; Boogaard & Roggeband, 2010; Herring, 2009; Shore et al., 2009).

Table 1. Overview of contemporary key diversity initiative studies.

Author	Dimensions: One	Dimensions: Multiple	Dimensions Included	Consideration and Implementation of Diversity Initiatives
Management Perspective				
Jayne & Dipboye, 2004		✓	Race, gender, ethnicity, age, sexuality, and disability	Give equal opportunities to minorities identified by race, age, gender, sexuality, national origin, or body ability. Multiple diversity characteristics need to be considered to reap the benefits of diversity.
Shore et al., 2009			Age, race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and culture	The several dimensions of diversity should be investigated in an integrative way to better understand human experiences and the benefits of diversity.
Herring, 2009		✓	Race and gender (focus), culture, ethnicity, age, religion, disability status, geographic location, personality, sexuality	An all-inclusive term, seeking to achieve consideration and inclusion of heterogeneous characteristics within given groups in organisations. The more diversity is increased, the more benefits an organisation experience.
Boogaard & Roggeband, 2010		✓	Gender, race, sexuality, disability	Intersectionality is critical for managing and implementing diversity, because diversity affects multiple people and identities, often simultaneously, so (race) cannot be investigated or considered singularly.
Özbilgin et al., 2011		✓	Sex, gender, age, race, sexual orientation, class, body abilities, religion and family structures	Diversity studies mostly examine one category at a time, which oversimplifies diversity and contributes to reinforcing diversity-based inequities.
Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012		✓	Gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age, and class	A single or limited focus on diversity categories can create limitations and bias, meaning diversity and equality is not adequately achieved.
Psychology Perspective				
Grov et al., 2006		✓	Race, ethnicity, age, and sexuality	Experiences and issues of gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals are best understood when the diversity of their identities is taken into consideration. While it is important to investigate discrimination of particular groups, ignoring other facets of their identity may restrict understanding oppression and inequality.
Cole, 2009		✓	Race/ethnicity, gender, social class, and sexuality	Psychology is increasingly recognising diversity, however, it is important dimensions underneath diversity are addressed collectively rather than singularly. Intersectionality suggests that to focus on a single dimension for short term gain (e.g., simpler research methods) will have more drastic effects in the long-term.
Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010		✓	Sex and race	There is an urgent need for more attention to be focused on the experiences of all women leaders and for more sophisticated and multifaceted definitions of identity. Researchers need to make use of the concepts of multiple identities and intersectionality to create respectful and inspiring solutions to the problems faced by women with complex and diverse identities who aspire to leadership.
Harnois, 2014		✓	Race, ethnicity, gender and age	Discrimination is social contexts is best resolved and understood through an intersectional, rather than and unidimensional or oppositional, framework. This means understanding and recognising multiple identities.

(*Continued*)

Table 1. (Continued).

Author	Dimensions: One	Dimensions: Multiple	Dimensions Included	Consideration and Implementation of Diversity Initiatives
Marketing Perspective				
Cui & Choudhury, 2002	✓		Ethnicity	Diversity is increasing, as evidenced by the growth of minority ethnic populations. Improving ethnic minority representation in media can help better reach and profit from minority segments.
Oakenfull et al., 2008	✓		Sexuality	Homosexual consumer markets are profitable. Successful advertisements connect to the majority and minority viewers. Improving homosexual representation should be subtle to make sure it does not offend the majority. Diversity initiatives can focus on singular dimensions of identity.
Williams et al., 2008		✓	Race and ethnicity focus	Initiatives must define, consider, and implement diversity in a way that is inclusive of all consumers. When investigating discrimination of a particular group, other facets of identity should not be disregarded to appropriately represent diversity.
Khan et al., 2015	✓		Ethnicity	Ethnic diversity is increasing, which should be reflected in advertising. However, including different ethnicities should not alienate the majority of consumers or consumers from other ethnicities.
Åkestam et al., 2017	✓		Sexuality	Improving homosexual representation in media, but making it relatable for majority viewers. Homosexual portrayals are considered diverse portrayals.
Harrison et al., 2017		✓	Race focus	Ethnic diversity is accelerating, meaning advertisements need to improve visual representations of race. To effectively portray different races and avoid stereotyping, marketers need to understand and consider other elements of their identity.
Licsandru & Cui, 2019	✓		Ethnicity	Millennials demand more diverse portrayals. Diverse portrayals can be executed through ethnic marketing. Multi-ethnic advertisements trigger more positive feelings and are interpreted as more genuine attempts to ethnic representation, in comparison with mono-ethnic attempts. Advertising reflecting a sense of togetherness among individuals of diverse ethnic backgrounds, through a celebration of both commonalities and differences, is key to success in heterogeneous marketplaces
This Paper		✓	Ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality, age, social class, and culture	Diversity across several dimensions of identity is increasing and becoming more recognised. Rather than relying on single dimensions, initiatives should consider diversity by representing multiple identities in advertisements, aligning with audiences' perceptions and beliefs of diversity, to better connect with audiences.

Such developments appear far more advanced in management and psychology literature, which largely embrace the multi-dimensional character of diversity, than in marketing literature, which mostly continues to focus on single dimensions, such as ethnic representations (e.g., Cui & Choudhury, 2002), even as some brands take a more multi- faceted approach (e.g., Dove; Wilkinson, 2019). Unidimensional investigations might be appealing because they are less complicated than considering multiple dimensions (Özbilgin et al., 2011) or because they offer detailed insights about a specific diversity topic (Harnois, 2014). Yet they also have created a gap, related to the lack of multi- dimensional explorations; even when marketing studies acknowledge multi- dimensionality, they typically focus on a particular dimension. We know of no applications of integrative, multi-dimensional views of diversity in an advertising context. Therefore, to provide a better understanding of diversity and its related initiatives in marketing, we conceptualise diversity as a dynamic, multi-faceted concept that comprises a wide range of characteristics (e.g., ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality, age, social class, culture); diversity initiatives are those that consider individually varying identities in determining the brand's marketing decisions and activities.

Audience connectedness

The concept of audience connectedness pertains to the degrees of relatedness and connection to others that people sense when they assess their ties with other members of society, such that they feel like they are part of something (Russell & Puto, 1999; Sinclair & Grieve, 2017). Such connections are core psychological needs; humans naturally attempt to connect with others, to avoid negative feelings and gain positive ones (Hutcherson et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2001). Accordingly, connectedness can increase physical and social well-being, self-esteem, and satisfaction (Hutcherson et al., 2008; Lee & Robbins, 1998). It reflects people's social and self-identity; for example, target markets might connect with a brand when they perceive a similarity

between themselves and people depicted in brand advertisements (Russell & Puto, 1999). Accordingly, marketing that seeks to signal diversity needs to evoke a sense of audience connectedness; if an advertisement fails to do so, and instead features poor or disingenuous diversity initiatives, it might lead audiences to feel alienated or excluded instead (Åkestam et al., 2017; Oakenfull et al., 2008). Using audience connectedness as a success indicator is richer than other measures of the favourability of an initiative, in that it better explains the intensity of the relationship between the audience and the advertisement (Russell & Puto, 1999).

Even though audience connectedness occurs at an individual level (Hutcherson et al., 2008), marketers need to acknowledge broader, collective audiences, rather than specific groups (Åkestam et al., 2017; Oakenfull et al., 2008). Connectedness can be understood as the extent to which collective audiences perceive belongingness, feelings of positivity, and similarity to the people in the advertisements (Åkestam et al., 2017). These similarities do not have to be direct (e.g., same ethnicity); consumers can connect in response to perceiving similar experiences or because they sense the relevance for other people (Åkestam et al., 2017; Russell & Puto, 1999). For example, some heterosexual people positively perceive and react to advertisements containing same-sex couples, as long as they feel connected rather than excluded from the narrative (Oakenfull et al., 2008), due to a relatable relationship scenario (Åkestam et al., 2017).

When marketers do not acknowledge broader, collective audiences, and instead focus on specific groups, there is a risk of instigating a lower degree of connectedness, or, audience *disconnection*, which may evoke negative feelings and behaviours among certain audiences, including anger (Armstrong & Oomen-Early, 2009; Lee et al., 2001). In these cases, consumers often publicly voice complaints, such as on social media (Dolan et al., 2019). For example, Gillette's 2019 'The Best a Man Can Be' campaign resulted in widespread controversy among viewers. While some responded positively to the campaign, describing it as being 'pro-humanity', other audiences said that it 'emasculates men' and 'drives a war against masculinity'

(Hsu, 2019). This mixed reception of this campaign reflects a lack of connectedness among the broader, collective audience.

Tokenism

Failed initiatives might display stereotyping and a poor understanding of marginalised groups, unintentionally contributing to oppression and inequality in the process, which can be explained through tokenism (King et al., 2010). In this context, we define tokenism as an artificial effort to represent minority or underrepresented groups in particular contexts (Cloud, 1996; Yoder, 1991). The meaning of tokenism has evolved to be more than just a number in a context, but also to include a stereotypical understanding and lack of effort towards minorities (Cloud, 1996; Yoder, 1991). Tokenism by brands might involve attempts to give the appearance of equality and diversity, without diligently trying to approach, achieve, or support diversity in the initiatives (Torchia et al., 2011).

Perceived tokenism can have negative outcomes (King et al., 2010; Yoder, 1991), including contributing to feelings of social isolation, inauthenticity, alienation, rejection, scrutiny, and a lack of satisfaction (Head, 2011; King et al., 2010; Torchia et al., 2011). People from various other backgrounds may also condemn and negatively react to tokenistic advertisements (Harris, 2016). Such emotions and reactions also might be evoked by a lack of connectedness (Armstrong & Oomen-Early, 2009; Hutcherson et al., 2008), so tokenism theory may help explain and predict the outcomes of audience (dis) connectedness in relation to diversity initiatives.

Discussions of tokenism in marketing literature are scant, but a pertinent parallel might be drawn with the more substantive discussion of greenwashing (Prothero et al., 1997). Greenwashing is ‘the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service’ (Lyon & Maxwell, 2011, p. 8),

by claiming to be green while engaging in inauthentic, falsified, or insufficient green practices. It can evoke negative word of mouth, poor brand perceptions and attitudes, and reduced purchase intentions (Chen & Chang, 2013). Similarly, perceived tokenism is a response to inauthentic, falsified diversity representations (Lyon & Maxwell, 2011; Torchia et al., 2011), so the negative consequences linked to greenwashing may emerge from tokenism in diversity initiatives too.

As an illustrative example, consider a marketing campaign by the clothing brand GapKids; in 2016, its 'Kids Can Do Anything' advertisement sought to incorporate more diversity by celebrating the talents of various children. Three Caucasian children demonstrate their acrobatic talents; an African-American girl appears out of place, posing statically (Harris, 2016). Commentary surrounding this suggested that the advertisement segregated this girl, from the group of Caucasian children, and from the overarching narrative that 'kids can do anything'. Although GapKids apologised, it also encountered negative responses and rejection from consumers (Harris, 2016). Marketers thus must avoid tokenism to avoid inducing negative sentiments and failing in their efforts to connect with audiences.

Intersectionality

Multiple dimensions of diversity reflect the many characteristics and identities that people hold within society (Table 1), all of which should be acknowledged to overcome oppressive structures in society (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). Instead, singular-axis frameworks often underlie discussions of equality and diversity, encouraging a focus on a single dimension of diversity (e.g., race). Intersectionality refers to the ways in which people's identities constitute sources of power and oppression, which interact and intersect with one another (Goff et al., 2008). In a media context, intersectionality reveals how diverse identities get (mis)represented in popular culture, such as advertising (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis,

2010; Vardeman-Winter et al., 2013). This intersection of identities determines individual positions and experiences in societies, explaining why and how individual members can feel excluded from certain societal narratives (Harnois, 2014; Yuval-Davis, 2006). We utilise the idea of intersectionality to inform a perspective of intersectional considerations; a way to understand and reconcile the exclusions of marginalised groups from equality and diversity movements by recognising that multiple components of diversity have distinct and powerful effects (Cole, 2009; Crenshaw, 1995; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). That is, rather than offensive and stereotypical representation, intersectional considerations are evident through highlighting that there is no singular story, dimension, stereotype, or person that represents the varied and complex experiences of all peoples (Özbilgin et al., 2011).

Notions of intersectionality considerations can help to understand diversity initiatives. Diversity initiatives require multiple identities and characteristics to be represented in positive, authentic, and non-stereotypical ways (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Vardeman-Winter et al., 2013). When diversity initiatives reflect intersectional considerations, they allow marginalised groups to be understood more authentically and thereby join societal narratives (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Accordingly, adopting intersectional considerations may assist marketers in evoking feelings of connectedness, through ensuring that diversity initiatives reflect to audiences a myriad of identities which purposefully encompass variances, to provide more authentic representations of diversity. By considering intersectionality, marketers also might be able to anticipate audience rejections of diversity initiatives that do not sufficiently represent the inequalities and experiences of marginalised groups (Harnois, 2014; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Propositions: drivers of audience connectedness

Identifying ways to drive audience connectedness requires consideration of the process that goes into implementing a diversity initiative. To illustrate, we use Pepsi's 'Live for Now'

commercial, a 2017 campaign that tried to appeal to consumers with an equality- oriented message but failed and was halted within one day of its initial release. In the advertisement, a white celebrity (Kendall Jenner) is the central focus; people representing minority groups are mostly relegated to the background. In addition, it depicts a vast protest, in confrontation with police, being resolved through the simple gesture of Jenner handing a police officer a Pepsi, prompting unrealistic reconciliation and hugs throughout the gathered crowd. For our analysis of the three factors that can establish audience connectedness, we refer to various elements of this advertisement to highlight how the marketing failed to establish connectedness with the target audience of consumers who regard diversity and equality as appropriate goals.

Marketer's approach to diversity (MATD)

Although Pepsi attempted to signal diversity, including with visual cues of numerical diversity among the crowd, the hero of the narrative was a white celebrity who did not identify with or belong to any relevant minority groups (Attiah, 2017). Pepsi's poor execution was widely blamed on its MATD; its acknowledgement of multiple dimensions of diversity was insufficiently complex (Özbilgin et al., 2011). Therefore, it evoked public backlash to a depiction that seemed to emphasise narrow, stereotypical roles for particular races (e.g., violence, musicianship) and reinforce hegemonic power structures that disadvantage marginalised groups (Gopaldas & Siebert, 2018). Audiences not only failed to connect with the brand, but they accused the MATD of being just a sales tactic. If in the first step of the development process, Pepsi marketers instead had specified an intersectional consideration, they might have been more likely to connect with audiences.

Of the three factors needed to facilitate and enhance audience connectedness, MATD is the only one that marketers can control, meaning that marketers are responsible for ensuring that their approach encourages audience connectedness. Pepsi's poor approach to developing the

diversity initiative led to its limited audience connectedness; for example, the decision by Pepsi to depict minority models essentially as props in the central story starring a white celebrity created inappropriate visual signals that led audiences to feel both rejected by and angry towards the advertisement. We thus assert:

P_1: An effective approach to diversity (MATD) enhances audience connectedness.

In more detail, a MATD reflects the guiding principles and tactics that marketers use to develop the diversity initiative. For this study, we address their inclusion of unidimensional or multi-dimensional diversity, as well as their use of visual or non-visual cues, to reflect these elements because they serve as the basis on which audiences form their judgements. In a sense, the unidimensional versus multi-dimensional decision is a question of 'who' gets represented (Gopaldas & DeRoy, 2015). A unidimensional approach tends to ignore important characteristics and identities, such as when a diversity initiative focused on race ignores age, gender, or body type (Williams et al., 2008). Victoria's Secret 'Perfect Body' campaign highlighted race as a diversity dimension but failed to address representations of diverse body types and ages (Wan, 2016), such that it limited audience connectedness and instead instigated feelings of rejection and anger among audiences (Akbareian, 2014). The initiative, more exclusionary than inclusive, led to accusations of the brand perpetuating tokenism, along with consumer boycotts (Akbareian, 2014; Hurst, 2018). To avoid such accusations of tokenism, discrimination, stereotyping, or exclusion, marketers need to transition to multi-dimensional diversity (Williams et al., 2008), though studies of multi- dimensional diversity remain scarce (Table 1). A multi-dimensional MATD would include broader forms of diversity and universal issues (e.g., marriage equality). Dove's '#ShowUs' campaign (Wilkinson, 2019) focused primarily on body diversity but also proactively included multiple dimensions of diversity, such as race, gender, sexuality, and disability (Wilkinson, 2019). Portraying more identities enabled and enhanced the audience's connection with the initiative, across multiple (rather than singular) potential points of relation (Russell & Puto, 1999). We thus assert:

P_2: Unidimensional diversity is less likely to enhance audience connectedness.

P_3: Multi-dimensional diversity is more likely to enhance audience connectedness.

Next, we turn to the 'how' element of MATD, as represented in the categorisation of visual and non-visual cues. Visual cues are symbolic; the advertisement might include characters who visually indicate particular backgrounds (Harrison et al., 2017; Licsandru & Cui, 2019), such as a woman wearing a hijab in the Pepsi commercial discussed earlier. Through visual cues, communication can produce meaning; the images can foreground identity dimensions to highlight or signal diversity (Harrison et al., 2017). However, non- visual cues such as storylines and dialogue may be just as critical to achieving audience connectedness (Brunner, 2006; Wang & Muehling, 2010; Windscheid et al., 2016). In the Pepsi commercial, a non-visual cue, the song 'Lions' by Skip Marley, about equality and standing up for one's oppression was played. Although visual diversity was attempted to match this song, given that Kendall Jenner did not identify with, or belong to any of the relevant minority groups, there was a disconnect between the visual and non-visual cues of diversity.

Non-visual cues, e.g., the storylines and dialogue used, can indicate less observable diversity traits, such as sexuality (e.g., a character openly discussing a gay partner), which can also model intersectional considerations and encourage audience connectedness (Cunningham & Melton, 2014; Khan et al., 2015; Wang & Muehling, 2010). For example, Tesco's 'Valentine's Day 2016: Introducing Basket Dating' campaign successfully integrated sexuality, race, age and lifestyles, depicting the pairing of couples based on their shopping preferences (Singh, 2017). By leveraging the non-visual cues of the storyline and script, the brand's MATD included multiple aspects of diversity, and was able to include the less observable traits of sexuality and ethnicity (e.g., accents). Tesco executed this in an authentic and non-stereotypical way, by showing that their consideration of diversity was more than surface level.

In MATD, initiatives often acknowledge only diversity that is seen, not felt (Brunner, 2006), such that the firm's visual and non-visual depictions may be misaligned (Windscheid et al., 2016). In the 2020 #LoveSpeech Mardi Gras initiative by the Australian and New Zealand Banking Group (ANZ), the visual display of multiple, diverse characters were accompanied by slurs used to refer to them (Gramenz, 2020). Despite extensive visual diversity cues, audiences reacted negatively to the insensitive non-visual cues in the dialogue, perceived as offensive and inappropriate for commercial communications (Gramenz, 2020). Audiences thus felt little connectedness with the brand (Armstrong & Oomen-Early, 2009; Lee et al., 2001). In this example, ANZ seemingly overlooked how non-visual cues can inform audiences' perceptions of diversity, beyond just surface-level signals. For a diversity initiative to connect with audiences, its visual and non-visual cues should work synergistically together. We thus assert:

P_4: Synergy between visual and non-visual cues enhances audience connectedness

Perceived diversity

As noted previously, whether audiences perceive diverse attributes to be present in the advertising context also defines their response to diversity initiatives (Wolfson et al., 2011). Although they are not under the direct control of marketers, audiences' perceptions form in response to the diversity signals (MATD) they receive from the marketer. When they assess this information, they begin analysing the signal and seeking to determine if the marketer is authentic in their execution (Cunningham & Melton, 2014). These perceptions then determine if the audience perceives diversity attributes as being present within the initiative, as well as whether they judge that presence positively or negatively (Madera et al., 2013; Wolfson et al., 2011). Intersectionality and tokenism theory can help anticipate sources of both positive and negative diversity perceptions. Positive perceptions may result from authentic (intersectionally considered) depictions of diversity (Brunner, 2006; Cunningham & Melton, 2014), and in turn,

they should prompt stronger satisfaction, feelings of belonging, and participation in diversity (Banks, 2009; Wolfson et al., 2011) – that is, enhanced audience connectedness (Russell & Puto, 1999). Conversely, negative perceptions of diversity may be influenced from perceptions of tokenism, and will likely restrict audience connectedness by heightening their undesirable emotions and reactions (Head, 2011), such as a lack of satisfaction, tension, and a sense of not belonging. When Tarte Cosmetics attempted to launch its Shape Tape foundation, released on Martin Luther King Day (Ritschel, 2018), it prompted negative perceptions by featuring only models with and shades for relatively lighter complexions and minimal representation from people of colour (Baragona, 2018). Seemingly, Tarte only included two darker shades (both for the product and their marketing communications) so they 'ticked' a box (Baragona, 2018), without diligently trying to cater to these groups, signifying tokenism. The audience, who felt little connection with the diversity initiative, responded with negative word of mouth and expressions of anger (Loveland, 2018). We thus assert:

P_5: The extent to which audiences perceive diverse attributes to be present in the diversity initiative (perceived diversity) enhances audience connectedness.

Belief congruence

As audience connectedness pertains to the degrees of relatedness and connection that a consumer feels towards an initiative, their beliefs must align to the message communicated in the diversity initiatives (Bougher, 2017; Hentschel et al., 2013). In particular, applying Rokeach's(1960) belief congruency theory to diversity initiatives leads us to predict that the level of congruence between the audiences' beliefs about diversity and the objectives of the MATD will determine how connected various audiences feel to the diversity initiative. A high level of belief congruence will facilitate audience connectedness while a low level might prompt rejection of the initiative (Hutcherson et al., 2008; Rokeach, 1960). This is because a high level

of belief congruence contributes to positive reactions which facilitate connectedness (e.g., acceptance). In contrast, a low level of belief congruence instigates negative emotions and behaviours which restrict connectedness (e.g., rejection or negative word-of- mouth tendencies such as hate speech) (Donnell & Gettinger, 2015; Rokeach, 1960). Marketers must carefully consider the beliefs of the audiences that they seek to reach and resonate with when considering the MATD. For example, the 2019 'The Best a Man Can Be' Gillette campaign, designed to address toxic masculinity (Hsu, 2019) and its manifestations in society (e.g., catcalling), resulted in their primary audience group showing belief incongruence, resenting the campaign for blaming the societal problem on men, among other issues (Hsu, 2019). This audience did not appear to have belief congruence with the Gillette campaign, which led to the resulting fallout that included brand switching, as well as negative word of mouth towards minority groups and equality movements on social media (Hsu, 2019). While Gillette's execution was well-intended and positively reacted to by some audiences, it shows that the persistence of belief incongruence in their primary audience made minority groups and equality movements susceptible to hate and discriminatory speech.

The impact of belief incongruence was also evident in 2020 when online clothing retailer, Verge Girl, released an Instagram post with a series of images in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. However, one of the images read 'All Lives Matter', seen as a counter-movement to Black Lives Matter (Verge Girl [@vergegirl], 2020). The post led some to believe that the company was not sharing the same beliefs as them regarding diversity. The incongruence arose as Verge Girl was seen as trying to position non-black people at the forefront of the Black Lives Matter movement, but not actively representing black identities in their marketing activities. On social media, the lack of belief congruence with this initiative translated to commentary from followers indicating intentions of brand switching, as well as negative word of mouth (see Verge Girl [@vergegirl], 2020). The examples given of Gillette and Verge Girl highlight the need for marketers to consider and understand their target audience carefully, their beliefs about

diversity, and anticipate the impact that the diversity initiatives issues may have on various audiences when designing the MATD. Ultimately, without belief congruence marketers are unable to establish connectedness in audiences. We thus assert:

P_6: Belief congruence enhances audience connectedness

Combined factors

Both perceived diversity and belief congruence should lead to desirable levels of audience connectedness if they converge, because together they enhance positive emotions and relationships (Banks, 2009; Rokeach, 1960). If marketers seek to leverage either factor, their MATD should enhance the other as well, because of their mutually exclusive nature for ensuring audience connectedness. If any factor is missing, it can diminish audience connectedness and even lead to disconnectedness, if the overall MATD leads to negative responses. Accordingly, we propose the conceptual framework in Figure 1, to detail how the MATD (including both dimensionality and visual elements), audiences' perceived diversity, and belief congruence can influence audience connectedness. If these factors do not converge, they instead hinder connectedness and may give rise to a sense of tokenism. A successful convergence appeared in Fenty Beauty's 'Beauty for All' advertising campaign of 2017. It aimed to

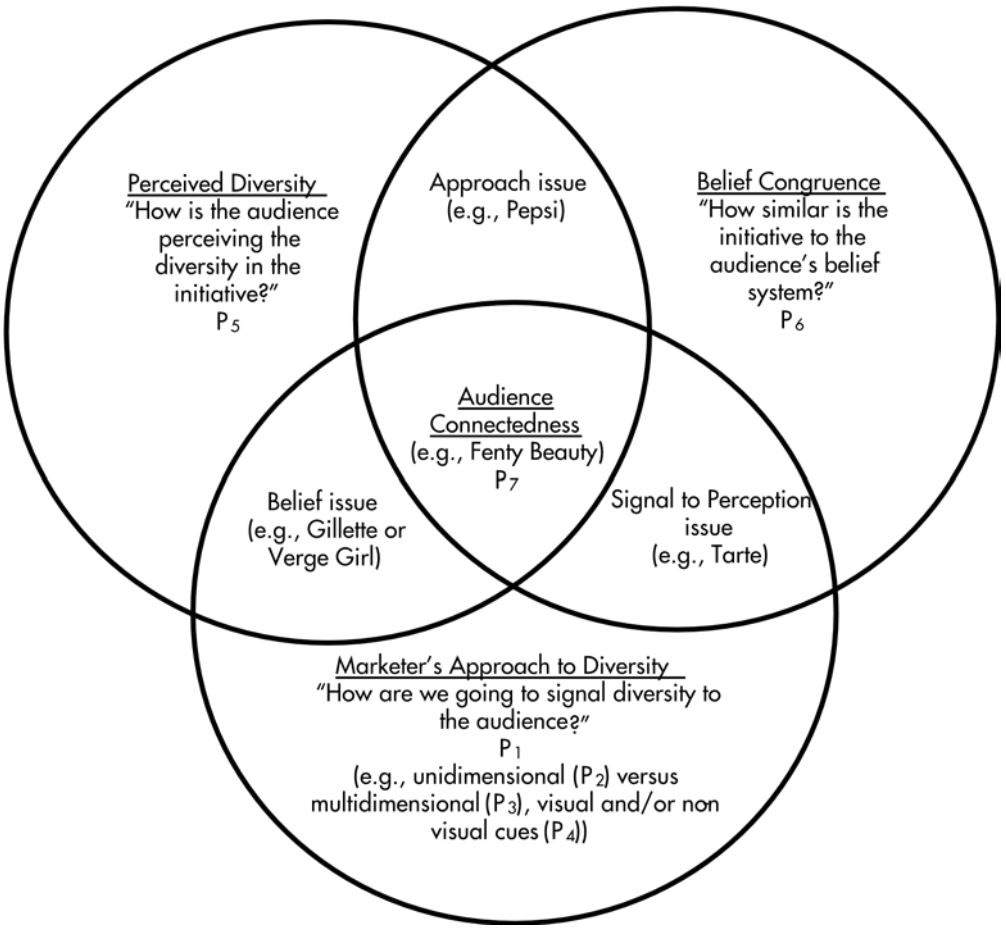

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for successful diversity initiatives.

showcase how the brand and its products were available to everyone, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age, or other personal attributes (Sharma, 2018). This philosophy was widely shared by the beauty brand's target market and audiences of the initiative, who celebrated its depictions of so many varying identities and efforts to avoid disregarding anyone in this process (Sharma, 2018). Audiences connected with the identities, and as a result of this excellent MATD, Fenty Beauty evoked high levels of perceived diversity and belief congruence. We thus assert:

P_7: Audience connectedness occurs when the marketer's approach to diversity, perceived diversity, and belief congruence converge.

Discussion and conclusion

Although marketers have embraced diversity initiatives in an attempt to connect with consumers (Åkestam et al., 2017; Licsandru & Cui, 2019), audience backlash persists (Attiah, 2017; Fleming, 2019), indicating that many initiatives have not been successful. Audience connectedness assists in targeting, reaching and resonating with broader audiences and thus offers a good indicator of the success of diversity initiatives (Oakenfull et al., 2008; Russell & Puto, 1999). A lack of audience connectedness instead may evoke refutation of an initiative and, ultimately, an unsuccessful execution of diversity initiatives (Åkestam et al., 2017). We offer a set of propositions to help marketers better understand and facilitate audience connectedness with diversity initiatives in advertising and thereby establish a framework of the role of connectedness for marketing communications. Specifically, in our proposed conceptual framework, greater audience connectedness depends on the consideration of three factors: the marketer's approach to diversity, perceived diversity (by the audience), and belief congruence. When these factors fail to converge, audience connectedness is restricted, and negative sentiment towards the diversity initiative is likely. The theoretical underpinnings of intersectionality and tokenism help clarify why convergence of these three factors may or may not occur. In turn, this study provides a new lens for viewing questions about what audiences seek in diversity advertisements and why, at times, they might evoke a lack of audience connectedness.

The propositions within the conceptual framework imply some specific characteristics that can lead to audience connectedness. First, marketers must understand and consider intersectionality and tokenism to avoid making creative decisions that restrict the ability of the initiative to evoke connections with the audience. It is evident that these two theories have a presence within each factor of the framework, and thus must be considered by the marketer. For example, recognising multiple identities, or multi-dimensional diversity, can establish more authentic representations

of diversity. In addition, the design of MATD should define the visual and non-visual cues, both of which add depth through storylines, and ensure that they include less observable diversity traits (Åkestam et al., 2017). Second, an audience's positive perceptions of diversity associated with the initiative are essential; negative or non-existent diversity perceptions can prompt opinions of tokenism and negative emotions, contradictory to connectedness (Lee et al., 2001; Torchia et al., 2011). Third, congruent beliefs about diversity and the initiative are desirable; incongruence instead leads to emotions that disrupt a sense of connectedness (Donnell & Gettinger, 2015).

These propositions also provide insights for practitioners to consider before implementing diversity initiatives. To start with, they should acknowledge that diversity initiatives can do as much harm as good, such as when audiences hold predisposed negative perceptions or beliefs about diversity (Harrison et al., 2017). An audience that rejects diversity as a valuable norm may be inclined to reject diversity-related campaigns, regardless of the intentions of the marketers (Donnell & Gettinger, 2015; Rokeach, 1960). Before implementing their initiatives, marketers should acknowledge and delineate the potential impacts on individuals, brands, and society. They must be committed to evolving the brand to reach and resonate with broader audiences given that there may be a backlash from existing audiences, and the broader audience may need to see a longer-term commitment and consistency in the brand's diversity messages before it views the brand as being authentic, and congruent in beliefs. To facilitate a feeling of audience connectedness with a diversity initiative, the marketing team needs to identify potential sources of consumer frustration, as well as strategies for implementing the defined approach to maximise audience connectedness. In particular, they should purposefully select the number of diversity characteristics to represent (unidimensional vs. multi-dimensional), and which signals they will use to represent this diversity (visual or non-visual). These ideas are highlighted through illustrative advertising examples, which are a valuable resource in allowing the framework and its related techniques to be understood and applied in practice.

Continuing diversity marketing research is imperative due to its implications for the welfare of consumers, brands, and wider society (Harrison et al., 2017; Licsandru & Cui, 2019). Empirical analyses might seek to explore the relationship of MATD, perceived diversity, and belief congruence and their effects on audience connectedness in more detail. Such empirical investigations could offer more substantial managerial insights for achieving audience connectedness. We encourage further exploration into the significance of tokenism and intersectionality in advertising contexts. These inquiries could render significant understandings of marketing's role in perpetuating stereotypical and discriminatory diversity initiatives in advertising. This perspective may assist in how marketers can move beyond these depictions. Furthermore, whereas we explicitly investigate diversity initiatives in advertising contexts, due to their significance and influence on popular culture (Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2009; Harrison et al., 2017), further research might address other forms of marketing communication. For example, non-visual cues might be more important in print and social media campaigns than in televised advertising, and they are the only technique available to radio advertising. Beyond advertising, further research can consider diversity initiatives embedded in other communication channels such as public relations, in-store displays, and corporate sponsorship.

This article provides a framework of how diversity initiatives can achieve success through audience connectedness. The framework includes three characteristics of such initiatives: the marketer's approach to diversity, the audiences' perception of diversity, and the level of belief congruence. When all three factors converge, we explain that diversity initiatives can evoke a sense of audience connectedness. Through leveraging audience connectedness, marketers can devise and achieve initiatives that target, reach, and resonate with broader, rather than limited audiences.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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CHAPTER THREE. The Race Towards Intersectional Considerations: A Typology of Brand Approaches to Diversity

Statement of Authorship

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Principal Author

Name of Principal Author (Candidate)	Amelie Burgess		
Contribution to the Paper	Literature review, conceptual development, formulation of typology and wrote the manuscript		
Overall percentage (%)	70%		
Certification:	This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research candidature and is not subject to any obligations or contractual agreements with a third party that would constrain its inclusion in this thesis. I am the primary author of this paper.		
Signature		Date	23/12/2021

Co-Author Contributions

By signing the Statement of Authorship, each author certifies that:

i. the candidate's stated contribution to the publication is accurate (as detailed above);
ii. permission is granted for the candidate in include the publication in the thesis; and
iii. the sum of all co-author contributions is equal to 100% less the candidate's stated contribution.

Name of Co-Author	Dr Dean Wilkie		
Contribution to the Paper	Supervised and contributed to the conceptual development and typology. Assisted with editing and revising manuscript.		
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Contribution to the Paper	Supervised and contributed to the conceptual development and typology. Assisted with editing and revising manuscript.		
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Brand Approaches to Diversity: A Typology and Research Agenda

Abstract

Purpose—Despite increased emphasis on diversity in marketing, much remains unknown about how brands should approach diversity. Therefore, the current research seeks to understand what constitutes a brand's approach to diversity (BATD), establish a categorisation of such approaches, and outline the effects on audience connectedness.

Design/methodology/approach—This conceptual paper draws on critical theory and practical exemplars to present a clear conceptualisation of BATD.

Findings—Using two determinants, depth of diversity integration and order of entry, it is possible to categorise BATD into four types: transformative, adaptive, dismissive and performative. Early adoption and greater depth provide optimal opportunities for evoking audience connectedness.

Research implications—The conceptual typological framework for BATD helps delineate how such choices influence audience connectedness. A detailed agenda for further research can guide ongoing diversity research.

Practical implications—Creating a typology reduces complexity and helps marketers recognise the differing components, manifestations and effects of their approach to diversity. To increase connectedness, marketers must seek deeper-level diversity integrations and adopt approaches earlier as both are critical for reducing audience scepticism.

Originality/value—This article offers a novel conceptualisation of BATD by defining it, distinguishing it from related research themes, and justifying investigations beyond single diversity dimensions and marketing mix elements. Further, audience connectedness is put forward as a critical consequence as it can instigate desirable brand outcomes, positively benefit those identities represented and promotes a more inclusive, less segregated society.

Keywords: *diversity, diversity branding, order of entry, intersectionality; tokenism, audience connectedness*

Article Classification: *Original article*

1. Introduction

Compelling social movements, such as #MeToo, Black Lives Matter and gender equality efforts, pressure many actors in society, including brands, to transform their practices to embrace diverse audiences better and absolve marketplace discrimination (Kipnis *et al*., 2021; Spry *et al.*, 2021). In a marketing context, diversity refers to "actions in marketing research, education, and practice that proactively and consistently promote the advancement of diversity and inclusion for all marketplace participants" (Kipnis *et al.*, 2021, p. 144), suggesting a wide range of uses and applications by brands. This paper focuses on the processes and decisions of brands to reflect and integrate diverse identities (e.g., gender) within their marketing mix practices. We refer to this as a brand's approach to diversity (BATD). For example, brands may include different genders and sexual orientations within an advertisement or create a product that suits different ethnicities. Given that managers often seek to integrate and connect with various consumer identities, how brands approach diversity may be especially pertinent. As one practitioner explained, when brands "tell stories that are involving all of the full spectrum of people we see in the world, we actually make our brands more vibrant, more culturally overly connected, just more interesting" (Diageo, 2019).

As exemplified by the above quote, the success of a diversity initiative may be two-fold; consumers feeling and engaging more positively towards the brand (e.g., positive word of mouth; Oliver *et al.*, 2015) and promoting a more inclusive, less segregated society. Encapsulating both outcomes is audience connectedness, defined in this context as the extent to which audiences feel they can relate to, or resonate with, people represented in a diversity initiative (Åkestam *et al.*, 2017). Yet many brands appear to be failing to achieve results that would indicate audience connectedness; 80% of audiences indicate that they expect brands to exhibit deep recognition of

diversity in marketing efforts (B&T, 2020), but only 4% consider brands as doing so (Aird, 2019). The gap might stem from how brands approach diversity and how audiences react. Consider the example in the beauty category. Fenty Beauty and Tarte have adjusted their marketing mixes to appeal to diverse audiences, but while Fenty Beauty received positive feedback, Tarte evoked some negative responses. Notably, Fenty Beauty embraced diversity from the moment of its inception; it was one of the first brands to offer extended shade ranges for makeup products (Patrick and Hollenbeck, 2021). Tarte instead suffered criticisms of their late, seemingly superficial approaches to integrating diversity into their marketing efforts (Lawson, 2021).

Considering the range of options and difficult decisions brands must make regarding embracing diversity, we argue that research is needed to explicate what defines BATD. Existing research offers some insights but also some limitations and fragmented perspectives (e.g., Åkestam *et al.,* 2017; Kipnis *et al.*, 2021; Liljedal *et al.,* 2020). First, most conceptualisations of marketing diversity adopt a singular identity dimension; they may investigate the role of a person's ethnicity while overlooking other components of their identity, such as gender or sexuality (e.g., Licansdru and Cui, 2019). A singular identity dimension representation may overly simplify the meaning of diversity and its approaches, limiting audience connectedness by overlooking other potentially more relevant identity dimensions (Tormos, 2017). Second, many investigations consider only specific elements of the marketing mix actions, such as advertising (Liljedal *et al.,* 2020). But audiences are sceptical of brands that approach diversity in this way, even accusing them of "woke-washing" (Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020; Sobande, 2019). Consumers were sceptical of Gillette's Best Men Can Be advertisement because it contradicted marketplace inequality occurring in other areas of their marketing mix (e.g., the price premium being charged on female razors; Mirzaei *et al.* 2022). Third, contributing to its conceptual confusion is that diversity considerations are often

raised in other literature streams (e.g., brand activism, corporate social responsibility and cause-related marketing literature; Vredenburg *et al.* 2020). For example, some consider diversity initiatives an activist tactic to inform societal attitudes (e.g., Gillette). But for brands seeking to mirror changing society beliefs (e.g., ModiBodi offering period underwear for people with physical disabilities), activism may not be as applicable. As a result, this leads to relatively limited investigations and theoretical exploration, ambiguity, gaps and inconsistencies, all of which limits our understanding of BATD, its manifestations and meaning (Kipnis *et al.*, 2021).

Based on the aforementioned research gaps, this paper conceptualises the concept of BATD, explicates its critical success factors, and outlines its relevance for marketing, utilising real-world exemplars and previous literature. Our novel conceptualisation relies on categorising dimensions within BATD, then predicts how BATD influences audience connectedness, leading to several contributions to diversity research. First, we justify why diversity needs to be considered separate from other often investigated themes within marketing literature, such as corporate social responsibility (CSR). For example, CSR generally represents an obligation aligned with corporate practices (e.g., hiring diverse employees) and focuses on ensuring corporate benefits. In contrast, BATD is voluntary, not necessarily aligned with corporate practices and not intended to create corporate advantages. By conceptualising BATD as a stand-alone concept, we offer a distinct theoretical perspective and propose new terminology to conceptualise according to its (1) definition, (2) scope and (3) related actions. It also allows us to overcome and integrate existing, fragmented approaches within diversity, where authors have relied on narrow, singular representations (e.g., ethnicity), to argue the need for deeper level diversity consideration and extension beyond just advertising. Acknowledging such differences encourages a clearer, more

accurate view and establish a pathway for continued, more in-depth research of diversity in marketing (Hulland, 2020; Jaakkola, 2020).

As diversity research in marketing is still in its infancy, our second contribution is to establish a typology that reduces complexity and helps marketers recognise the differing components, manifestations and effects of BATDs (Jaakkola, 2020). Our approach reflects theories of intersectionality, tokenism and order of entry, which together inform a typological framework that can differentiate various diversity approaches according to the depth of the approach and the timing of its adoption. In turn, we identify four types: performative, dismissive, adaptive and transformative. The typology also supports a precise, nuanced understanding of BATD, pinpointing and justifying both characteristics.

Third, the typology can serve as a starting point for understanding the consequences of BATD. In line with Åkestam *et al.* (2017) and Liljedal *et al.* (2020), we recognise audience connectedness as a measure of success. By delineating our typology, we can predict the varying effects of BATD on audience connectedness, as well as create a propositional inventory to guide further research (Jaakkola, 2020). Managers should also recognise how different depths and timing of diversity initiatives will inform how closely their brands can connect with audiences. We offer some recommendations for augmenting BATD, such as by initiating deeper-level efforts sooner rather than later. Finally, we propose a comprehensive research agenda addressing emerging and pressing concerns within the diversity field.

2. Methodology

In selecting our conceptual approach, we rely on MacInnis's (2011) framework and Jaakkola's (2020) methodological design suggestions, as also demonstrated in previous research (e.g., Anker *et al.*, 2021; Davies *et al.*, 2020; Moulard *et al.*, 2021; Schroeder, 2017). In detail, we

seek *theory synthesis* through a *revising* approach. Through a review of prior literature (see Section 3), we identify an emerging phenomenon—a brands' approach to diversity—along with some key challenges, existing considerations and evidence that BATD represents a stand-alone concept. This review also encompasses growing literature on diversity in marketing, which suggests the need for a theoretical synthesis to integrate various perspectives (Jaakkola, 2020). Therefore, we use narrative reasoning to find "big picture" patterns and associations rather than precise causal processes (Delbridge and Fiss, 2013; Jaakkola, 2020). In our case, the review and synthesis process challenge how diversity has been investigated thus far in relation to brands (e.g., considerations of only specific forms of diversity, such as ethnicity; Licsandru and Cui, 2019). To resolve those concerns, we synthesise intersectionality, tokenism and order of entry theories to establish a foundation for understanding BATD and define its boundaries and types.

Then to establish our typology, we actively work to differentiate and delineate prior contributions to identify exemplars. Exemplars differ from examples or cases in that they offer highly characteristic versions of a specific phenomenon that provide a particular instance or narrative description of the phenomenon (Anker *et al*., 2021). Exemplars are conducive for conceptual studies because they establish a tangible context for explaining and defining theoretical constructs and their interrelations (Smith and Zarate, 1990). We draw on four exemplars (see Section 5), chosen because they are characteristic of the depth of diversity integration and order of entry elements of BATD. Finally, with a delineating approach, we offer propositions regarding how BATD can influence audience connectedness. Applying deductive reasoning, we extract propositions from prior literature and identify boundaries on the effects on connectedness, revealing some optimal approaches to diversity.

3. Literature Review

By reviewing the contributions, theoretical assumptions and gaps of diversity marketing literature, as well as broader diversity research, we establish an overview of relevant conceptual and contextual contributions and constraints, specifically in a branding domain. Different classifications of diversity approaches that produce various schools of thought lead to contextual constraints that then foster increasingly distinct and limited conceptualisations of diversity in marketing (Gopaldas and Siebert, 2018; Kipnis *et al.*, 2021). These discrepancies likely arise because extant investigations are singular-focused (e.g., ethnic marketing), marketing mix-specific (e.g., advertising) or reliant on alternative literature (e.g., brand activism). Therefore, we identify the need to revise theoretical classifications and standpoints that have dominated prior diversity research in marketing. Our literature review informs our conceptualisation of BATD by distinguishing it from various existing concepts of diversity and defining its boundaries accordingly.

3.1. Meanings of diversity

Diversity implies heterogeneous identities in populations in society (Harrison and Sin, 2006). In management and psychology settings, diversity also refers to theories, strategies and practices to improve the experiences, representation or outcomes of underrepresented groups that face some disadvantage (e.g., ethnic/racial minorities, women; Byrd, 2018; Callahan *et al.*, 2018; Leslie, 2019; Kipnis *et al.*, 2021). While sometimes referred to as an umbrella term (e.g., Byrd, 2018), early studies theorised diversity through a singular dimension to help the outcomes of specific groups that face disadvantages such as racial or gender representation (e.g., Kanter, 1977; Kraiger and Ford, 1985). Crenshaw (1989) explicitly called for expanding singular views of diversity by adopting an intersecting perspective because intersectionality theory, and its

application in diversity, suggest that breaking diversity approaches down into singular dimensions can be counterproductive by ignoring the interconnected nature of discrimination (Kollen, 2019). While an all-encompassing view, it led to a multidimensional perspective of diversity emerging; diversity is a broader term reflecting multiple identities such as sexuality, transgender, age, body type, disability and more (e.g., Carastathis, 2014; Shore *et al.*, 2009).

3.2. Diversity in marketing and its problems

Consumer expectations have evolved to include increasing demands for brands to acknowledge and embrace differences among people in societal contexts (Gopaldas and Siebert, 2018; Licsandru and Cui, 2018; Sobande, 2019). Such efforts are a specific way for brands to formulate prosocial outcomes by reducing discrimination, facilitating open-mindedness, encouraging equality and increasing positivity in society (Åkestam *et al.*, 2017; Harper and Yeung, 2013; Harrison *et al.*, 2017; Spry *et al.*, 2021). As illustrated in Table 1, diversity can manifest in marketing practices pertaining to different marketing mix elements. For example, Scaraboto and Fischer (2013) recognise that the fashion industry fails to cater to plus-sized bodies and instead offers unattractive clothing with inappropriate designs. Francis and Robertson (2021) demonstrate that Black consumers often are charged inflated prices in real estate contexts. Yet most existing studies focus on specific marketing actions, particularly advertising (e.g., Schroeder and Borgerson, 2005; Harrison *et al.*, 2017; Licsandru and Cui, 2019). These studies often reveal that diversity advertising focuses on representing marginalised identities and plays a critical role in (de)constructing stereotypes and inequality (Schroeder and Borgerson, 2005; Harrison et al., 2017). However, brands only representing diversity within advertising can spark criticism such as “woke-washing” when audiences perceive diversity claims as insubstantial—they contradict the brand’s narrative in other areas such as product design, and their efforts do not productively

address marketplace inequality (Brunner, 2006; Mirzaei *et al.*, 2022; Sobande, 2019). Excluding key marketing mix facets such as products (e.g., clothing modifications for consumers with disabilities), distribution (e.g., ensuring product availability in regions populated by vulnerable consumers), and pricing (e.g., consistent, ethical pricing) (Kipnis *et al.*, 2021) restricts both theoretical and practical understanding of diversity. Thus, given audiences evaluate collective, rather than singular, diversity marketing approaches, so too must researchers and marketers.

Table 1. Diversity-based Marketing Mix Actions

	Negative Description	Example	Positive Description	Example	Supporting Literature
Product	Creating products that exclude or disadvantage certain groups	Tarte Shape Tape Concealer offers a limited shade range for consumers with darker complexions.	Actively ensuring consumption offerings are inclusive of broader audiences and seeking opportunities to do so	Fenty Beauty offers more than 40 foundation shades to cater to broad audiences.	Scaraboto & Fischer (2013); Francis & Robertson (2021)
Place	Failing to provide access to consumption opportunities	McDonald's did not allow people using mobility scooters to use drive-thrus as an accessible means to consume.	Ensuring consumption opportunities for equal access to all consumers	Woolworths created extended and assisted shopping hours for elderly and disabled consumers during panic buying periods of COVID-19.	Demangeot *et al*. (2013)
Promotion	Misrepresenting or failing to represent marginalised groups in marketing communications, in offensive ways	In advertising, Victoria's Secret addresses diversity only at an ethnic level, ignoring other types such as gender, disability or body type.	Brands' communications take a counter-stereotyping viewpoint (both negative and positive stereotypes) to ensure portrayals of consumers engaged in a variety of social roles and contexts	Aerie's communication casually features multiple diverse identities. They pledged to forgo all retouching in campaign imagery and moved towards featuring role models rather than traditional fashion models.	Schroeder and Borgerson (2005); Harrison *et al.* (2017); Licsandru & Cui (2019)
Price	Setting unethical pricing tactics and strategies for marginalised groups	Old Navy charged higher prices for clothing in larger sizes.	Leveraging pricing to benefit underserved segments or ensure consumption offerings for marginalised groups are not unfairly taxed	Modibodi created adaptive period underwear, priced the same as other period underwear.	Francis & Robertson (2021)

Next, brands can integrate multiple dimensions into their diversity initiatives (e.g., gender, age and race), but again, most focus on a singular diversity dimension such as gender (e.g., Sternadori and Abitbol, 2019) or ethnicity (e.g., Licsandru and Cui, 2019). Continually investigating singular diversity dimensions will only offer insights into a specific type of diversity, reaffirming specific types of inequality and discrimination (Licsandru and Cui, 2019; Tsai, 2011). For example, ethnically diverse marketing reflects stereotypes and tends to present people of ethnic minorities as "other" (Licsandru and Cui, 2019). Focusing on singular dimensions thus is counterproductive (Crenshaw, 1989; Gopaldas, 2013). By conceptualising diversity from a collective perspective, marketers might gain a new understanding of how to enhance their diversity practices (Gopaldas and Siebert, 2018; Kipnis et al., 2021).

Finally, diversity marketing literature does not establish a specific, distinct conceptualisation of varying brand approaches to diversity. Yet, the concept of brand approaches to diversity and its related themes are investigated under areas such as brand activism, corporate social responsibility, cause-related marketing, advocacy advertising and woke-washing (see Table 2). While the above concepts might be interrelated with BATD, Table 2 highlights how they differ based on their critical success factors, characteristics, manifestations and outcomes. For example, some brands adopt diversity as a core value from the moment they were created, but others pursue such efforts only in response to societal pressures or after witnessing the success of other brands (Li, 2021; McDonald *et al.*, 2020). Comparatively, while concepts like brand activism are considered controversial (Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020), BATD aligns with the notion of transformative branding, whereby brands might approach diversity to reflect or influence societal values (Spry *et al.*, 2021).

Table 2. Themes of Diversity in Marketing Literature

Activity	Definition	Distinction from BATD	Supporting Literature	Example
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	CSR calls for purposeful solutions and initiatives to overcome social and environmental issues (Mirzaei *et al.*, 2021)	CSR has a broader agenda towards social, environmental and ethical obligations. Unlike BATD, CSR is obligatory and is typically more aligned with internal commercial practices.	Podnar and Golob (2007); Maignan & Ferrrell (2004); Vredenburg *et al.* 2020; Sternadori and Abitbol (2019)	Deloitte advertises its commitment to integrating and upholding hiring and equitable treatment of diverse employees within its business.
Brand Activism	A brand adopts a non-neutral stance on institutionally contested sociopolitical issues through its practice and advertising to create social change and succeed (Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020).	Brand Activism tends to cover a broader range of socio-political issues to create social change. Unlike BATD, diversity may only be integrated through controversial topical issues. Further, while progressive brand activism aims to ignite meaningful change, brand activism also contains regressive brand activism—when brands attempt to prevent societal issues from creating change. BATDs do not encapsulate initiatives aimed at restricting the freedoms of minority groups. Finally, even though brand activism and BATD may cover diversity-related topics (e.g., Black Lives Matter), BATD will also cover diversity topics outside of activist spaces (e.g., modifying products for people who have disabilities).	Vredenburg *et al.* (2020); Moorman (2020); Sobande (2019)	L'Oreal took a stand for Black Lives Matter by posting black squares for Black Out Tuesday on its social media pages.
Cause-Related Marketing	Process of formulating and implementing marketing activities where the brand may contribute a specified	While CRM may occur across the marketing mix, unlike BATD, it typically involves a brand contributing money to a specific cause rather than considering the needs of those with diverse identities within marketing mix decisions. The	Samu and Wyner (2014); Webb and Mohr (1998); Vredenburg *et al.* (2020)	Mount Franklin donating up to $20,000 in sales from their limited edition water bottles to McGrath

	amount to a cause where consumers can engage in revenue-providing exchanges that satisfy organisational and individual objectives (Webb and Mohr, 1998).	causes within can be wide-ranging, covering multiple issues (e.g., environmental or health).		Foundation, a breast cancer charity.
Woke washing	Brands that attempt to market themselves as being associated with or resolving social inequality issues and themes but contradict other elements of their marketing and business practices (Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020)	Woke washing is a falsified approach brands take to social cause practices. The failure to integrate diversity beyond surface-level representations or singular marketing mix actions can be seen as BATD. However, unlike BATD, it does not include efforts that productively address marketplace inequality and only uses single marketing mix action.	Mirzaei *et al.* (2021); Sobande (2019); Vredenburg *et al.* (2020)	Gillette's 'Best Men Can Be' campaign tackles toxic masculinity yet still instates a higher price for female products.
Advocacy advertising	A form of corporate advertising that attempts to enhance stakeholder evaluations through deflecting criticism, advocating a particular policy, or enhancing acceptance of a product/service (Lee *et al.*, 2010).	Unlike BATD, advocacy advertising covers a wide range of social, political, legal and environmental issues but only those that impact the firm (e.g., mining's impact on the environment). Additionally, advocacy advertising only involves a single marketing mix action, where BATD can occur across the marketing mix.	Lee *et al.* (2010); Vredenburg *et al.* (202)	BHP releasing campaigns communicating the benefit of the mining industry on employment and economic benefit in Australia after continuous criticisms about the environmental degradation caused by mining.

3.3. Conceptualising BATD

As Table 2 details, diversity themes have been investigated in various ways, which allows for a comparison with our proposed notion of BATD. Although related concepts tackle issues related to diversity, often involving branding or marketing mix considerations, they do not fully account for the scope, actions and dimensionality of BATD. For example, rather than involving the marketing mix specifically, brand activism leverages practice and advertising aims specifically to align "a brand's explicit purpose and values with its activist marketing messaging and prosocial corporate practice" (Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020, p. 445). It can also involve multiple social issues (e.g., economic, environmental, social). Instead, BATD can also take non-activist forms (e.g., changing packaging to be more accessible to consumers with disabilities; Kipnis *et al*., 2021), is specific to marketing mix actions, and dals with one specific social issue; marketplace inequality. As discussed in the introduction, CSR generally represents an obligation aligned with corporate practices (e.g., hiring diverse employees) and focused on ensuring corporate benefits. In contrast, BATD is voluntary, not necessarily aligned with corporate practices, and not guaranteed to create corporate advantages. Some diversity approaches even might create the opposite effect, such as brand switching or negative word of mouth (e.g., Nike; Mirzaei *et al.*, 2022), or achieve social rather than corporate benefits (Kipnis *et al.*, 2021). We argue that previous studies may have incorrectly categorised BATD and its related facets under other concepts (e.g., CSR), which leads to conflicting findings pertaining to the outcomes, critical success factors, characteristics and the manifestation of diversity practices.

To establish conceptual clarity and distinction concerning BATD, we start by proposing the following definition of brand approaches to diversity:

Processes and decisions a brand makes to reflect and integrate diverse identities across its marketing practices to reflect society and resolve marketplace discrimination and underrepresentation.

The above definition highlights that diversity can occur across multiple identities (e.g., sexuality, race, gender), but brands decide what identities are represented, through what elements of the marketing mix, and when they do so. This variance in approaches is what helps inform our categorisation of BATD.

4. Key Elements of BATD

In this section, we rely on theorising to identify concepts we can use to categorise BATD based on characteristics cited in previous diversity and strategy research. In particular, we propose addressing the depth of diversity integration and the order of entry.

4.1. Audience Scepticism

The decisions and actions brands make regarding diversity serve as signals of evaluation for audiences and can help explain why approaches to diversity are questioned based on their intentions (Byrd, 2018). Audience scepticism refers to audiences' disbelief about a brand's motivation to engage with a social initiative, such as one related to diversity (Forehand and Grier, 2003). When audiences express scepticism, they tend to be less receptive to brand initiatives (Connors *et al.*, 2007; Webb and Mohr, 1998). To diminish scepticism, brands must carefully curate their actions because they serve as signals that audiences use to develop judgments about the brand and its pursuit (Hoppner and Vadakkepatt, 2019). Brands need to signal their benevolent motives to help improve audiences' receptivity to their diversity efforts. (Samu and Wymer, 2014).

4.2. Depth of diversity integration

Approaches to diversity vary in their levels or depth (Francis and Robertson, 2021; Podoshen and Ekpo, 2021), depending on the degree to which the brands engage with, and integrate diversity into their marketing mix activities (Evans, 2019; Tormos, 2017). The degree of integration also pertains to the dimensions and depth of the diversity identities considered (Carastathis, 2014; Gopaldas and DeRoy, 2015). We can classify depth as two levels: surface or deeper (Francis and Robertson, 2018; Harrison and Sin, 2006; Podoshen and Ekpo, 2021; Sobande, 2019; Steinfeld *et al.*, 2019). As a relevant type of surface-level diversity, we consider tokenism; as a representation of deeper-level diversity, we discuss intersectionality in theorising about these dimensions.

4.2.1. *Surface-level diversity integration.* In response to rapidly increasing societal pressures, many brands seem to embrace diversity mainly for institutional gain and as a mere promotional tactic (Podoshen and Ekpo, 2021). These limited, often offensive attempts occur on the *surface level* and lack substance (Harrison *et al.*, 2017; Schroeder and Borgerson, 2005; Sobande, 2019). Surface-level diversity initiatives tend to indicate less commitment as they are aligned with being short-term—taking place during periods in which key issues appear heightened and especially topical (e.g., Black Lives Matter). They also generally reflect a misunderstanding or oversimplification of the relevant concepts (Kanter, 1977). To understand surface-level approaches to diversity, we turn to tokenism as a support theory, which describes symbolic efforts to represent minority or underrepresented groups (Schroeder and Borgerson, 2005). Tokenism offers a critique of practices that fail to offer meaningful support for or integrate true diversity practices (King *et al.*, representing 2010; Podoshen and Ekpo, 2021). Tokenism entails brands exemplifying qualities that are singular in dimension, singular marketing actions, and stereotypical recognition (Evans, 2019; King *et al.*, 2010; Tormos, 2017). They fail to represent the specific marginalised groups in a meaningful, consistent

manner (Davis, 2018; Kristofferson *et al.*, 2014; Schroeder and Borgerson, 2005). All of which may lead audiences to be sceptical of the brand.

4.2.2. *Deeper-level diversity integration*. A deeper level of recognition and integration of diversity involves evident efforts to represent complex, varying identities in marketing practices (Licsandru and Cui, 2019). These diverse identities are listened to and catered to, leading to deeper-level diversity initiatives providing realistic portrayals of identities that audiences can relate to and engage with (Podoshen and Ekpo, 2021), which challenges stereotypes and transparent forms of representation (Foster and Pettinicchio, 2021; Pounders, 2018). These efforts likely integrate diversity across all marketing practices (Podoshen and Ekpo, 2021).

To understand deeper-level approaches to diversity, we turn to intersectional as a support theory. Intersectionality is a theory developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) to explain how oppression stems from multiple categories of identity, concurrently. Rather than simplifying oppression to refer solely to exhibitions of specific practices, Crenshaw (1989) calls for an intersectional lens that reflects the range and interactions of discriminatory injustices, such that "through an awareness of intersectionality, we can better acknowledge and ground the differences among us and negotiate the means by which these differences will find expression in constructing group politics" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1299). This complex idea requires a more detailed presentation for the purposes of our study. Intersectionality is the interaction of multiple categories of difference, reflecting individual diversity and experiences, which contributes to discrimination in a society (Crenshaw, 1989). In addition, it acknowledges that every person embodies at least one manifestation of every dimension of diversity, most of which are expressed simultaneously (Talwar, 2010). Thus, people cannot be defined by gender alone; they also have a certain age, skin colour, origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and so forth, which together determine their societal experiences (Kollen, 2019).

Beyond its initial application, intersectionality provides valuable insights for integrating practices that exemplify a deeper-level approach. Brands exemplifying a deeper-level approach recognise that diversity and related issues are not homogenous or singular (Gopaldas and DeRoy, 2015; Rodriguez *et al*., 2016). They understand that a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient (Carastathis, 2014; Gopaldas, 2013; Sobande, 2019). We propose that a deeper-level approach will vary from multidimensional (i.e., representing multiple identity dimensions) to intersectional (i.e., portraying a person with two or more identities that intersect; Gopaldas, 2013; Sobande, 2019). While an intersectional representation is likely to connect more with the specific identities portrayed, we do not distinguish between the two. Both require understanding diversity's complexity and changing nature (Rodriguez *et al*., 2016), both can lead to audiences feeling they can relate to, or resonate with, the people represented in a diversity initiative, and both can instil positive attitudes towards the brand.

4.3. Timing of diversity initiatives: Order of entry

When marketers pursue a new strategy, they face a fundamental decision: be early, or wait to see how the market develops (Kardes and Kalyanaram, 1992). Order of entry indicates when brands decide to undertake a diversity initiative relative to other brands in the marketplace (Kardes and Kalyanaram, 1992). Early entrants are first movers or fast-followers, whereas brands that wait can be classified as followers; they only follow after the strategy has been established as effective (Hoppner and Vadakkepatt, 2019). When applied to BATD, we posit that entry order influences perceptions of a brand's motives for adopting diversity practices.

4.3.1. Early entrant. By being market-drivers, early entrants respond quickly to emerging societal influences and shape market behaviours by establishing a reference point that creates pressure for competitors to embrace diversity initiatives (Silver *et al.*, 2021). For

example, Fenty Beauty's inclusive, expansive approach to diversity resulted in competitors (e.g., NYX, Bobbi Brown, Nars) adding more shades to their cosmetic lines too. Early entrants also tend to be more successful with their initiatives than followers. As exemplified by Dove's "Real Beauty" campaign, a reason why is a closer association with diversity-oriented brand images, which makes them an exemplar in the category (Hoppner and Vadakkepatt, 2019; Murray, 2013). They also innovate diversity practices and collaborate with audiences to formulate a strategy (Silver *et al.,* 2021). Even if audiences may be initially sceptical of an early entrant who communicates its commitment to diversity, their market-driving behaviours should enable them to appear more sincerely motivated, helping them overcome audience scepticism (Silver *et al.,* 2021).

4.3.2. Followers. Followers are reactive, being market-driven through responding to efforts by early entrants, increasing social pressure, or observing how the market develops after an early entrant enters with a unique initiative (Silver *et al.,* 2021). Assuming the early entrant gains praise and benefits from its diversity initiative, followers will be driven to mimic them to achieve similar rewards (Choi, 1997). If early entrants are instead attacked for their appraoch or do not earn substantial rewards, followers will likely resist adopting any diversity approach. Although waiting reduces their risk, it also implies that followers seek to minimise the commitment to a diversity initiative, which may lead to greater audience scepticism because audiences question their motives.

5. Typological Framework and Exemplars of BATD

With Figure 1, we propose a typology based on the two dimensions of depth and order of entry, revealing four forms of diversity approaches. In turn, we discuss each of them, starting with the preferable version, namely, transformative.

Figure 1: Typology of Brand Approaches to Diversity

	Surface Level	*Deeper Level*
Early Entry	**Dismissive** • Early entrant and market-driver • Singular dimensions of diversity and marketing mix representations • Mid-level commitment	**Transformative** • Early entrant and market-driver • Multidimensional to intersectional diversity consideration • Integration across multiple marketing mix elements • High commitment
Late Entry	**Performative** • Follower and market-driven • Singular dimensions of diversity and marketing mix representations • Low commitment	**Adaptive** • Follower and market-driven • Multidimensional to intersectional diversity consideration • Integration across multiple marketing mix elements • Mid-level commitment

5.1. Transformative approach

A transformative approach is defined as brands that proactively reflect and integrate complex, diverse identities across the marketing mix (Francis 2021; Kipnis *et al.* 2021; Spry *et al.* 2021). These brands challenge dominant perspectives and shape markets through collaborations with audiences to understand diversity more deeply and advance society (Spry *et al.*, 2021). A transformative approach has a deeper-level approach to diversity, striving to resolve tension points and avoid exacerbating harmful representations (Alexander-Floyd, 2012; Evans, 2019; Gopaldas and Siebert, 2018; Villanueva *et al.*, 2019). Transformative approaches exhibit higher commitments to diversity by investing more resources and time in becoming the leader in approaching emergent forms of diversity and recognising the complexity of diversity through deeper-level practices (Silver *et al.*, 2021). Their deeper-level view is also integrated through its marketing mix. For example, ModiBodi reflects a deeper level of representation through its communications (e.g., featuring queer, non-binary Paralympian Robyn Lambird) and product development, including period care products that accommodate the range of needs

expressed by people with gender-diverse identities and disabilities (Yates, 2021). The adaptive underwear also costs the same as products designed for mainstream audiences, such that it avoids the common criticism that disability-friendly products are subject to unfair price premiums. Brands adopting a transformative approach are usually early entrants that then catalyse further diversity efforts by follower brands being characterised as market-drivers (Silver *et al.*, 2021). Continuing with the ModiBodi, their leadership in integrating multiple forms of diversity when designing period care products has led to gender- and disability-inclusive period care offerings being available from more brands (e.g., Aisle, Lunette, Bonds and Taboo; Yates, 2021).

5.2. Adaptive approach

An adaptive approach is defined as brands that reactively reflect and integrate complex, diverse identities across the marketing mix (Kipnis *et al.*, 2021). Reflectively because they adopt diversity initiatives only after early entrants have shown how, but they still exhibit deeper-level diversity, with an ongoing commitment to understanding the complexity of diversity (Alexander-Floyd, 2012; Evans, 2019; Villanueva *et al.*, 2019). These brands may be met with greater scepticism from audiences than the transformative approach due to a perceived lack of commitment driven by a later entry (Hoppner and Vadakkepatt, 2019). Hence, an adaptive approach exhibits mid-levels of commitment.

We can use another example from the period care sector to illustrate an adaptive approach, the Australian brand Taboo. It has embraced deeper-level integrations of diversity across various identities, including racial, LGBTQI+, body, gender and age-diverse people. Its gender- and identity-inclusive labelling aims to deconstruct gender binaries, including education and workshop programs that highlight the disadvantages of identities who menstruate (Taboo, 2021). Through its pricing, Taboo supports a pay-it-forward program so that consumers can support marginalised groups' access to menstrual products (Taboo, 2021).

However, Taboo was late relative to the period product category in approaching diversity, such that it mainly featured majority representations in its marketing activities. Prompted by social movements, competitor initiatives and demands from its customer base, Taboo sought to broaden its approach, realising a statement that promised to leverage diversity throughout its operations, and becoming gender-neutral (Taboo, 2020; Taboo, 2021). As this exemplar indicates, whether driven by consumer demands or competitor pressure, it is never too late to adopt diversity initiatives as long as the brand exhibits a commitment to diversity.

5.3. Dismissive approach

A dismissive approach is when a brand has proactively committed to pursuing diversity through singular dimensions, but they have less commitment to evolving this deeper (Davis, 2018; Torchia *et al.*, 2011). Hence, dismissive approaches exhibit mid-level commitment but are differentiated from adaptive approaches through when and how they approach diversity. They commit to diversity approaches independently rather than in response to competitive pressures (Hoppner and Vadakkepatt, 2019). And by doing so at an early stage, these brands consider the task complete (i.e., "tick the box") and perceive no further need for ongoing commitments to diversity. However, their initial efforts quickly become outdated, and they are surpassed by competitors (Hoppner and Vadakkepatt, 2019). For example, in the 1990s and early 2000s, audiences praised Victoria's Secret as a refreshing departure from the racially non-diverse fashion world due to its inclusion and promotion of racial minorities among its models (Phelps, 2018). Their advertising featured racial diversity, as evident in hiring models of colour, such as Naomi Campbell and Tyra Banks. But even as Victoria Secret continues to affirm racial diversity in its marketing efforts, it has not expanded its efforts to diversity in other identities, such as body and gender diversity, which in turn has had negative implications for its performance (Munzenrieder, 2018; Phelps, 2018). Even as competitors began embracing opportunities to demonstrate a deeper-level commitment (e.g., Aerie, Savage, and Fenty), the

brand publicly refused to include models of varying sizes or gender in its marketing activities (Munzenrieder, 2018). Such resistance will likely lead brands with a dismissive approach to receive criticism from an increasingly sceptical audience.

5.4. Performative approach

The performative approach involves surface-level, late adoptions of diversity initiatives; the brand is motivated by consumer pressures, profit motives, or desires to mimic competitors' success (McNamara *et al.*, 2008). In equality studies, the term performative describes approaches and perspectives that are contrary to transformative ones (Francis, 2021). Accordingly, we define a performative approach as a reactive approach to diversity through the surface-level integration of limited identities (Kipnis *et al.*, 2021). The performative approach can be considered the lowest level of commitment due to failing to understand and represent the complexity of diversity and using fewer resources. Its surface-level representation of diversity shows a lack of commitment through tokenistic means and/or marketing actions (e.g., promoting the brand during Pride Month but maintaining gender-exclusionary labels; King *et al.*, 2010; Kristofferson *et al.*, 2014). Their surface-level understanding of diversity is likely labelled as woke-washing from lacking moral sensitivity and limited expression (Mirzaei *et al.*, 2021; Vredenburg *et al.*, 2020). For example, Tinder claims that it achieves diversity by increasing racial representation in its marketing campaigns (e.g., #RepresentLove, aimed at being more inclusive of interracial couples) and aligning with diversity-related causes (e.g., #BlackLivesMatter; Iovine, 2020). Furthermore, arguably Tinder only responded and adopted diversity approaches due to competitive pressures (Dias *et al*., 2020; Lee, 2019). Given this, audiences quickly sensed the inconsistency and lack of depth in Tinder's approach, highlighting that it regularly bans members who express other diverse identities, such as being transgender (Iovine, 2020). Relevant changes to the application, such as adding safety features to protect vulnerable groups, were not applied until competitors such as Bumble made the first

move. To overcome such criticisms, Tinder would need to take a more proactive approach by integrating diversity beyond the surface level and towards a deeper level, acknowledging multiple to intersecting identities within advertisements and/or product modifications).

5.5. Dynamic approach

This typology of BATD is not static; types can change over time, as the exemplars of Taboo and Victoria's Secret reveal. Their strategies once appeared performative (only addressing diversity during Black Lives Matter protests) or transformative (the first brand to integrate racial diversity in fashion). But over time, the concept of diversity has evolved due to changing societal attitudes toward diversity and significant socio-environmental changes. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted and transformed marketing's understanding of marketplace inequalities, disrupting brand practices into diversity reparation tactics (Francis, 2021). As the concept of diversity evolves, brands also can change, whether by falling behind or embracing a more proactive, in-depth approach. Thus, to adhere to the specific boundaries of deeper-level diversity and proactive entry require continued effort and resource devotion to achieve and maintain (Rodriguez *et al*., 2016; Silver *et al.,* 2021). Thus, once a brand enters a certain quadrant in our typology, it is not fated to remain there. To avoid entering a less committed quadrant or achieve an enhanced one, such that they engage in deeper-level thought leadership, brands must exhibit a considerable commitment to continually understanding the evolving nature of diversity.

6. Audience Connectedness as a Consequence of BATD

In discussing our typology and offering illustrative exemplars, we note how each approach leads to different levels of audience receptivity and scepticism (Connors *et al.*, 2017). Evidently, when approaching diversity, brands will experience variances in success. In such a case, success related to diversity may refer to desirable outcomes for the brand, audiences and

society. In making the business case for diversity, researchers increasingly suggest that an appropriate measure of its success might be audience connectedness (Åkestam *et al.*, 2017), a critical form of social good and brand benefit that can be strongly determined by marketing efforts (Kirk and Rifkin, 2020). Audience connectedness in this context is the extent to which audiences feel they can relate to, or resonate with, people represented in a brand's actions (Åkestam *et al.*, 2017). If the audience perceives that they or others with whom they have relationships are represented adequately, they experience connectedness (Åkestam *et al.*, 2017). Core positive feelings evidence connectedness (e.g., well-being, self-esteem, and satisfaction), while negative feelings (e.g., anger, rejection) deter connectedness (Hutcherson *et al.*, 2008). When audiences are connected, it can generate success through instigating desirable brand outcomes such as acceptance, positive feelings and actions towards the brand and marketing activity (e.g., brand engagement; Åkestam et al., 2017; Burgess et al., 2021). If connectedness can be achieved, evidence also suggests that this will lead to well-being and positive mental health with those who perceive they are represented. It helps them feel validated and accepted by the marketing activity (Åkestam *et al*., 2017; Feng *et al.*, 2019). For all others, connectedness contributes to promoting a more inclusive, less segregated society (Åkestam *et al.*, 2017). Hence, if specific elements of BATD elicit more connectedness in audiences, brands should strive to achieve these elements, as we summarise in four propositions.

First, we predict that surface-level integrations of diversity diminish audience connectedness. First, it will reduce connectedness by having fewer points to establish connectedness— surface-level integrations are harder to relate or resonate with (Åkestam et al., 2017). Second, surface-level integrations often result in offensive representations that can evoke negative reactions, avoidance and a sense of isolation among audiences (Kilpatrick *et al.*, 2017). Third, the lack of or inconsistency across its marketing mix practices also implies a

lack of commitment (Kristofferson et al., 2014). As the Victoria's Secret "Perfect Body Campaign" demonstrates. Its inability to represent diversity beyond the singular racial dimension and failure to consider diversity in its other marketing mix elements has prompted audiences to label the brand as exclusionary and accuse it of perpetuating tokenistic qualities, ultimately leading to calls for consumer boycotts (Akbareian, 2014). We propose:

> *P1: Surface-level diversity restricts connectedness due to its (a) singular dimension representation, (b) lack of marketing mix integration, and (c) being perceived as less committed.*

Deeper-level integrations of diversity are an active attempt to be more inclusive by avoiding stereotypes and inequalities, evoke positive perceptions (Carastathis, 2014; Cole et al., 2011), leading to more socially inclusive spaces and positive social change (Carastathis, 2014). Deeper-level integrations of diversity provide more representations for audiences to relate to, or resonate with, enhancing the probability of connectedness (Åkestam et al., 2017). Through investing more time in understanding the intricacies of diversity and representing these across marketing mix practices, deeper-level diversity is likely associated with a greater commitment to diversity (Alexander-Floyd, 2012; Smith et al., 2012; Villanueva et al., 2019), as occurred for Taboo. Due to deeper-level integrations of diversity and commitment, the brand has experienced immensely positive responses from audiences (i.e., those who feel better represented and those who resonate with the people represented), prompting connectedness. We propose:

> *P2: Deeper-level recognition of diversity enhances connectedness due to (a) multidimensional to intersectional representation, (b) integration across multiple marketing mix elements, and (c) being perceived as more committed.*

Third, by adopting diversity initiatives early and collaborating with audiences to formulate a diversity strategy, early entrants should enjoy more positive perceptions and attitudes with audiences. They will be more closely associated with proactively promoting diversity, which in turn likely reduces scepticism (Silver *et al*., 2021; Sirsly and Lamretz, 2008). All of which drives audience connectedness (Åkestam *et al.*, 2017; Hutcherson *et al.*, 2008). Our discussion of ModiBodi exemplifies how being first can build audience connectedness. Through its commitment to market-driving behaviour, ModiBodi earned positive audience responses as one of the first brands to offer disability-adaptive period underwear, making audiences less sceptical of the brand.

P3: Early entrants enhance audience connectedness through (a) being more associated with diversity, (b) audiences being less sceptical towards the intent, and (c) being perceived as more committed.

Fourth, brands that approach diversity later, or signal their hesitancy towards diversity, likely are met with scepticism and even negativity (e.g., negative word of mouth, rejection) from audiences as they will perceive the brands' motives as inauthentic; they pursue diversity only for self-serving reasons such competitor pressure or profits (Hoppner and Vadakkepatt, 2019; Silver *et al.*, 2021). Audiences may also be more sceptical towards the brand, perceiving it as less diverse, as their actions do not commit to advancing diversity (Silver *et al.*, 2021). Such reactions resonate with restricting connectedness (Oliver *et al*., 2015). Tinder ignored earlier pleas to represent diversity, and then it met criticism and negativity from audiences when it claimed to be approaching diversity during the Black Lives Matter movement. Therefore,

P4: Followers restrict audience connectedness by (a) being less associated with diversity, (b) audiences being more sceptical towards the intent and (c) being perceived as less committed.

7. Theoretical Implications

In accordance with the contributions framework developed by MacInnis (2011), we seek to establish several conceptual contributions. Specifically, we offer a *revising* contribution, with a clear articulation of what BATD constitutes and how it is distinct from similar concepts. We reveal it entails more than singular dimensions of diversity and specific marketing mix actions. Moreover, according to a typological conceptual approach, we provide a differentiating contribution by classifying BATD into four types (Jaakkola, 2020). Finally, we offer a *delineating* contribution by exploring how BATD achieves audience connectedness.

Revising contributions reconfigure how a previously identified phenomenon is articulated (Jaakkola, 2020; MacInnis, 2011). As our research illustrates, themes related to BATD have been discussed, but mostly briefly and inconsistently, without establishing a clear conceptual grounding. In reviewing these prior investigations, we provide four key contributions. First, challenging most conceptualisations that focus on singular diversity dimensions (e.g. ethnicity), we argue why brands need to recognise and adopt a deeper level of diversity integration. Second, we emphasise the importance of diversity integration extending from just communication to across the marketing mix. Third, we justify that because diversity initiatives have different critical success factors, mechanisms, and theoretical underpinnings, they need to be considered separate from other often investigated themes within other literature (e.g., brand activism). Finally, in establishing the clear conceptual grounding for diversity, we propose a definition of a brand's approach to diversity (BATD) that encompass how brands reflect and integrate diversity across their marketing mixes and the intended outcomes: *Processes and decisions a brand make to reflect and integrate diverse*

identities across its marketing practices to reflect society, resolve marketplace discrimination and underrepresentation.

A differentiating contribution distinguishes, dimensionalises, classifies or categorises an entity (MacInnis 2011); we achieve this standard with our typology. Creating a typology reduces complexity and helps marketers recognise the differing components, manifestations and effects of BATD (Jaakkola, 2020). Diversity has limited application in marketing research, contributing to its conceptual confusion and a lack of theoretical underpinnings, limiting the understanding of BATD, its manifestations and the meaning of diversity itself. We assign BATD to categories according to the depth of brands' diversity integration and order of entry. These distinct concepts help provide clarity and support applications of appropriate theories. The typology also supports a precise, nuanced understanding of BATD, pinpointing and justifying both characteristics.

Finally, this research contributes by detailing how BATD influences audience connectedness, as a delineating contribution that details, charts, describes or depicts an entity and its relationship with other entities (MacInnis, 2011). Audience connectedness is put forward as a critical consequence as it can instigate desirable brand outcomes such as positive feelings and actions towards the brand. Equally as important, it can positively benefit those who perceive they are represented, and promotes a more inclusive, less segregated society. Then, drawing from theoretical underpinnings of tokenism, intersectionality, and order of entry, we offer four propositions based on this delineating contribution.

8. Managerial Implications

This study offers several implications for managers seeking to understand the broad, varied ways to approach diversity. In particular, they can apply our typology to understand their current diversity approach, how it differs from competitors, and how they might adjust their approaches if they desire to increase connectedness. To increase connectedness, managers

must consider the two boundary conditions that inform our typology, engage in deeper-level integrations of diversity and adopt initiatives earlier. Deeper-level diversity is critical in connecting the brand with consumers. For managers of brands at the forefront (i.e., transformative and adaptive approaches), they need to remain well-informed in the diversity space and allow a deeper level of diversity to evolve. For managers of brands with surface-level representation (i.e., performative and dismissive approaches), increasing consumer expectations and competitive dynamics will pressure action to cater to marginalised groups more effectively. To do this, managers might need to consider multiple diverse identities (e.g., race, body type and gender), the unique experiences of people that belong to one or more of these identities (e.g., lack of product accessibility), and look beyond just communication. Depth comes from diversity being evident in all marketing decisions, such as extended product ranges and distribution efforts that facilitate access marginalised segments. For example, by developing products or services to meet the specific needs of a diverse segment, the brand should create strong preferences, perceptions of commitment, and reduced scepticism towards its initiatives.

Brands also benefit from adopting diversity earlier, such that they achieve greater audience connectedness and diminish scepticism about the brand's intentions and sincerity (Silver *et al.*, 2021; Sirsly and Lamretz, 2008). Yet brands with later adoption (performative and adaptive approaches) still should pursue diversity. For adaptive brands, searching for opportunities and increasing commitment to diversity initiatives will likely reduce scepticism further and help them move towards typifying a transformative approach. For performative brands, transitioning to long-term commitments and adopting newer forms of diversity sooner rather than later are critical. The extent to which these are undertaken will seemingly determine whether the brand fits the adaptive or transformative approaches.

The nuances discussed call to attention that diversity is dynamic, subject to revisions, and inclusive of more identities (Shore *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, as diversity evolves, all brands might gain new opportunities to lead the market with new offerings or address previously ignored diversity dimensions (e.g., cognitive disabilities). To proactively address emerging forms of diversity, brands should engage in social listening and environmental scanning, or consider hiring a diversity marketing consultant, so that they remain well-informed in the diversity space.

9. Directions for Future Research

Continued research can build on the typology of BATDs, their application in practice and their ability to enhance audience connectedness. As summarised in Table 3, we propose a comprehensive research agenda to increase the depth and breadth of diversity research.

9.1. Increasing the depth of diversity research in marketing

The research questions in Table 3 are flexible in terms of the epistemological, methodological and method approaches that might be used to address them. We take a conceptual approach to build clarity and theoretical understanding of BATD; continued research might adopt alternative epistemological approaches to draw conclusions (e.g., empirical testing). For example, researchers could investigate and validate BATD by testing the questions in Table 3 or the four propositions presented previously. Such investigations might reveal which approach is more successful for facilitating various outcomes. Further theoretical and empirical inquiries could increase understanding of these relationships, their antecedents and consequences, and develop a scale to measure BATD so that future research can flourish. Future research may delve into uncovering the different ways diversity can be tactically represented in branding practices (e.g., visual or non-visual cues; Burgess *et al.*, 2021). These insights could uncover the different tactics and their relative effectiveness for achieving successful diversity.

Table 3: Research Directions Derived from the Typology

Themes	Research Avenues and Questions
Increasing Depth	Performance impact of BATD ● How and to what extent do different diversity approaches vary in their type and degree of outcomes (e.g., brand versus consumer-related outcomes)? ● Are some approaches more resource exhaustive? ● Does the performance impact of BATD change depending on the industry or type of brand (e.g., services, fashion, finance)? Nature of BATDs ● How should we measure BATD? ● How do audiences or consumers categorise BATD? ● How can brands move through each of the approaches? ● How does each approach inform or interact with one another? ● How prominent is each approach (e.g., are brands more likely to be performative than adaptive, or transformative?)? ● What are the different tactics (e.g., cues) that brands can use to achieve certain types of diversity, and how do these vary in their impact? Factors that may moderate or drive BATD ● How do specific identities (e.g., belonging to minority groups) moderate the success of BATD? ● How do attitudes or beliefs held about diversity moderate the success of BATD? Drivers of BATD ● What specific audience (e.g., conservative) or contextual (e.g., social movements) factors influence brands to adopt a particular appraoch?
Increasing Breadth	Linking BATD with other theoretical constructs ● How does BATD interact with or influence collective engagement or engagement? ● What other outcomes are associated with BATD (e.g., brand loyalty, brand authenticity)? ● How is BATD linked to other related constructs (e.g., CSR, brand activism, green marketing)? Do these inform how audiences receive BATD? Examining BATD in specific contexts ● How does the typology relate and unfold in other research streams (e.g., services marketing, human resources, healthcare, marketing education)?

	Connection of BATD research with other disciplines: ● What are the implications of performative, dismissive, adaptive and transformative approaches for health care (e.g., emergency treatment vs. routine treatment) or education (e.g., education for students with special needs)? ● What are the links of performative, dismissive, adaptive and transformative approaches to human resource management? ● How does the typology inform and/or connect with organisational behaviour and social psychology literature (e.g., change management, employee training, mentoring)? ● How can collaborations with external disciplines (e.g., psychology, management, education) inform the typology?
Increasing Breadth	Role of technology ● What impact does social media have on BATD (e.g., social media, cancel culture)? ● Can emerging technological trends be used to foster BATD? Emerging trends include social commerce (e.g., via Instagram), live stream video (e.g., Android/iOS's Meerkat), mobile marketing (e.g., mobile apps), wearables (e.g., Google Glass) and location-based marketing (e.g., Foursquare). ● How can big data be used to understand better and manage BATD? For example, how does online monitoring or social listening enhance the mechanisms of different approaches? ● What opportunities does artificial intelligence present for BATD (e.g., virtual influencers, ability to customise approaches for audiences on a micro-level) Societal impact of BATD ● What role do diversity approaches have in informing/influencing societal attitudes toward diversity or diversity-based movements?

We explore BATD in a broader sense, reflecting the brand's implementation, and thus avoid approaches that might be too narrow in their focus (e.g., focusing on just ethnicity representations in advertising, Licsandru & Cui, 2019). Less represented dimensions of diversity (e.g., disabilities) would benefit from academic investigations that highlight specific theoretical explanations and recommendations and direct necessary attention to relatively invisible forms of identity. These insights also can reveal previously ignored discriminations within the marketplace and academia. Such research also might consider specific diversity initiatives and tactics, such as differences in audience receptions of brands that show solidarity with diversity-related movements (e.g., #BlackLivesMatter) or take more subtle approaches (e.g., increasing product lines to be more inclusive).

Embracing diversity can assist in creating norms, and shaping behaviours and attitudes among the actors in these settings (Harper and Yeung, 2013). As part of popular culture, marketing is instrumental in shaping what society defines as normal, aspirational or acceptable (Schroeder & Borgerson, 2005). Thus, we call for efforts to investigate how BATD contributes to the social good by influencing societal attitudes or sentiment toward diversity or diversity-related trends (e.g., social movements).

9.2. Increasing the breadth of diversity research

The relationship between BATD and other constructs, contexts, entities, disciplines deserves further attention. Our article highlights the limited and inconsistent view of successful diversity initiatives. We encourage marketers and researchers to include audience connectedness as an essential outcome, but further research is needed to increase the breadth of understanding by identifying other associated outcomes. Researchers might investigate whether BATD produces brand-specific outcomes such as purchase intentions, brand equity, or brand loyalty. We also encourage consideration of relational and social outcomes (e.g.,

collective engagement) that might motivate brands to focus on relationships with audiences and broader societal impacts.

The different diversity approaches, and their boundaries, have been discussed in management, psychology, education and sociology research (e.g., Byrd, 2018; Cole *et al*., 2011; Leslie, 2019). Although the contextual focus and perspectives differ, there is a common emphasis for more effective approaches (Carastathis, 2014; Villanueva *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, continued research should confirm the applicability or relevance of our typology for other research streams and how other disciplines might inform the typology. For example, can the framework be applied within organisations or specific service environments? Further, do other organisation characteristics, such as internal employee diversity or the firm's size, influence BATD and the achievement of certain boundaries (e.g., approaching diversity earlier or to a deeper-level)? Collaboration across disciplines might produce important developments and implications for marketing, management, psychology, education and sociology.

10. Conclusion

Diversity must inform how brands conduct their marketing activities. This article aims to shed light on various approaches to diversity adopted by brands and thus contribute to conversations about how brands' actions might contribute unintentionally to discrimination, negative well-being or damage to the brand's reputation. In addition, we clarify that singular, limited and specific marketing action representations of diversity in marketing practice are insufficient. With a framework of how brands approach diversity, we identify the depth of brands' diversity integration and order of entry as key elements for defining BATD into four types; transformative, adaptive, dismissive or performative. Ideally, brands should pursue deeper-level and earlier approaches to diversity to evoke a stronger sense of audience connectedness.

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CHAPTER FOUR. Diversity Advertising: Is That Me I See?

Statement of Authorship

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Contribution to the Paper	Conceptual development, survey development, data collection, data analysis and wrote the manuscript		
Overall percentage (%)	70%		
Certification:	This paper reports on original research I conducted during the period of my Higher Degree by Research candidature and is not subject to any obligations or contractual agreements with a third party that would constrain its inclusion in this thesis. I am the primary author of this paper.		
Signature		Date	23/12/2021

Co-Author Contributions

By signing the Statement of Authorship, each author certifies that:

i. the candidate's stated contribution to the publication is accurate (as detailed above);
ii. permission is granted for the candidate in include the publication in the thesis; and
iii. the sum of all co-author contributions is equal to 100% less the candidate's stated contribution.

Name of Co-Author	Dr Dean Wilkie		
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Abstract

Portrayals of diversity in advertising are increasing, but recent studies indicate that such portrayals have a bright side (strong positive reaction from audiences) and a dark side (large-scale criticism). As positive sentiment towards diversity increases in society, investigating the bright and dark side of diversity advertising in marketing is imperative. Through a quantitative study using partial least squares with survey data from 509 respondents, this paper aims to answer the research question of what mechanisms lead audiences to (dis)connect with a diversity advertisement. Specifically, reflecting the two ways audiences can connect with a diversity campaign, we position self- and belief-congruence as critical mediators in the relationship between perceived diversity and (dis)connectedness. These findings provide specific guidance for diversity integration into all aspects of marketing. Future research directions are offered to enhance connectedness and well-being within the marketplace.

Introduction

At a time when social movements have risen to prominence, Gillette and Dove are exemplars of the bright and dark side of diversity advertising. Dove has received acclaim for connecting with audiences through its "Real Beauty" campaign (Drake, 2017), leading scholars to conclude that diversity advertising offers several benefits for brands and society. Enhanced advertising effectiveness, positive brand attitudes and increased purchases are a few brand benefits (Khan et al., 2015; Li, 2020). Society benefits from the diversity advertisement encouraging a more inclusive, less segregated society that instils a sense of well-being among people who are appropriately represented in authentic and relatable ways (Åkestam et al., 2017). However, Gillette's "The Best Men Can Be" campaign attracted large-scale outrage and criticism from audiences (Mirzaei et al., 2022). Such a response may

be permanently harmful to brands and, equally as important, to the marginalised group portrayed (Davis, 2018). As positive sentiment towards diversity increases in society, driving more and more brands to adopt diversity campaigns, more needs to be understood about the bright and dark sides of diversity advertising.

Audience connectedness, defined in this study as the degree to which audiences feel their identity, experiences, or those close to them are adequately represented (Hutcherson et al., 2008; Liljedal et al., 2020), is emerging as an important measure of diversity advertising success (Liljedal et al., 2020). Connectedness encapsulates how diversity advertising, and its implementation, leads to brand outcomes and facilitates an open-minded society (Åkestam et al., 2017; Liljedal et al., 2020). The definition also acknowledges two ways to build connectedness. The first, which much of the diversity research to date recognises, is through identifying with a marginalised group represented (e.g., LBGTI+ people viewing an ad featuring a same-sex couple). The second way is through relating to the diversity representations despite being outside the marginalised group (e.g., heterosexual audiences viewing an ad featuring a same-sex couple; Åkestam et al., 2017; Burgess et al., 2021; Liljedal et al., 2020). This path shows promising potential to explain the bright side of diversity advertising; not alienating particular groups and resonating with general audiences (e.g., majority groups).

While connectedness provides a measure for the bright side, the polarised reactions that reflect the dark side are relatively unexplored but may be explained as emerging from a feeling of disconnect. Disconnectedness in this study represents feeling distant, not relating, or estranged from people in a diversity advertisement (Huang et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2001). Disconnectedness is distinct from a lack of connectedness. It instigates different feelings (e.g., anger, outrage and isolation), leading to unwanted attitudes and behaviours towards the brand and the marginalised group represented (Costabile et al., 2021; Davis, 2018).

Disconnectedness is also said to destroy the opportunity to connect (Phillips & Haase, 2020), whereas low levels of connectedness can be improved over time. Audiences refusing to purchase Gillette again is resonant of disconnectedness. How connectedness is built may also give us insight into how disconnectedness might emerge; when a person feels vulnerable by a brand promoting the marginalised group represented, either because it conflicts with their self-identity or they hold contrasting beliefs (Mirzaei et al., 2022). Given that marketers seek to avoid the dark side of diversity advertising, providing evidence of such contributing factors is imperative.

Our research aims to answer the question of what leads audiences to (dis)connect to diversity advertisements? To answer this question, a representative sample of the UK population were surveyed about their perceptions of a specific diversity campaign they could recall. Unlike most existing literature, our study surveys the general population instead of a particular marginalised audience to represent the shift in broadening positive sentiment towards diversity. Respondents' levels of connectedness and disconnectedness were examined and are presented across the study. The findings first show that increasing perceived diversity is critical to increasing connectedness and decreasing disconnectedness. However, reflecting the proposed ways audiences can (dis)connect with a diversity advertisement, this is achieved through mediation—increasing levels of perceived diversity increase self- and belief-congruence, which subsequently impact (dis)connectedness. Further, perhaps reflecting increasing beliefs about diversity in society, belief-congruence plays a greater role than self-congruence. This indicates that marketers can reduce the risk of the dark side of diversity advertising (i.e., alienating the general audience) if they find common ground through shared beliefs. With these critical success factors established, we provide managerial recommendations for maximising the bright side of diversity advertising.

Hypotheses Development

Perceived diversity and its evolution

Perceived diversity relates to the degree to which audiences notice and attend to diversity stimuli in an advertisement (Shemla et al., 2014). Traditionally, diversity advertisement studies focus on singular dimensions of diversity, such as gender or race (Åkestam et al., 2017; Licsandru & Cui, 2019). While these studies are useful in revealing certain forms of discrimination and appreciation towards diversity, increasing engagement with social issues such as #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, and Pride have seen diversity evolve with people demanding brands reflect such values (Grier et al. 2006; Licsandru & Cui, 2019). Expectations surrounding diversity have also become multidimensional, encompassing identities such as sexuality, transgender, age, body type, and disability (Gopaldas & Siebert, 2018). Evolving attitudes and multidimensional expectations means that for audiences to relate to and connect with diversity advertisements, they must first contain realistic portrayals of identities.

Perceived diversity and connectedness

Realistic portrayals of identities can enhance connection in two ways. First, it can result through a person seeing a diversity representation they directly identify with (Khan et al., 2015; Truong et al., 2015). Second, the realistic portrayal increases connectedness indirectly by the person relating the diversity representation to a close connection (e.g., a family member or friend; Åkestam et al., 2017). A connection is also more likely when the advert contains multiple portrayals as it is more likely to elicit feelings of belonging and increases the touchpoints to connect with (Licsandru & Cui, 2019). As such, there is a clear positive relationship between levels of perceived diversity contained in an advertisement

and audience connectedness. While there is this understanding, consideration needs to be on the factors that influence this relationship.

The mediating role of self-congruence

As highlighted, a connection with a diversity advertisement can occur when a person directly identifies with a diversity portrayal (e.g., congruent ethnicity; Grier et al., 2006). A person's self-concept can explain this. Self-concept encompasses an individual's thoughts and feelings regarding themselves as an object (Sirgy, 2018). In advertisements, marketers seek a match between the audiences' perceived self-concept and its brand, often referred to as the degree of self-congruence (Yoon & Kim, 2016). Self-congruity theory proposes that when a brand achieves a level of self-congruence, the person develops more positive attitudes and behaviours toward the brand (Sirgy, 2018).

Self-congruence is critical in diversity advertising due to the increasing desire for people to see themselves represented in popular culture (Khan et al., 2015). We argue that self-congruence is also critical because it mediates the relationship between perceived diversity and audience connectedness. Seeing more parts of their identity represented in a diversity advertisement will first increase self-congruence levels as audiences relate and feel more accepted (Gong, 2020; Licsandru & Cui, 2018; Truong et al., 2015). Then, because audiences relate and feel more accepted, this enhances connectedness.

H1: Self-congruence mediates the relationship between perceived diversity and audience connectedness

Literature suggests that negative feelings towards diversity advertisements occur through subjective processes; those with diverse identities feel directly excluded and distant when they do not see themselves in advertisements (Davis, 2018; Licsandru & Cui, 2019). Hence, there is a negative relationship between perceived diversity and disconnectedness,

subsequently suggesting that self-congruence is again a mediator. Seeing more parts of their identity represented in a diversity advertisement will first increase self-congruence levels as audiences relate and feel more accepted (Gong, 2020; Licsandru & Cui, 2018; Truong et al., 2015). This then reduces disconnectedness; feelings of exclusion and being estranged from the people in a diversity advertisement are reduced.

H2: Self-congruence negatively mediates the relationship between perceived diversity and disconnectedness.

Belief-congruence

As highlighted, movements such as #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter and Pride have proliferated positive beliefs towards multiple forms of diversity. In Australia, 83% of the population share positive views towards homosexuality, compared to 56% in 2011 (Pew Research Centre, 2020). While society's attitudes have evolved, diversity marketing literature has struggled to explain why audiences that do not belong to the minority groups targeted responded positively to the diversity advertising effort (Nichols & Raska, 2020; Yoo, 2020). We put forward that the positive response from the general audience might be driven by holding congruent diversity beliefs to those portrayed in the advertisement.

According to belief-congruence theory (Rokeach & Rothman, 1965), people strive to behave in ways that are consistent with their beliefs to alleviate cognitive dissonance and negative affect. Emerging in diversity literature is the idea that congruent beliefs play an important role in responding to diversity advertising (e.g., Alhouti et al., 2015; Burgess et al., 2021). It informs us of how people's beliefs about marginalised groups significantly contribute to accepting (rejecting) diversity advertisements (Alhouti et al., 2015; Davis, 2018). For example, LGBT advertising literature has found that people with more tolerance

towards homosexuality are more likely to positively respond to advertisements with LGBT imagery (Um, 2014).

Like self-congruence, we put forward that belief-congruence is critical for building connectedness because it too mediates the relationship between perceived diversity and audience connectedness. When audiences sense higher levels of perceived diversity, there is an expanded opportunity to connect with different sides of their beliefs and to a higher level (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2019; Åkestam et al., 2017; Malär et al., 2011). And because connectedness also encapsulates the perceived feeling of relatedness (Hutcherson et al., 2008), increasing levels of belief-congruence will then increase audience connectedness.

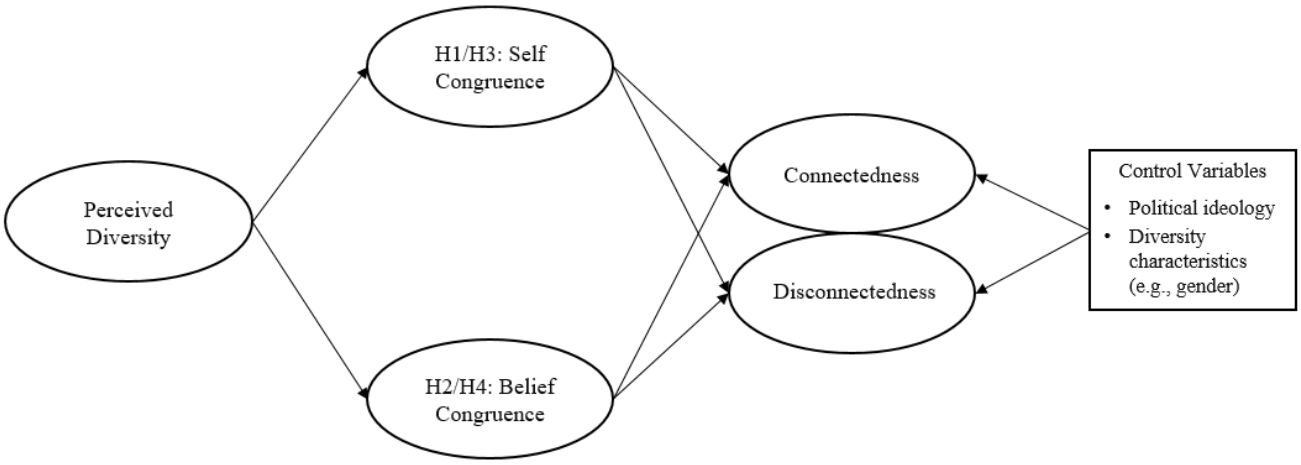
H3: Belief-congruence positively mediates the relationship between perceived diversity and audience connectedness.

Disconnectedness can also occur when diversity advertisements, such as Gillette's 'The Best Me Can Be', challenge the audience's beliefs on a diversity issue (e.g., toxic masculinity; Hsu, 2019). As Mirzaei et al. (2022) argued, those who disconnected with Gillette's diversity advertisement felt that their beliefs were ignored and even attacked by the advertisement. Critical to reducing disconnectedness appears to be finding common ground with the general population (Mirzaei et al., 2022). We propose that this starts with increasing levels of perceived diversity because it expands the opportunity to connect with different sides of their beliefs and to a higher level (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2019; Åkestam et al., 2017). Increased belief-congruence leads to a greater feeling of relatedness, which will reduce audience disconnectedness as they no longer see their beliefs being ignored or attacked by the advertisement.

H4: Belief-congruence negatively mediates the relationship between perceived diversity and disconnectedness.

The hypotheses mentioned above arrive at a conceptual framework presented in Figure 1, which proposes that the relationship between perceived diversity and (dis)connectedness is mediated through two pathways; belief-congruence and self-congruence.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



Methodology

Sample selection, data collection, and questionnaire

An online survey was administered to a representative sample of UK-based respondents over 18-years-old who had seen a diversity advertisement from a brand they could identify. The initial number of respondents was 600. The demographic profile of the sample included of the respondents, 61 per cent (n= 299) were women, 38 per cent (n= 203) were men, 2 per cent (n = 6) identified as non-binary, and the remaining respondents wished not to disclose (n = 1). The self-recorded median age was 43. The median annual income category was “£30,000-£39,999” (n=133). Ethnic distribution was predominantly Caucasian

(n=417) followed by Asian (n=35), Black (n=25), Latino (n=6), Pacific Islander (n=1) and Mixed Race (n=19). The remaining respondents did not disclose their race (n=6).

A pre-test of the survey was conducted (n=45) to ensure adequate confidence that each question was interpreted as intended. We reviewed the open-ended responses to several questions, which indicated that respondents clearly understood the questions, offering evidence of face validity. Thus, we made no further changes to the questionnaire. The main questionnaire started with a general overview, without any details about the specific relationships being investigated. This introduction helps minimise the potential for biased responses (Dwivedi et al., 2016). Respondents identified a diversity advertisement recalled and the brand, which became the focal brand in the survey. Open- and closed-ended questions gathered the key antecedent and dependent variables, and the design helped minimise the potential effects of various response biases. To reduce the risk of order bias, the questions within each section (e.g. congruence measures) and items within the survey were presented randomly (Podsakoff et al., 2003), and demographic questions were presented last. To address the risk of self-generated validity, the questionnaire also created perceptual separations between the antecedent and outcome variables, using sub-headings, separate introductions, and page breaks (Feldman & Lynch, 1988). Closed-ended, Likert scale questions pertaining to (dis)connectedness also separated the open-ended self-congruence items, preventing straight-lining and the potential for response bias due to fatigue (Feldman and Lynch, 1988). The straightforward wording of the survey items, without any double-barrelled or leading questions, also should minimise any confusion that might lead to response errors or non-responses (Malhotra and Patil, 2006). Forced responses reduced the possibility of missing data (Dwivedi et al., 2016). The examples of self-congruence and belief-congruence dimensions presented to participants were randomised; no two participants saw the same set of examples, which should additionally reduce response

bias (Jaffe and Pasternak, 1997). Other design aspects, such as the voluntary nature of their participation, assurance of complete anonymity, and the self-administration of the survey, minimised potential acquiescence biases (Jaffe and Pasternak, 1997).

Multiple data validation checks also confirm data quality. First, a check at the start of the survey eliminated those who failed the screening criteria and any responses that cited illegible or nonsense brand names (n=43). Second, given an average completion time of 17 minutes, any respondents who finished the survey in less than one-third the median time (i.e. less than 302 seconds) were deemed non-serious respondents and eliminated from the sample (n=8). Third, a straight-line check was conducted to eliminate questionnaires that repeated the same response for multiple items and pages (e.g. systematically selecting a rating of 7 for every answer) (n=10). Fourth, statements such as 'This is a quality check. If you have read this, please leave this statement blank', were used following prior conventions (Paas and Morren, 2018); respondents who answered were not paying attention to the content and thus were removed (n=30). The final sample included 509 respondents.

Minimising common method variance (CMV)

Common method variance (CMV) is typically associated with self-reported, subjective criteria that may tend to correlate, compared with objectively observed phenomena (Raffiee & Coff, 2016), so it is a potential concern for this study. We use three tests to show the minimisation of CMV. Harman's one-factor test indicated that a single factor explained less than 50 per cent (29.41 per cent) of the variance, thus providing evidence that CMV was not a significant concern (Podsakoff *et al.,* 2003). Second, after partialing out the correlation due to CMV by using a theoretically unrelated marker variable, 'I feel a deep love for donuts', as recommended by previous studies (Lindell and Whitney, 2001), the results remained unchanged, and the correlation of all latent variables with the

marker variable was less than .30. Third, a collinearity diagnostic is often applied to PLS-SEM models, which predicts that common method bias is present when a latent variable has a value greater than 3.3 (Hair et al., 2016). The VIF value for the latent construct of self-congruence was less than 1.5. Although these tests cannot entirely rule out the presence of CMV, they strongly suggest CMV is unlikely to have had any significant impact on the reported results.

Measurement

The construct items were adapted from empirically validated, robust scales, measured using multi-item, seven-point, Likert scales anchored at 'Strongly Disagree' (1) and 'Strongly Agree' (7). All items can be viewed in Table A1. Our review of the measures starts with self-congruence due to its innovative operationalisation.

Self-congruence. Most operationalisations of self-congruence have the shortcoming of measuring the perceived fit of the respondent's self-concept and the brand's personality (Malär et al., 2011), which is irrelevant because diversity identities have no connection to personality traits. Some also fail to specify the focal characteristic (e.g., the specific personality trait) they should be assessing congruence with. Instead, the question will simply ask the respondent to evaluate whether the personality of Brand X is consistent with how they see themselves. To address this, a two-stage approach was developed. Based on the conceptualisation of the self by Kuhn and McPartland's (1954) and the resulting Twenty Statement test developed to help answer 'Who am I?' (McConnell, 2011), an open-ended prompt first asks respondents to indicate five identity statements that best represent their self-identity. For example, 'I am a mother'. Respondents varied in responses with examples related to their gender, sexuality, interests, aspirations, and personality, to name a few. The subsequent questions, adapted from Sirgy et al.'s (1997) scale of self-congruence, probed

whether the advertisement was consistent with their nominated self-identity traits. For example, 'How well does [Brand]'s advertisement portray your self-identity of '[self-identity statement]'?'. Finally, because these five identity statements are theoretically uncorrelated, self-congruence is modelled as a formative construct.

Perceived Diversity. Perceived diversity measured the degree to which participants could perceive diversity in their nominated advertisement. This measure contained four items adapted from two scales; two were from Lee et al.'s (2017) visual processing fluency scale, and Unzueta et al.'s (2012) perceived diversity scale.

Belief-congruence. Belief-congruence forms part of the broader concept of self-congruence. To measure this construct, we again adapted the four-item measure of *self-congruence* from Sirgy et al.'s (1997) scale of self-congruence. An open-ended prompt first asks respondents to indicate the belief traits in their nominated diversity advertisement. A following question asked whether the advertisement's perpetuated beliefs align with their indicated belief trait. For example, 'I generally share the beliefs of [Brand's] advertisement' (Malär et al., 2011).

Connectedness. The measure of connectedness was used as our outcome variable to assess how participants felt they could relate to the diversity advertisement they recalled. *Connectedness* included five items; three items were derived from Hutcherson et al. (2008) (adapted by Åkestam et al., 2017) and two items from Ang et al. (2007).

Disconnectedness. The measure of disconnectedness was used as our second outcome variable to assess how distant they felt with the advertisement they recalled. *Disconnectedness* is measured with six items adapted from Lee et al. (2001; See Table A.1).

Control variables. We control for the effect of two variables on audience connectedness. *Political ideology* included three items and were derived from Kaikati et al.

(2017). Because diversity encompasses multiple identities (Gopaldas and Siebert, 2018), a variable called

Diversity characteristics is operationalised. For each characteristic of a diversity group (i.e., homosexual, non-male, over 65-years-old, disabled and non-white, if a respondent's identity consists of this, they receive a '1', otherwise a zero. And because these characteristics encapsulate different characteristics, it is modelled as a formative construct.

Measurement model

To analyse data, we use partial least squares-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS (Ringle et al., 2015). We use the PLS-SEM for five main advantages. First, our study explores several mediating relationships and additional dimensions for some constructs. Our data and analysis are more suited to PLS-SEM than covariance-based SEM because the relationships are predictive rather than confirmatory (Leppäniemi et al., 2017). Second, our model includes a formative construct (e.g., self-congruence); thus, PLS-SEM is more appropriate as assessing formative constructs with covariance-based SEM approaches can lead to unidentified models (Peng and Lai, 2012). Third, when theory is less developed, PLS-SEM is appropriate (Hair et al., 2016), as is the case for the theory of belief-congruence and perceived diversity. Fourth, PLS relies on bootstrapping to examine the stability of the parameter estimates, which is a more statistically robust method for detecting and estimating the direct effect of the independent variables (Chin, 2010). Fifth, PLS-SEM provides robust model estimations when data are not normally distributed (Hair et al., 2016). Preliminary observations identify a range of skewness (-1.75 to 1.23) and kurtosis (-1.06 to 3.07) values.

Model evaluation

Evaluation of the model is completed in two steps, assessing the measurement (outer) model and the structural (inner) model. Different evaluation methods must be used because

the outer model consists of formative and reflective measures. For the reflective constructs, we assess the reliability of individual items according to their factor loadings; all of them were above .70 (see Table A.1; Hair et al., 2016). We also confirm each construct's reliability in that the composite reliability values exceed the .70 threshold (Chin, 2010). In support of convergent and discriminant validity, all average variance extracted (AVE) values exceed .70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Furthermore, all the inter-construct correlations were lower than the square roots of the AVEs for the respective constructs (See Table A.2; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Similarly, all values from the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) analysis were lower than .71, which indicated sufficient discriminant validity. We also confirmed that the HTMT statistics significantly differed from 1, using the bootstrap CIs. Overall, there is strong evidence of the validity and reliability of the measured constructs. For the formative constructs of self-congruence and diversity characteristics, the inner and outer variance inflation factors were below 1.5, which indicates that multicollinearity is not an issue (Hair et al., 2016). Finally, the path estimates were tested with a 5,000 resample bootstrap. The dependent variables exhibit adjusted R-square values of .194 (self-identity congruity), .308 (belief-congruence), .573 (connectedness) and .449 (disconnectedness) indicating an acceptable model.

Results

Connectedness

We proposed that self-congruence (H1) and belief-congruence (H2) mediate the relationship between perceived diversity and connectedness. To test this, we need to review estimates of the indirect effects of perceived diversity via self-congruence and belief-congruence and confidence intervals from the 5,000 resample set to test this prediction. If the confidence intervals for either indirect effect does not contain 0, the mediation is

significant and supported; otherwise, there is no mediation. We also check for full mediation, which occurs when the confidence intervals for the direct relationship between perceived diversity and connectedness contain a 0, or else there is partial mediation.

The results in Table 1 support H1 and H2, the full mediation of the relationship between perceived diversity and connectedness; the direct relationship between perceived diversity and connectedness was insignificant, and the indirect effect of self-congruence and belief-congruence were significant. The results in Table 1 also indicate that belief-congruence has a stronger effect than self-congruence; nearly twice the indirect effect of perceived diversity to connectedness goes through belief-congruence, and belief-congruence has a greater direct effect on connectedness. This finding indicates that diversity initiatives do not have to relate to aspects of the self directly but can connect to audiences through relating to life experiences portrayed in the advertisement.

Disconnectedness

We proposed that self-congruence (H3) and belief-congruence (H4) negatively mediates the relationship between perceived diversity and disconnectedness. Using the same approach as H1 and H2, we test this by reviewing the estimates of the indirect paths via self-congruence and belief-congruence and confidence intervals from the 5,000 resample set to test these hypotheses.

The results in Table 1 support H3 and H4, the full mediation of the relationship between perceived diversity and disconnectedness; the direct relationship between perceived diversity and disconnectedness was insignificant, and the indirect effect of self-congruence) and belief-congruence were significant. Similar to the findings relating to connectedness, nearly twice the indirect effect of perceived diversity to disconnectedness goes through belief-congruence, and belief-congruence has a greater direct effect on disconnectedness.

Indicating why diversity initiatives reflecting marginalised groups may create feelings of disconnectedness with the general audience.

Control Variables

The control variables provide an important supplementary finding. The outer weights for the diversity characteristics indicate that those that identify as being non-male (.693, p=.00), or disabled (.295, p=.069) are more likely to connect with a diversity advertisement, reflecting the bright side of diversity advertising—positive changes within minority groups. Those more likely to disconnect with a diversity advertisement, those over the age of 65-years (-.424, p=.012) and those with conservative political views (.100, p=.006). Again suggesting that more work needs to be done to build a greater feeling of relatedness with this section of the general population. Note; the outer weight of those who identify as non-heterosexual (.031, p=.829) and non-white (.266, p=.122) were not significant.

Table 1: Parameter estimates

	β	*t-value*	*Confidence Interval (95%)*	*Hypothesis Support*
Perceived diversity to Connectedness				
Direct effect	.025	.625$^{n.s}$	-.056→.111	
H1: Indirect effect via self-congruence	.134	5.904**	.093→.179	Full Mediation
H2: Indirect effect via belief-congruence	.254	8.426**	.197→.315	Full Mediation
Perceived diversity to disconnectedness				
Direct effect	.013	.236$^{n.s}$	-.087→ .109	
H3: Indirect effect via self-congruence	.097	4.308**	-.144→-.056	Full Mediation
H4: Indirect effect via belief-congruence	.260	7.679**	-.332→-.196	Full Mediation
Other Relationships				
Perceived Diversity to Connectedness				
Perceived diversity to Self-congruence	.439	9.516**	.345→ .528	
Perceived diversity to Belief-congruence	.553	12.935**	.467→ .633	
Congruence to Connectedness				
Self-congruence to Connectedness	.301	7.539**	.223→ .379	
Self-congruence to Disconnectedness	-.217	4.475**	-.307→-.124	
Belief-congruence to Connectedness	.460	10.220**	.367→ .546	
Belief-congruence to Disconnectedness	-.471	9.176**	-.572→-.370	
Control Variables				
Political ideology to Connectedness	-.127	4.232**	-.187→-.069	
Political ideology to Disconnectedness	.100	2.760**	.032→-.171	
Diversity characteristics to Connectedness	.124	3.266**	.058→ .188	
Diversity characteristics to Disconnectedness	-.111	2.710**	-.179→-.043	

Notes: ** = p<.01; n.s. is not significant. 'β' refers to the standardized path coefficient.

Discussion

As diversity has proliferated through society, it has disrupted how brands advertise as they look to reach a specific marginalised target audience or attract a pro-diversity audience (Khan et al., 2015; Licsandru & Cui, 2019). But recent studies indicate that such portrayals have a bright side (strong positive reaction from audiences) and a dark side (large-scale criticism) (Khan et al., 2015; Li, 2020; Mirzaei et al., 2022). This paper sought to contribute to this research by answering the question of what leads audiences to connect or disconnect with a diversity advertisement. The findings of the study first show that increasing levels of perceived diversity are critical to (dis)connecting with audiences. However, reflecting the two ways audiences can connect with a diversity advertisement (the degree to which audiences feel their identity, experiences, or those close to them, are adequately represented; Hutcherson et al., 2008; Liljedal et al., 2020), is achieved through a mediating effect. Perceived diversity increases levels of self- and belief-congruence, subsequently increasing (decreasing) levels of audience connectedness (disconnectedness).

Our investigation of the effects of diversity advertising on audience connectedness and disconnectedness responds to recent research calls (e.g., Kipnis et al., 2021). We show that marketers can and should strive to create connectedness in marginalised and general audiences. Our supplementary findings indicating that most identity groups are more likely to feel connectedness shows the success that diversity advertising has had to date. We also show that disconnectedness is distinct from just low levels of connectedness, presenting a risk for marketers. Older males with conservative political views have higher feelings of disconnectedness, suggesting that the risk for marketers is not marginalised groups feeling excluded or distant when their identity is not portrayed, but, and in line with Mirzaei et al. (2022), the risk is in those who might feel like their self-identity and beliefs are ignored and even attacked by diversity advertisements.

Central to creating a feeling of connectedness, or reducing the risk of disconnectedness, is to take a multidimensional perspective to diversity portrayals. Brands must ensure their diversity advertisements contain high levels of perceived diversity to align and thus connect with multiple elements of consumers' self-identity and beliefs (Licsandru & Cui, 2019; Alhouti et al., 2015). This is evident through further analysis of the results in Table 1. While the direct relationship of perceived diversity on connectedness and disconnectedness was insignificant, the total indirect effect was strong and significant; .390 ($p<.01$) and -.358 ($p<.01$), respectively. However, diversity literature in marketing mainly reflects a singular form of identity (e.g., ethnicity). Such a conceptualisation is inadequate for brands that seek to connect closely and remain relevant to audiences whose beliefs and identities are evolving and multidimensional.

The multidimensional perspective also provides critical insights for brands wanting to connect with the general audience. This study links existing literature on diversity advertising with research on belief-congruence theory to show that diversity advertising can resonate with a general audience. In fact, belief-congruence showed a more substantial influence on audience connectedness and alleviating disconnectedness than self-congruence. This finding is a critical contribution considering that previous research has argued that effective diversity portrayals must be congruent with an audiences' self-identity (Oakenfull et al., 2008; Truong et al., 2015). Such an assumption, as highlighted previously, risks deterring marketers from diversity portrayals because it suggests it can alienate those outside the marginalised group being portrayed. Instead, our findings towards belief-congruence provide a pathway for overcoming such risks; brands need to be inclusive by finding common ground through shared beliefs.

Finally, while self-congruence was shown to have less effect, seeing more parts of your self-identity represented in a diversity advertisement is another avenue for connecting

with audiences. Therefore it is critical to include self-congruence as an explanatory factor. However, most operationalisations of self-congruence have the shortcoming of measuring the perceived fit of the respondent's self-concept and the brand's personality (Malär et al., 2011), which is irrelevant because diversity identities have no connection to personality traits. An adapted measure of self-congruence was presented that aims to reflect better the respondent's identities through eliciting the multiple identities of the self that are most relevant. This generalisable two-step approach overcomes the shortcomings of existing measures, and because the first step involves open-ended questions that elicit the five characteristics that best represent their self-identity, it potentially provides researchers with insight into which characteristics to portray in a diversity advertisement.

Implication for marketers

Marketers often express the need to contribute socially to society. Our analysis suggests that to date, marketers are contributing. Many of those who identify with diversity identities connected with diversity advertising, which is important because when these minority groups relate and feel represented, it increases their well-being and mental health (Hutcherson et al., 2008; Lee et al., 2001). Our study also provides a nuanced understanding of facilitating feelings of connectedness through diversity advertising. Rather than portraying self-identity and singular dimensions of diversity, reflecting multidimensional, diverse identities and increasing belief-congruence is critical. Both will create multiple points for advertisements to resonate with general audiences and reduce the risks of disconnecting. Therefore, managers must understand their audience; the identities that matter most, and their beliefs. To achieve this, they may wish to conduct market research or social listening because diversity advertising is not a one-size-fits-all approach.

Limitations and future research directions

The findings of the present research are subject to several limitations. First, the empirical support is based on a study relying on participants to recall their own example of a diversity initiative. The empirical nature of survey research also means that the results could not uncover the reasons why belief-congruence is more important than self-congruence or why older respondents were more likely to disconnect. They may have more strongly held beliefs that they perceive as being attacked by diversity advertisements. They may instead feel that the challenges of being an older person in today's society is being overlooked and not adequately represented in diversity advertising. Future studies may also seek to uncover how different types of brand actions and advertising cues (e.g., visual versus non-visual means) contribute to a sense of perceived diversity. Finally, the focal outcome in this study was connectedness and disconnectedness, which encapsulates the effects of diversity advertising on the brand and society. However, researchers such as Mirzaei et al. (2022) have highlighted the importance of considering brand outcomes (e.g., brand engagement) as well as brand-related factors that may moderate the effect of diversity advertising (e.g., brand authenticity). While we acknowledge this as a limitation, we believe it is an important next step in understanding diversity advertising and its impacts.

We also see other pressing needs for future research. We implore researchers to investigate diversity advertising and its broader societal effects. Critical is building an understanding of how to engage and establish common ground with those who feel excluded or ignored by diversity advertising. Increasing the depth of knowledge and understanding of diversity advertising is also imperative. This study is also one of the only existing to examine diversity advertising from a broader perspective. Noticeable in the literature was a lack of exploration of consumers and managers perceptions and expectations regarding diversity advertising. Also evident is an increasing need to consider intersectionality within marketing

(Gopaldas, 2013). The evolution towards a multidimensional representation aligns with the intersectional perspective of diversity research present in other disciplines. Future research might seek to construct and validate a construct for the perceived level of intersectionality to facilitate its use in future empirical studies.

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Table A1: Reliability and Validity Estimates

Construct and items	Standardised Loading (sig.)	Composite Reliability	AVE
Perceived Diversity		.931	.772
I could clearly visualise the diversity in [Brand X]'s advertisement	.912		
I was able to "see" the diversity of [Brand X]'s advertisement in my mind	.908		
[Brand X]'s advertisement has a high level of diversity	.904		
[Brand X]'s advertisement is a diversity advertisement	.784		
Self-Congruity	Not applicable as it is a formative construct		
How well does [Brand X]'s advertisement portray your self-identity of [Nominated Self-Identity Statement]			
How well does [Brand X]'s advertisement portray your self-identity of [Nominated Self-Identity Statement]			
How well does [Brand X]'s advertisement portray your self-identity of [Nominated Self-Identity Statement]			
How well does [Brand X]'s advertisement portray your self-identity of [Nominated Self-Identity Statement]			
How well does [Brand X]'s advertisement portray your self-identity of [Nominated Self-Identity Statement]			
Belief-congruence		.975	.906
I generally share the beliefs of [Brand X]'s advertisement	.958		
The beliefs of [Brand X]'s advertisement are mostly consistent with how others see mine	.943		
The beliefs of [Brand X]'s advertisement are generally how I would like mine to be	.958		
In general, I would like others to see my beliefs to be similar to those in [Brand X]'s advertisement	.948		
Connectedness		.925	.714
I feel positive towards the people in [Brand X]'s diversity advertisement	.809		
I feel like I belong with the people in [Brand X]'s diversity advertisement	.898		
I am similar with the people in [Brand X]'s diversity advertisement	.861		

[Brand X]'s diversity advertisement connected with my past experiences	.741		
I can identify with [Brand X]'s diversity advertisement	.902		
Disconnectedness		.946	.746
I feel disconnected from the world in [Brand X]'s diversity advertisement	.874		
I don't feel related to most people in [Brand X]'s diversity advertisement	.876		
I feel distant from people in [Brand X]'s diversity advertisement	.929		
I feel like an outsider when seeing the people in [Brand X]'s advertisement	.903		
I have little sense of togetherness with people in [Brand X]'s advertisement	.820		
I see myself as a loner when I see the people in [Brand X]'s advertisement	.770		
Political ideology		.943	.845
I identify as [(1) Liberal to (7) extremely conservative]	.937		
Politically, I would describe myself as [(1) Liberal to (7) extremely conservative]	.948		
I think of myself as [(1) Liberal to (7) extremely conservative]	.870		
Diversity Characteristics	Not applicable as it is a formative construct		
What gender do you identify as?			
What race do you identify as?			
Do you identify as having a disability?			
What sexuality do you identify as?			
How old are you [in years]?			

Table A2: Correlations and Square Root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Belief-congruence	**.952**						
2. Diversity Characteristics	.111	**N/A**					
3. Connectedness	.685	.181	**.845**				
4. Disconnectedness	-.620	-.159	-.751	**.864**			
5. Perceived Diversity	.552	-.032	.410	-.341	**.879**		
6. Political Ideology	-.164	-.065	-.241	.209	.020	**.920**	
7. Self-congruence	.561	.061	.592	-.493	.436	-.066	**N/A**

Square root of the average-variance-extracted (AVE) estimates are typed bold along the diagonal. Correlations appear below the diagonal.

CHAPTER FIVE. CONCLUSION

Overview of Study

With increasing pressures arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, critical social movements and changing societal values in audiences, the objective of this thesis was to advance understanding of diversity, its place within marketing, and the broader social implication and consequences of doing such. As such, the thesis provides conceptual and empirical insight into diversity marketing, its differing manifestations and its impact on establishing social impact through audience connectedness. While numerous scholars have examined the concept of diversity in a variety of contexts, such research has revolved mainly around brand outcomes (e.g., Oakenfull, 2013; Sternadori & Abitbol, 2019; Johnson & Grier, 2011), singular dimensions (e.g., Licsandru & Cui, 2019; Åkestam et al., 2017) and specific marketing actions (e.g., advertising). Despite recognising the importance of multidimensionality through intersectionality (Sobande, 2019; Gopaldas & Siebert, 2018), and despite the growing emphasis on social impact (Åkestam et al., 2017; Kipnis et al., 2021), the existing diversity marketing discourse has largely ignored these perspectives. Furthermore, the current understanding of diversity marketing and the reasoning for different approaches and thus differing reactions remains uninformed. Thus, this dissertation sought to examine diversity marketing across different industry segments and through a multidimensional lens, with connectedness as the main focal object of achievement. Doing so provides a deeper understanding of diversity marketing manifestations and their related social impact on audiences, whether that being positively or negatively impactful.

This dissertation comprises two conceptual papers and one empirical paper designed to understand the marketing and audiences mechanisms that lead us towards more effective diversity marketing applications. The first paper conceptualises diversity marketing and provides a conceptual framework in understanding the mechanisms at play that (de)construct

connectedness in diversity initiatives in advertising. The second classifies brand approaches to diversity through a typological framework. The third empirically demonstrates how higher levels of perceived diversity enhance connectedness through two relevant audience factors. This final chapter concludes the thesis by outlining the contributions, limitations and suggestions for future research.

Theoretical Contributions

Each paper within this thesis advances marketing's theoretical understanding of diversity, with a critical focus on advancing the conceptual limitations observed within the current literature stream. While each paper outlines specific theoretical contributions, the overarching contributions are briefly summarised below.

Develop and revise the understanding and conceptualisation of diversity in marketing practices

This thesis makes several strides in theoretically developing academia's understanding and conceptualisation of diversity marketing practice. Firstly, a central contribution of this thesis was the desire to shift the focus of diversity research from singular dimensions towards a broader and multidimensional understanding and application. The investigation of diversity in marketing literature is often conducted through a singular lens, with little effort to transform this into a broader perspective. As such, research is often oversimplified, failing to be applicable to broader diversity strategies or acknowledge the complexity of diverse identities. Thus, this research answers the call for a broader and multidimensional view of diversity (Gopaldas & DeRoy, 2015; Kipnis et al., 2021) and diverse identities (Sobande, 2019). In Chapter Two, through a literature review, the concept of diversity is reconceptualised to consistently align with diversity applications in external research streams such as management and psychology.

Thus, we find that diversity is a dynamic, multi-faceted concept that comprises a wide range of characteristics (e.g., ethnicity, gender, disability, sexuality, age, social class, culture).

Chapter Three builds on this conceptualisation by revising its application in a branding context. As such, we critically reviewed key literature identifying themes in which diversity is often investigated under brand activism, corporate social responsibility and cause-related marketing. Resultantly, there is currently a lack of conceptualisation and investigation of diversity as a stand-alone concept and subsequent uncovering of its theoretical underpinnings. To improve clarity, we highlight the differences between a BATD and other external concepts. Thus, we note Brand Activism, CRM, Diversity Advertising, and CSR may be tactics used under a BATD strategy but are not identified as the only ways of doing so and only supply part of the picture. Ultimately, we suggest varying ways brands can and do approach diversity. Notably, it reveals that brands differ on the types of diversity they integrate (e.g., gender or gender, race and body ability), how they might incorporate this (e.g., advertising or products, advertising and accessibility), and when they decide to do so (e.g., after seeing other successful brands or after social movements). As such, we arrive at the following definition:

The process and decisions a brand makes to reflect and integrate diverse and various identities across their marketing practices

Theoretically understand the different ways brands integrate diversity practices

Once conceptualisation and definition of diversity marketing were reached, this thesis aimed to understand the theoretical underpinnings of diversity practices in marketing. Namely, in Chapters 2 and 3 we identify that marketing actions serve as a basis for audiences to judge how they are approaching diversity. A fundamental commonality across all three studies is that marketers and brands decide what and how many dimensions of diversity to represent (Gopaldas & Siebert, 2018; Kipnis et al., 2021). As previously

mentioned, marketing academia seemingly focuses on integrating singular types of diversity (e.g., Licsandru & Cui, 2019). While we have critiqued this perspective in literature, we use tokenism to theorise its use in practice. Specifically, in Chapters 2 and 3, we identify that tokenism presents a shallow and falsified representation of diversity. This often translates to marketers representing singular dimensions of engaging in stereotypical behaviour (Podoshen et al., 2021). As such, tokenism represents a lack of effort or understanding towards diversity on behalf of marketers.

At the opposing end of the scale, we contribute to a growing body of literature that emphasises the importance and increasing use of broader and multidimensional forms of diversity (Kipnis et al., 2021; Gopaldas & Siebert, 2018; Byrd, 2018). Theoretically, we typically justify broader and multidimensional perspectives through the lens of intersectionality. While intersectionality has grown in academia, such applications are typically through research methods (e.g., Gopaldas & DeRoy, 2015). Yet, authors are beginning to position how intersectionality may improve marketing practice (Sobande, 2019). In Chapters 2 and 3, we use intersectionality to theoretically understand and develop deeper and more multidimensional levels of diversity practices. In particular, we advance the use of intersectionality as a tool in marketing that can help build more effective diversity initiatives by providing a deeper understanding of inequality, thus challenging and eliminating it in the process (Rodriguez et al., 2016). Cho et al. (2013) acknowledge that intersectionality has been used to transform diversity and equality related practices in legal and organisational domains.

Understand the importance of building connectedness in audiences and outline how diversity marketing practices may impact this feeling

A central contribution of the three papers in this thesis is the conceptual and empirical demonstration of the relationships between diversity initiatives in marketing and social impact, through connectedness. There are growing concerns in literature that the social impact of diversity applications in marketing are not sufficiently addressed or understood (Kipnis et al., 2021). When conducting activities that contribute to resolving societal issues, literature has noted that audiences' express concerns regarding egotistical motivations (Connor et al., 2017; Licsandru & Cui, 2019). Yet, literature still largely cites the business case of diversity (e.g., profit) as a key reason brand should be diversifying their practices (Licsandru & Cui, 2019; Coffey, 2013; Oakenfull, 2013).

Broadly, we align that connectedness is a key social impact marketing must understand and strive to achieve. Our investigation of the effects of portrayals of diversity in marketing on social connectedness responds and adds to recent calls for research to explore the effects of diverse portrayals in marketing (Åkestam et al., 2017; Kipnis et al., 2021). Previous studies have noted the concerns of marketing contributing to either resolving or perpetuating stereotypes, typically from the group's perspective being stereotyped (Davis, 2018; Harrison et al., 2017). This thesis, however, notes that diversity marketing efforts reach a broad range of audiences, and their reactions should be studied together to assess general audience effects. We also theoretically develop the dark side of marketing practices by introducing disconnectedness into diversity marketing literature. This thesis notes that diversity marketing efforts are mostly well-intended, yet at times they unintentionally contribute to marketplace inequality. As such, marketers might instigate stereotypes or portray diversity in a way that disconnects audiences. As such, we add to the literature that characterises connectedness as acceptance and positivity towards diversity initiatives (Åkestam et al., 2017; Liljedal et al., 2020). We develop that disconnectedness may have an opposing effect through fuelling hateful comments towards the brand and marginalised groups.

We contribute to the literature by demonstrating that increasing diversity in marketing actions affects connectedness (Åkestam et al., 2017; Liljedal et al., 2020). This is an important contribution considering previous literature typically provides these linkages based on specific forms of diversity (Åkestam et al., 2017; Liljedal et al., 2020). Further previous studies provide little insight behind how exactly diverse portrayals build connectedness. In this study, we believe higher diversity levels (e.g., multidimensionality) are imperative to building connectedness. Thus, this study encourages research to move towards broader and multidimensional recognition of diversity in research and practice to find more compelling results

Identify the mechanisms within audiences that contribute to enhancing connectedness

While this thesis highlights the importance of brand actions, it also outlines that congruence between the brand's action and audiences are key mechanisms in building social impacts through connectedness. As such, we reject concerns in the literature that diverse practices may alienate majority audiences (Harrison et al., 2017; Johnson & Grier, 2011). In fact, we show that higher levels of diversity are increasingly congruent with audiences' self-identity and beliefs. These congruent characteristics are imperative mechanisms in connecting with audiences. However, incongruence within audiences may cause them to disconnect. For example, audiences with less progressive beliefs may be more predisposed to disconnecting from diversity initiatives. As such, this might instil hate speech towards particular groups. Additionally, Chapter Three notes that those who identify as having a disability or non-male are more likely to connect with diversity initiatives. In contrast, audiences aged over sixty-five are more likely to disconnect. Thus, diversity is not a one-size-fits-all approach meaning research needs to move towards considering the diversity within audiences.

Managerial Implications

Integrating diversity into marketing practices will likely garner far-reaching advantages for individuals, brands and society (Åkestam et al., 2017). However, this is only likely if the integrations are effective and successful (Kipnis et al., 2021: Åkestam et al., 2017). Given the growing complexity and evolution of diversity and audiences, understanding the mechanisms that matter is imperative. While each paper in this thesis outlines specific managerial contributions, they are summarised collectively below.

Firstly, marketing is a form of popular culture, which shapes what society sees as normal, aspirational and acceptable (Harrison et al., 2017). Audiences are increasingly sceptical of brands that integrate diversity for falsified and profit-based reasons (Harrison et al., 2017; Sternadori & Abitbol, 2019). Through focusing on social impacts, such as connectedness, marketers can contribute to forming a less segregated and more inclusive society (Åkestam et al., 2017). Across this thesis, it is clear that when audiences feel connected, they may interact more positively with the brand (e.g., acceptance of the diversity initiative). But when connectedness lacks or disconnectedness is evident, the brand is at risk for harmful impacts (e.g., rejection of the initiative and facilitating discriminatory conversations). Thus, we position connectedness as a key way marketers can achieve more effective and successful diversity initiatives. As such, this thesis outline several ways marketers may be able to instigate better connectedness with audiences.

Secondly, this thesis argues that marketing and brand actions have social implications for audiences. Namely, the dimensionality of diversity is imperative to building connectedness. When marketers are singular in their approach, audiences are less likely to perceive them as diverse and instead as tokenistic. Unidimensional applications of diversity may lead to fewer points of relation and become less connecting and perhaps more disconnecting for audiences. Comparatively, multidimensionality seems imperative

in being perceived as more diverse and helps achieve intersectionality. As such, multidimensionality creates multiple points of relation and is useful in enhancing connectedness and restricting disconnectedness in audiences.

Thirdly, diversity can be identified as a trend in contemporary society; however, the concept evolves and increases in its importance as time passes. This thesis reveals a common thread in which external forces such as the COVID-19 pandemic and social movements have seen diversity and equality emerge as critical areas of concern for citizens, businesses and policymakers (Francis & Robertson, 2021; Kipnis et al., 2021). These external forces have intensified the need and subsequent application of diversity in marketing practice, particularly through the increasing expectation amongst audiences for marketers to integrate diverse practices. While all papers note diversity's increasing popularity, paper two theorises this through order of entry. Marketers are encouraged to approach diversity earlier to align better with emerging societal concerns and avoid being perceived as jumping on the bandwagon, subsequently reducing connection with audiences. As such, this thesis argues that playing a waiting game with diversity can have detrimental effects on audiences connecting with a brand's approach to diversity.

Fourthly, this thesis builds on marketers' understanding of the different ways diversity can be integrated. In Chapter Two, it is outlined that diverse characteristics can be integrated through visual and non-visual means. Considering both are imperative in representing a deep-level of diversity and connecting with audiences. In Chapter Three, a literature review substantiates that diversity should be integrated across a brand's marketing mix. Failure to do so might be viewed as shallow and restrict connectedness within audiences.

Lastly, while a marketer and brand's actions serve as imperative signals, the success and effectiveness depend on the audience. Perhaps a key takeaway for marketers derived from Chapters Two and Four is that diversity is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Marketers must

understand that audiences vary in their identities and beliefs, and they must represent diversity in a way that aligns with their audiences to connect with them. Thus, it suggests marketers must undertake rigorous research with their audience to determine the most connecting and relevant way to represent diversity. It can be understood that specific audiences (e.g., less progressive in beliefs or belonging to an older demographic) may be predisposed to disconnecting from diversity initiatives.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite the significant contribution this thesis makes to marketing theory and practice, the implications of this research must be viewed in light of several limitations. This section considers these limitations and translates them into fruitful avenues for future research.

First, most of the research within this thesis is conceptual due to the exploratory nature of research objectives and the fragmented, complex and underdeveloped state of the literature. Thus, future research may consider empirical and qualitative research approaches to explore further and demonstrate the perspectives and implications of diversity in marketing.

Second, this research was conducted in a broader advertising and branding context. While we expect the findings to be cross-contextually applicable and relevant to specific contexts (e.g., fashion) to encourage generalisability of findings, future research may be conducted in specific and different contexts to understand how diversity may manifest and unfold within these.

Third, while the final paper measures aspects of diversity perceptions within audiences, more research into the measurement of specific diversity actions are needed. Future research should seek to uncover and develop scales for particular foci within this study. For example, future research may develop a scale for perceived intersectionality of

diversity marketing actions. Despite numerous research studies highlighting the importance of concepts like diversity and intersectionality, researchers have yet to develop a scale to measure this phenomenon. Being able to accurately measure aspects of diversity or intersectionality can yield significant implications for marketing practice by allowing managers to understand how these aspects are understood and perceived by audiences, thus tailoring marketing programs to suit these phenomena.

Fourth, this research delineated diversity marketing actions and their social impact through connectedness. Largely, this was due to increasing emphasis by researchers (e.g., Kipnis et al., 2021) and the need to understand the dark side of marketing practices. Further, much of the extant literature currently focuses on brand and profit related outcomes. Given the contributions of this study, future research might consider the relationship between broader and more multidimensional applications of diversity on brand-related outcomes. Additionally, research might seek to uncover the relationship and pay-off between social and brand-related outcomes. Further, future research may investigate other forms of social impact (e.g., changing audience propensity to engage in discriminatory behaviours).

Fifth, a central theme to this research is the non-static and evolving nature of diversity as a concept. While initial conceptualisations and investigations were limited to singular and specific characteristics, extant and external discipline literature identifies that the concept of diversity has changed over time to be more inclusive of broader identities (e.g., gender expression, neurodivergent identities and those with disabilities). With brands increasingly approaching diversity to facilitate open-mindedness and leverage particular outcomes, diversity marketing research needs to adapt to the changing nature and understanding of the concept. Future research should attempt to understand emerging forms of diversity and how marketing must reflect this. While this study takes a broader and more umbrella categorisation of diversity, future studies may also seek to uncover insights regarding specific intersections of identities (e.g., ethnic, gender and body ability). Indeed, diversity

in marketing will likely resonate differently with specific audiences, as outlined in this study. Thus, future research must also attempt to understand the differences in audiences and their disposition to accept or reject diversity initiatives in marketing. For example, Chapter Three found that audiences with disabilities or that identify as non-male are more likely to connect with diversity initiatives. Contrastingly, audiences who are over the age of sixty-five are more likely to disconnect with diversity initiatives. However, all other measured identities (e.g., ethnicity and sexuality) were found to be insignificant in building (dis)connectedness. Through qualitative research, future studies may seek to uncover why specific demographic characteristics are influential in leading audiences to (dis)connect. Furthermore, in line with the increased adoption of technology and artificial intelligence within brands and audiences, future research can consider how these sophisticated innovations can transform and augment diversity practices towards specific audiences (e.g., audiences with progressive versus conservative beliefs).

Sixth, the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis are rooted within external disciplinary literature. Namely, tokenism and intersectionality theory were developed in management and sociology literature respectively (Kanter, 1977; Crenshaw, 1989). However, such theories have proven to be extremely valuable in this thesis to explain variance in diversity approaches within a marketing context. Furthermore, the papers in Chapters Two and Three note the advanced state of diversity research in other disciplines compared to marketing. Both Chapters Two and Three utilise insights and theory applications from external disciplines (e.g., management, psychology and sociology) to conceptualise and advance the concept of diversity in marketing (e.g., Cole, 2009; Cho et al., 2013; Byrd, 2018). Thus, future research should seek to collaborate and generate cross-discipline research into diversity marketing. While such collaborations will assist in advancing our knowledge in diversity marketing, they may also assist in understanding the differential and integrative nature of diversity across disciplines. For example, integrating diversity

marketing research with the human resources literature might assist in understanding the importance and relationship between internal (e.g., employee) and external (e.g., branding) diversity practices. Further, diversity in fields such as management is typically guided by legislation (Leslie, 2019), whereas diversity marketing is still relatively voluntary and lacks legislation. Future research may compare and contrast the forces of influence across diversity in different disciplinary contexts.

Lastly, the empirical studies rely on participants to recall their own example of a diversity initiative. Thus, audiences unaware of what diversity initiatives entail might have different perspectives to participants in the study. Additionally, as Chapter Three identifies, diversity advertising is part of a multitude of ways brands can approach diversity. The study may be replicated for other actions (e.g., product or distribution), and thus influenced by other mechanisms. Although ensuring anonymity, the nature of the survey surrounds topical social and diversity issues, presenting a risk for social desirability when asking questions related to themes of inequality and belief congruence, which could have influenced the results. Further, the survey platform Prolific allowed recruitment of a UK representative custom sample to complete our study, the survey's parameters meant only those familiar with diversity advertisements and able to recall one by a nominated brand may be invited to the study. As such, the sample seemingly was skewed towards female representation. Finally, due to the parameters of Prolific, only UK representative participants were able to participate in the study. Future research may seek to replicate the paper contained in Chapter Four in other country contexts. This may provide insightful commentary on differing audiences reactions (e.g., more progressive versus less progressive nations).

Conclusion

As diversity has proliferated, society has become more aware and sensitive to the inequitable treatment of marginalised groups. Particularly, the turn of the century has seen critical social movements such as Black Lives Matter and Me Too demonstrate the large scale shift in societal attitudes towards marginalised groups. Diversity's application in marketing provides a way for brands to address the inequitable treatment of minorities at the hands of society and themselves as brands. Marketers may wish to reflect varying marginalised groups through their products, pricing, distribution or advertising strategies. Yet, the dominant literature perspective remains singular in its focus on identities (e.g., ethnic advertising), which has been said to promote limited and oversimplified diversity portrayals.

Overall, this thesis provides significant contributions to both marketing theory and practice. It highlights the need for marketing academics and practitioners to move away from singular dimension strategies for diversity, adopting a more multidimensional approach that considers the intersectional nature of diversity. Through doing so, brands, marketers and academics alike can build more effective and socially impactful diversity strategies and research.

This thesis has investigated multidimensional perspectives of diversity marketing, identified what constitutes both a marketers and brands approach to diversity, the mechanisms that classify it and their impact on audience connectedness. Consequently, the paper in Chapter Two sought to shift academia and practice away from a singular focus on diversity, emphasising the opportunity it brings for connecting better with audiences. The paper in Chapter Three identifies a typology of four brand approaches to diversity. Further, this research identifies two boundaries of (1) level of depth and (2) order of entry is proposed to categorise a BATD into four types—Transformative, Adaptive, Dismissive

and Performative. Early adoption and depth of diversity provide optimal opportunities for achieving audience connectedness. The final paper, contained in Chapter Four, focuses on the audience perspective of diversity initiatives and the internal mechanisms that matter. It is outlined that belief congruence and self-congruence are important audience mechanisms in establishing connectedness towards diversity advertisements.

Through reflecting on what diversity means in marketing, and how we can connect better with diverse audiences, we can begin to understand how we can contribute to an open-minded and less segregated society.

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APPENDICES

Ethics Approval (Chapter Five)

THE UNIVERSITY of ADELAIDE

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12 August 2021

Dr Dean Wilkie
Marketing

Dear Dr Wilkie

ETHICS APPROVAL No: H-2021-141
PROJECT TITLE: A Marketer's Approach to Diversity and Negative Brand Engagement: The role of audience disconnectedness

The ethics application for the above project has been reviewed by the Low Risk Human Research Ethics Review Group (Faculty of Arts and Faculty of the Professions) and is deemed to meet the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (Updated 2018)* involving no more than low risk for research participants.

You are authorised to commence your research on: 12/08/2021
The ethics expiry date for this project is: 31/08/2024

NAMED INVESTIGATORS:

Chief Investigator:	Dr Dean Wilkie
Student - Postgraduate Doctorate by Research (PhD):	Miss Amelie Jay Burgess
Associate Investigator:	Dr Rebecca Marie Dolan

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL: Thank you for your considered responses to the matters raised. The revised application provided on 03/08/2021 has been approved.

Ethics approval is granted for three years and is subject to satisfactory annual reporting. The form titled Annual Report on Project Status is to be used when reporting annual progress and project completion and can be downloaded at http://www.adelaide.edu.au/research-services/oreci/human/reporting/. Prior to expiry, ethics approval may be extended for a further period.

Participants in the study are to be given a copy of the information sheet and the signed consent form to retain. It is also a condition of approval that you immediately report anything which might warrant review of ethical approval including:

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- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants,
- previously unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project,
- proposed changes to the protocol or project investigators; and
- the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Anna Olijnyk
Convenor

The University of Adelaide