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**Freerange
Future**

# Marketing
# for everyone

Why and How to Make Your Marketing
Accessible, Inclusive & Ethical

Who is this document for?

# Anyone who wants to ensure their marketing is accessible, inclusive and ethical. It's for everyone.

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# Marketing for everyone

**Marketing has the power to shape narratives, influence culture, and connect people, but too often, it excludes. From inaccessible websites to ad campaigns that reinforce stereotypes, many brands unintentionally leave people out.**

Inclusive marketing isn't just about diverse representation in ads. It's about removing barriers, challenging biases, and ensuring that everyone can engage with your brand. This book explores how to embed accessibility, inclusion, and ethics into your marketing strategies, from content creation and social media to advertising and digital accessibility.

By making marketing truly for everyone, businesses and non-profits can build trust, loyalty, and meaningful connections with the audiences they serve.

**Just over half of Australians aged 65 and over live with a disability[3]**

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# What is Inclusive Marketing?

Marketing shapes how people see the world, and their place in it. When done well, it welcomes, reflects, and engages diverse audiences. But too often, marketing excludes people without meaning to, whether through inaccessible content, narrow representation, or messaging that assumes a "default" audience.

Inclusive marketing isn't just about showing diversity in campaigns, it's about removing barriers and ensuring that everyone can engage with your brand, regardless of ability, background, or identity. It's not a trend or a compliance exercise; it's a shift in mindset that leads to more ethical, effective, and impactful marketing.

This chapter explores what inclusive marketing really means, how it differs from diversity-focused advertising, and why it's a business, ethical, and strategic necessity.

# 1.1 Beyond Diverse Stock Photos: Moving Past Surface-Level Inclusion

Many brands attempt diversity by adding more faces to their advertising; a campaign featuring different ethnicities, a Pride-themed version of a product, or a model in a wheelchair. While representation matters, real inclusion goes deeper than visuals.

For marketing to be truly inclusive, it must also be accessible, meaningful, and reflective of real experiences. A campaign that features diverse people but uses exclusionary language, lacks accessibility, or reinforces stereotypes is still excluding audiences.

Inclusive marketing asks: Who is being included in your messaging, and who is being left out? It ensures that people aren't just seen, but also heard, understood, and valued through the language, design, and experiences your brand creates.

**Who is being included in your messaging, and who is being left out?**

# 1.2 The Difference Between Representation, Accessibility, and Equity

Inclusive marketing is more than just representation. It also requires accessibility and equity. These three elements work together, but they are not the same:
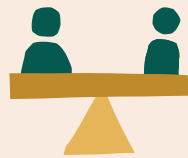
### Representation
Representation ensures that people from different backgrounds, identities, and abilities see themselves reflected in marketing.

### Accessibility
Accessibility ensures that content is usable by everyone, including disabled people, neurodivergent audiences, and non-native speakers.

### Equity
Equity recognises that different groups face different barriers and actively works to remove those barriers rather than treating all audiences the same.

A campaign can be diverse without being inclusive if it fails to consider accessibility or systemic barriers. A truly inclusive marketing strategy doesn't just invite people in, it ensures they can fully participate.

# 1.3 Why Inclusive Marketing is a Business, Ethical, and Strategic Advantage

Beyond being the right thing to do, inclusive marketing is better for business. Studies show that consumers are more likely to support brands that align with their values. According to a 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer report, 64% of consumers will choose, switch, or boycott a brand based on its stance on social issues.

But inclusion isn't just about consumer perception, it's also about reach and engagement. By ensuring that your content is accessible, your brand reaches a wider audience, including disabled people, older consumers, and those in different cultural or linguistic groups.

Brands that embed inclusivity into their marketing don't just gain trust, they build stronger, longer-term connections with their audience. Inclusive marketing isn't just good ethics; it's smart strategy.
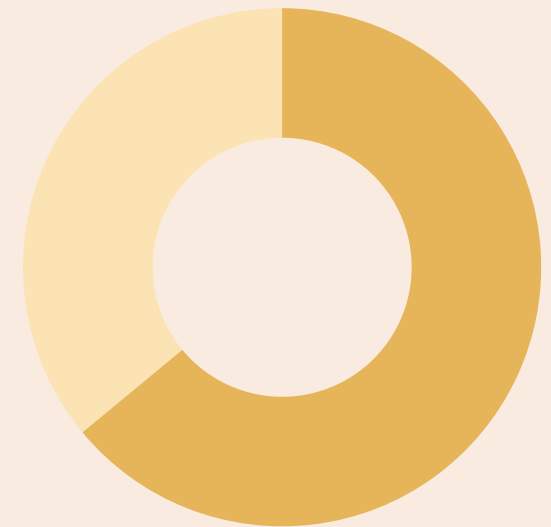
**64% of consumers will choose, switch, or boycott a brand based on its stance on social issues.**

## Summary

Inclusive marketing goes beyond diverse imagery. It ensures that marketing is accessible, representative, and equitable. Brands that commit to inclusivity connect with more people, build trust, and create lasting impact.

# Who Gets Left Out? Understanding Exclusion in Marketing

Marketing has the power to shape culture, influence perception, and create a sense of belonging. But it has also long been a tool of exclusion, whether by ignoring certain groups, reinforcing harmful stereotypes, or failing to consider accessibility. Even today, brands still unintentionally exclude large audiences through the images they use, the language they choose, and the digital platforms they rely on.

Understanding who gets left out is the first step toward more authentic, ethical, and effective marketing. This chapter explores the historical patterns of exclusion, the dangers of tokenism and performative activism, and how modern algorithms reinforce bias, shaping who gets seen and who remains invisible.

# 2.1 How Marketing Has Historically Excluded People

For decades, mainstream marketing was built around a narrow idea of the "default" audience; often white, non-disabled, cisgender, and middle-class. Many groups were either ignored, misrepresented, or only included in stereotypical ways.

For example, disabled people were rarely featured in advertising unless the focus was charity or medical care, reinforcing the idea that disability was something to be "overcome" rather than a natural part of life. LGBTQ+ representation was long absent or coded, with same-sex relationships implied but never explicitly shown. Women were often objectified or limited to domestic roles, while Black, Indigenous, and other people of colour were either excluded entirely or only depicted in subservient roles.

While representation has improved, exclusion remains an issue. Many brands still default to the most "marketable" demographics, sidelining diverse audiences. True inclusivity means acknowledging this history and actively working to change it.

**True inclusivity means acknowledging this history and actively working to change it.**

## 2.2 The Dangers of Tokenism, Stereotyping, and Performative Activism

As brands attempt to embrace diversity, many fall into superficial inclusion efforts. Tokenism happens when diverse representation is added for appearance's sake, rather than as a meaningful part of the brand's identity.

Stereotyping is another common pitfall. Instead of reflecting real experiences, brands reduce groups to clichés; the "inspirational disabled person," the "fiery Latina," or the "gay best friend." These portrayals might seem positive on the surface, but they flatten identities and reinforce limiting narratives.

Performative activism is when brands speak about diversity and inclusion without taking real action. For example, posting a Black square for Black Lives Matter or releasing a Pride-themed product without supporting LGBTQ+ causes. Audiences today see through inauthentic efforts, and when brands fail to back up their messaging with real change, it damages trust.

Real inclusion requires moving beyond optics. It means hiring diverse talent, supporting the communities you market to, and ensuring representation is deep, not just decorative.

"If you don't see yourself represented, you don't feel like you belong."

Marian Wright Edelman,
Activist & Founder of the Children's Defense Fund

## 2.3 Algorithmic Bias & Who Gets Seen (and Who Doesn't)

Even when brands commit to inclusive marketing, digital algorithms can reinforce exclusion. Social media, search engines, and ad platforms use AI-driven systems to decide who sees what content, often amplifying bias in the process.

Many advertising algorithms prioritise engagement over ethics, meaning content that reinforces existing stereotypes often gets more visibility than content that challenges them. A beauty brand's ad might primarily be shown to young, white women, even if the campaign is meant to be inclusive. Job recruitment ads have been found to show higher-paying jobs to men more often than women.

For brands that want to market inclusively, it's essential to question and adjust digital strategies. This means diversifying audience targeting, monitoring ad performance across demographics, and actively countering bias in AI-driven marketing.

True inclusivity isn't just about who a brand wants to reach, it's about ensuring all audiences have equal access to content, products, and opportunities.
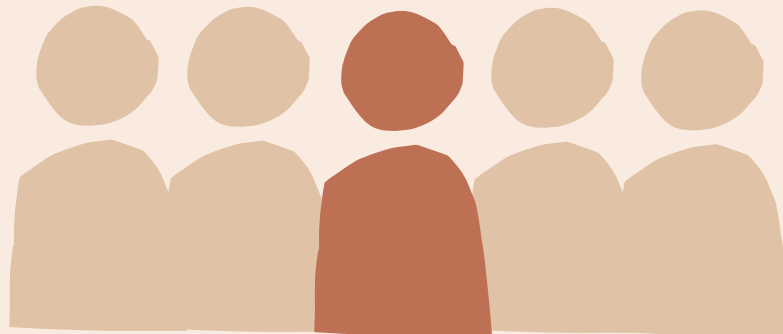
# Summary

Marketing has historically excluded, stereotyped, or erased entire communities. While diversity in advertising has improved, tokenism, performative activism, and algorithmic bias still leave many people out. Inclusive marketing requires more than representation. It demands a commitment to real, meaningful change.

# The Foundations of Accessible & Inclusive Marketing

Marketing should be clear, engaging, and accessible to everyone, but many brands unintentionally create barriers that exclude people. A campaign with diverse visuals might still alienate audiences through inaccessible design. A well-meaning message can fail if it reinforces stereotypes. Even a beautifully crafted story may fall flat if it's not accessible to disabled users.

True inclusion starts with foundational choices in language, design, and content creation. When marketing is designed to be both accessible and representative, it doesn't just reach more people. It builds trust, loyalty, and stronger connections. This chapter explores how to ensure language is inclusive, design is accessible, and content reflects real, diverse voices.

# 3.1 Language & Messaging:
## Writing for Clarity and Cultural Sensitivity

Words shape perception and inclusion. The way a brand communicates signals who is welcome, and who isn't. Using clear, bias-free, and culturally sensitive language ensures that marketing resonates with diverse audiences rather than alienating them.

Unintended exclusion often happens through assumptive language. Gendered phrases like "ladies and gentlemen" exclude non-binary people, while industry jargon can confuse those unfamiliar with a subject. Even seemingly neutral terms may carry bias—for example, describing a wheelchair user as "confined to" rather than "using" a wheelchair reinforces negative framing.

Inclusive messaging means considering how different audiences will receive and interpret your words. It's about speaking to, not about, diverse communities, ensuring that every word reflects respect, clarity, and inclusivity.
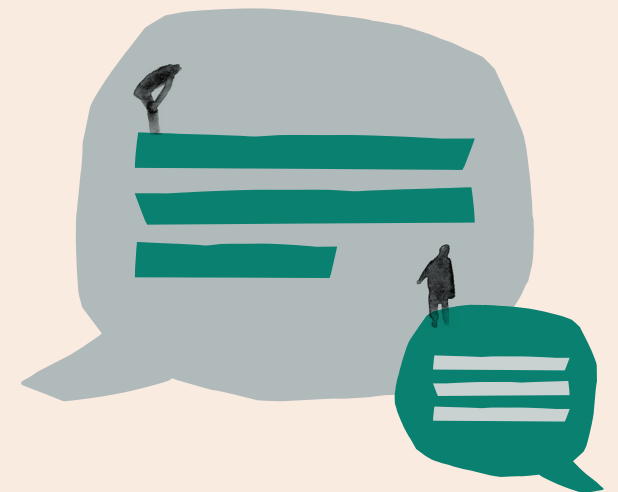
# 3.2 Visual & Digital Accessibility: Colour Contrast, Readable Fonts, Captions & Alt Text

Design choices can enhance or limit how people engage with marketing. If content is visually striking but difficult to read, hear, or navigate, it's excluding people by design.

High colour contrast improves readability for those with visual impairments. Simple, sans-serif fonts are more accessible for dyslexic and neurodivergent audiences. Alt text on images allows blind and low-vision users to engage with content, while captions and transcripts ensure that video and audio content are accessible to Deaf and hard-of-hearing users.

Digital accessibility isn't just for disabled users, it improves usability for everyone. Clear, well-structured content benefits people with cognitive differences, older audiences, non-native speakers, and those consuming content in noisy environments. Making marketing visually and digitally inclusive ensures that no one is left out.

> **"Design should be inclusive by default, not as an afterthought."**
>
> Kat Holmes, Author of Mismatch: How Inclusion Shapes Design

# 3.3 Inclusive Content Creation: Storytelling That Centres Real Voices

Representation in marketing isn't just about who appears in images or videos, it's about whose voices are heard and how stories are told. When brands fail to engage with real people, they risk creating superficial or stereotypical content.

Authentic storytelling means collaborating with underrepresented communities, rather than just speaking on their behalf. It requires avoiding clichés and ensuring diverse creators have a seat at the table. For example, a campaign about disability should involve disabled people in the creative process, not just feature them as subjects.

Real inclusion means moving beyond tokenism. Stories should reflect real, nuanced experiences, ensuring that marketing isn't just diverse on the surface but is deeply inclusive in its perspective.



> "The words we choose matter. They shape our world and define who belongs in it."
>
> Karen Yin, Founder of The Conscious Style Guide

## Summary

Inclusive marketing starts with intentional choices in language, design, and content creation. Accessible visuals, clear messaging, and authentic storytelling ensure that branding engages, includes, and represents all audiences.

# Ethical Digital Marketing & Advertising

Digital marketing has made it easier than ever for brands to reach the right audience at the right time, but it has also raised serious ethical concerns. Platforms like Meta (Facebook), Google, and X (formerly Twitter) prioritise engagement over accuracy, driving misinformation, amplifying harmful content, and reinforcing biases through algorithm-driven advertising. Meanwhile, AI and automation shape who gets seen and who remains invisible, often reflecting the same prejudices found in society.

For brands committed to ethical, inclusive marketing, it's essential to question how digital platforms operate and whether their marketing strategies align with their values. This chapter explores the impact of Big Tech on marketing ethics, the risks of algorithmic bias, and how brands can create more responsible, inclusive advertising campaigns.

# 4.1 The Impact of Big Tech on Marketing Ethics

Big Tech companies control much of the digital advertising ecosystem, shaping what people see, who gets visibility, and how data is collected. While these platforms offer powerful tools for targeting audiences, they also raise ethical concerns.

Social media algorithms often prioritise engagement at any cost, pushing divisive or sensational content because it generates more clicks. This has led to widespread misinformation, online harassment, and the amplification of extremist views. Meanwhile, data privacy scandals, such as the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica case, have exposed how personal data is used for profit, often without informed consent.

For marketers, this raises an important question: Can brands align with ethical values while relying on platforms that compromise them? While opting out entirely may not be practical, brands can take steps to minimise harm, such as being selective about where ads appear, supporting alternative platforms, and advocating for greater transparency in digital marketing.

> **"People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it."**
>
> Simon Sinek, Author of Start with Why

# 4.2 AI, Automation & Algorithm-Driven Exclusion

Artificial intelligence is transforming marketing, from automated ad targeting to AI-powered chatbots. But while AI can improve efficiency, it also reinforces bias if not carefully managed.

Many AI systems are trained on historical data that reflects existing inequalities. For example, job ads have been found to show high-paying roles to men more often than women, and AI-driven facial recognition struggles with accurately identifying people of colour. These biases affect marketing too; who sees an ad, how products are recommended, and even which voices are amplified.

To ensure AI is used ethically in marketing, brands should:

- **Audit algorithms** to check for bias in targeting and recommendations.

- **Use diverse data sets** to train AI systems and reduce exclusion.

- **Monitor ad placements** to avoid reinforcing discrimination.

Without accountability, AI risks making marketing less inclusive, not more. Ethical marketers must take active steps to ensure that automation doesn't create new barriers to representation and accessibility.

> **"Artificial intelligence is like a mirror: it reflects the biases of the society that built it."**
>
> Dr. Timnit Gebru, AI Ethics Researcher

# 4.3 Running Ethical, Inclusive Advertising Campaigns

Advertising should engage audiences, not exploit them. Yet many brands unknowingly exclude people through ad targeting, content choices, and platform selection. To create ethical, inclusive ad campaigns, brands should focus on transparency, accessibility, and representation.

### Transparency in Advertising

Audiences are increasingly concerned about how their data is used. Brands that prioritise clear consent, ethical data collection, and responsible targeting will build more trust and loyalty.

### Accessibility in Ads

Many digital ads remain inaccessible to disabled audiences. Including alt text for images, captions for video ads, and clear, easy-to-read design ensures that ads are engaging for everyone.

### Inclusive Representation

Advertising should reflect real, diverse audiences, not just in who appears in ads, but in who creates them. Consulting underrepresented communities in campaign development ensures that ads feel authentic, not performative.

**Brands that take ethical marketing seriously will not only avoid harm but will stand out as leaders in an era where consumers expect brands to act with integrity.**

## Summary

Digital marketing is powerful, but it also comes with ethical responsibilities. Marketers must be aware of how Big Tech platforms operate, how AI reinforces bias, and how advertising can either exclude or empower audiences. Ethical marketing means questioning the status quo, prioritising transparency, and ensuring that advertising is both accessible and inclusive.

# Getting Started: Practical Steps for More Inclusive Marketing

Inclusive marketing isn't about perfection, it's about progress. Every brand, no matter its size or industry, can take steps to make its marketing more accessible, representative, and ethical. The key is to start where you are and commit to continuous improvement.

This chapter provides practical steps to assess your current marketing efforts, make immediate changes that have a big impact, and develop long-term strategies to ensure inclusion isn't just an afterthought, but a core part of your brand's identity.

# 5.1 Conducting an Inclusion & Accessibility Audit of Your Marketing

Before making improvements, it's essential to understand where your brand currently stands. An inclusion and accessibility audit helps identify gaps in representation, accessibility, and ethical practices, so your changes are intentional and effective.

Start by reviewing your messaging, visuals, and digital content through an inclusive lens. Does your language reflect a diverse audience, or does it rely on assumptions about gender, ability, or cultural norms? Are your images and videos truly representative, or do they reinforce outdated stereotypes? If your content isn't accessible to disabled users, such as lacking captions or alt text, you could be excluding a significant part of your audience without realising it.

An audit doesn't mean overhauling everything overnight. Instead, it's a way to pinpoint areas for improvement and create a roadmap for change. Even small adjustments, like using clearer language, expanding representation, or ensuring digital accessibility, can make a brand more inclusive and welcoming.

## 5.2 Small Changes, Big Impact: Actions You Can Take Today

Making marketing more inclusive doesn't always require a complete rebrand. In fact, some of the most impactful changes are quick, simple, and cost nothing to implement.

A good first step is improving digital accessibility. Adding alt text to images ensures that blind and low-vision users can engage with visual content, while enabling captions on videos makes them accessible to Deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences. Adjusting colour contrast and font choices can enhance readability for neurodivergent users and older audiences, making your content more approachable for everyone.

Representation also plays a role in quick wins. Reviewing your visuals to ensure diversity in race, body types, disabilities, and gender identities can make your brand instantly more relatable and welcoming. But inclusion isn't just about who appears in your marketing, it's also about who is involved in creating it. Seeking input from diverse voices, both internally and externally, strengthens authenticity and helps avoid missteps.

These small changes don't just benefit specific groups. They create a better experience for everyone.

> **"Inclusion is not about making one big change—it's about making a hundred small ones."**
>
> Annie Jean-Baptiste, Head of Product Inclusion, Google

# 5.3 Long-Term Strategies for Ethical, Accessible, and Inclusive Marketing

Short-term improvements are important, but real inclusion requires ongoing commitment. Brands that embed accessibility and inclusion into their long-term strategy build trust, expand their audience, and future-proof their marketing.

To make inclusion a lasting part of your brand, start by integrating it into your brand guidelines and creative processes. When accessibility and representation are considered from the beginning, they become standard practice rather than last-minute fixes. Training your team on inclusive language, accessible design, and bias in advertising ensures that inclusion is woven into every campaign.

Testing content with diverse users is another essential step. Inclusive marketing isn't just about how a brand sees itself, it's about how it's experienced by real people. Partnering with underrepresented communities and ensuring their voices shape your marketing strategy creates branding that feels authentic rather than performative.

True inclusivity isn't a single campaign or initiative. It's an ongoing effort to create marketing that reflects and respects the full diversity of your audience.

## Summary

Making marketing more inclusive starts with awareness, small actions, and long-term commitment. Conducting an audit helps identify areas for improvement, while simple changes, such as improving accessibility and diversifying representation, can have an immediate impact. For inclusion to be sustainable, it needs to be built into brand strategy, team training, and audience engagement. By taking these steps, brands can create ethical, accessible, and truly inclusive marketing that reaches and resonates with more people.

# Conclusion & Next Steps

Inclusive marketing isn't just about what you say, it's about what you do. Consumers are becoming more aware of performative diversity, unethical data practices, and accessibility gaps, and they expect brands to do better. Marketing that is truly inclusive, accessible, and ethical isn't just a trend, it's the future.

The shift toward more responsible marketing means questioning who is represented, who is excluded, and how digital platforms shape engagement. Brands that commit to authentic inclusion, ethical advertising, and accessible content will build stronger connections, greater trust, and long-term success.

This final chapter looks at what's next for inclusive marketing, how brands can stay accountable, and where to find further resources to continue learning and improving.

## 6.1 The Future of Marketing Beyond Big Tech

Big Tech platforms, such as Meta (Facebook), Google, and X (formerly Twitter), dominate digital marketing, but they also raise ethical concerns around data privacy, misinformation, and algorithmic bias. More brands are beginning to rethink their dependence on these platforms and explore alternative, community-driven marketing strategies.

The future of ethical marketing may involve more decentralised platforms, privacy-focused advertising, and values-driven engagement. Email marketing, owned media (such as blogs and podcasts), and ethical social networks give brands more control over their messaging while reducing reliance on ad-driven algorithms.

This shift won't happen overnight, but brands that start experimenting now, by diversifying their marketing channels and focusing on genuine community engagement, will be better positioned as the digital landscape evolves.
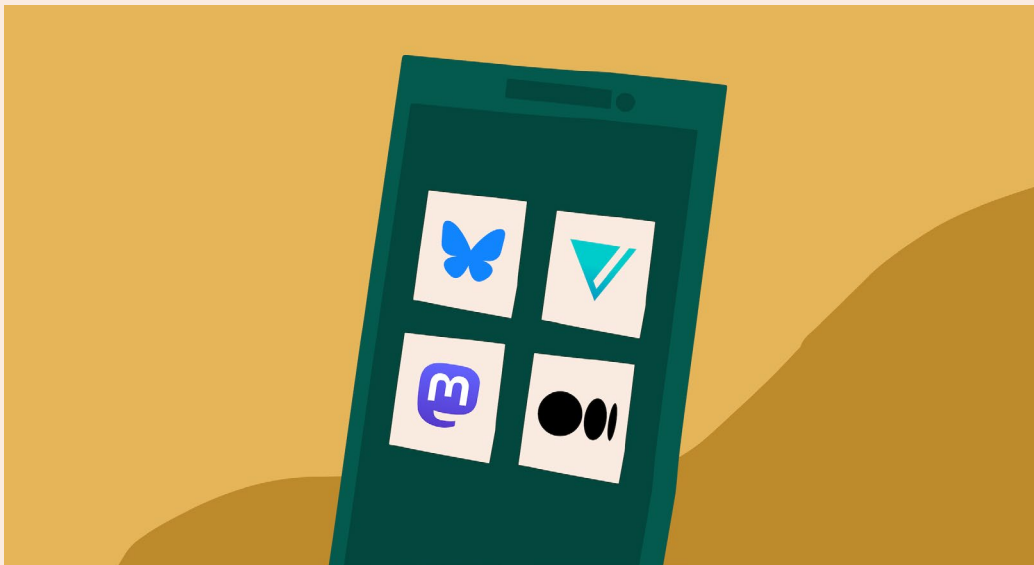
# 6.2 Committing to Authentic Inclusion, Not Just Trends

Diversity campaigns and inclusive messaging mean nothing without action. Consumers can tell when a brand is performative, when inclusion is used as a marketing tool rather than a core value.

Authentic inclusion means making real commitments. This includes ensuring diverse hiring and leadership, accessible design, ethical AI practices, and long-term partnerships with underrepresented communities. It means continuously evaluating marketing efforts, being open to feedback, and making changes based on impact, not optics.

A brand that truly values inclusion doesn't just talk about it, they embed it into everything they do.

"**Diversity is not a trend. It's a reality. The brands that embrace it authentically will be the ones that thrive.**

Bozoma Saint John, Former CMO at Netflix & Apple Music

# 6.3 Further Resources for Learning & Implementation

Inclusive marketing is a continuous learning process. Below are recommended books, reports, and toolkits to help brands keep improving:

## Books & Reports

- **The Business Case for Inclusive Marketing** – WARC

- **Building For Everyone** – Annie Jean-Baptiste (on inclusive product and marketing design)

- **Beyond Diversity: 12 Non-Obvious Ways to Build a More Inclusive World** – Rohit Bhargava & Jennifer Brown

## Organisations & Toolkits

- **Centre for Inclusive Design (Australia)** – Insights on accessibility and inclusive branding

- **Microsoft Inclusive Design Toolkit** – Practical guide to designing for accessibility

- **The Conscious Advertising Network** – Guidelines for ethical and inclusive advertising

## Online Learning

- **W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI)** – Best practices for digital accessibility

- **The Conscious Style Guide** – Resource on inclusive language

- **UK Government Digital Service (GDS) Accessibility Guidance** – Practical accessibility guidelines

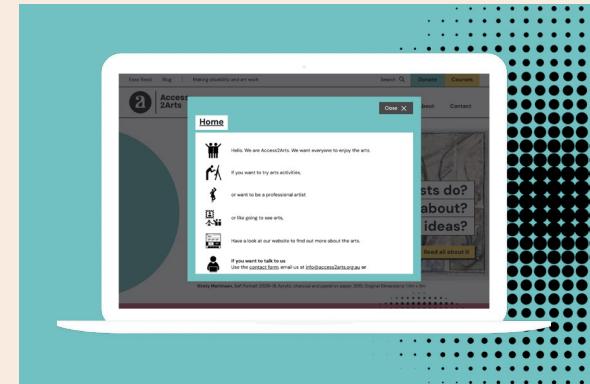# See how we incorporated these principles into our work



We prioritised inclusion in this recent photoshoot with Yumba Bimbi.

**Read more**



We designed the JFM Fund website to live up to their inclusive vision.

**See case study**



Accessibility was a focus in the new font, colour refresh and website for Access2Arts.

**See case study**

About Freerange Future

# Creating for cause & culture.

**Our expertise in the disciplines of branding, marketing and digital enable our clients to achieve their membership, fundraising, campaigning, community and audience building goals.**

If you would like to have a coffee and discuss any of the concepts in this book, please do get in touch.

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