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# A Study on LGBTQ-Inclusive Marketing As A Path To Economic Growth In Developing Countries

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## Abstract

*This paper examines the newly developing association between LGBTQ-friendly marketing and economic development in the developing countries, which treats inclusion not as a social imperative but as a more economic opportunity. With the growth trends of globalization, digitalization and social consciousness transforming the consumer behaviour, the concept of inclusive marketing is starting to bear objective economic and reputational benefits to both the business and the country. It is the ability of the firms to identify and involve LGBTQ consumers as market players that can open new demand, improve brand equity, and sustain development. The article concludes that LGBTQ-focused marketing enhances economic diversification, entrepreneurship, and innovation, and, at the same time, improves human capital and enhances social stability, which are essential sources of economic development in developing countries. Not only does inclusive campaigns imply ethical branding, but also formalization of informal markets, foreign investment, tourism and talent mobility. Nevertheless, the cultural stigma, legal limitations, and data deficiencies are the major complications in the way to disclose this potential. The findings will be used by policymakers, corporate executives, and development professionals to develop approaches that will integrate social inclusion with economic progress in a way that will help ensure that the gains of growth are enjoyed by all groups within society irrespective of gender attachment.*

**Keywords:** LGBTQ- marketing, economic development, economic growth, authenticity

**Paper type:** Research Paper

## 1.1 Introduction

Twenty-first century marketing, inclusivity, and social justice are more closely interrelated. Businesses are not considered as only profit-driven entities, but they are also considered strong social actors, which can affect the attitude, facilitate equality, and lead to sustainable development. In this changing environment, marketing to LGBTQ has become a responsive ethical imperative and a business opportunity to effect economic change (Craig et al., 2015). It is a gradual and conscious change in the traditional methods of marketing to the approaches that include and honour diversity in gender identity. In most less developed nations, the LGBTQ community is under expressed, economically marginalized and frequently excluded in the mainstream market systems because of cultural customs, discrimination, or the absence of institutional support (Ciszek & Pounders, 2020). However, it is the same community that represents a very important and dynamic market segment that has its unique likes, brand loyalty, and buying capabilities. When they can recognize their needs based on inclusive marketing, it can open the untapped markets, improve brand competitiveness, and trigger economic participation. In addition, inclusivity is also a contributor to nation branding that enhances a country image in the eyes of the world and gains foreign investment and tourism, particularly the socially progressive markets (Srivastava et al., 2024).

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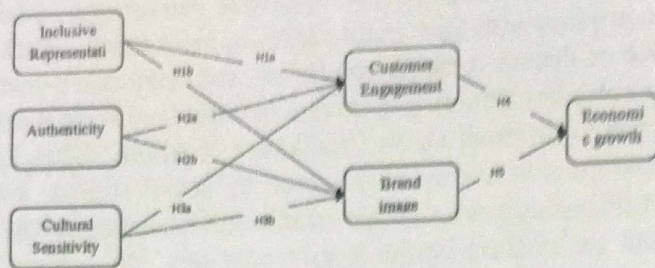
Since the developing countries are working towards the targeted objectives of inclusive and sustainable economic development, it is important to integrate the business strategies with the principles of equality and human rights (Jakubik et al., 2025). LGBTQ inclusive marketing not only support fairness and representation, but also complies with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 8 and SDG 10), which emphasize the importance of decent working conditions and economic growth, as well as decreased inequalities. Diversity enables companies to generate new jobs, provide small-scale entrepreneurs of LGBTQ and innovate due to different views (Yanikkaya & Altun, 2020). The use of inclusive marketing in developing economies is however hampered by social stigma, legal challenges, and poor availability of data. A lot of businesses are afraid of misunderstanding, whereas others do not have the means of reaching out to LGBTQ consumers in a unique way (Tyson & Zysman, 2022). Nevertheless, the increasing digital connectiveness, adoption of social media advocacy, and exposure to global society have started to influence the consumer consciousness and generate more chances of inclusive narratives.

## 1.2 Literature Review and research framework

Targeting LGBTQ consumers is not just a symbolic representation, but it falls under a more comprehensive social-and-economic inclusion agenda that potentially presents significant economic payoffs. (Ciszek & Pounders, 2020) Macro-level studies indicate that legal and social incorporation of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals has led to enhanced economic performance due to lowered labour productivity, entrepreneurship, and human capital formation. (Achyldurdyeva et al., 2023), macro-level studies can discover consistent correlations between LGBTQ inclusion and national macroeconomic indicators, including the loss of GDP and reduced growth in the country where exclusion is prevalent. (Srivastava et al., 2024). Inclusive marketing enhances brand equity, occurs attracts a loyal group of consumers in the firm and market, and indicates progressive values of the workplace, which combine to increase firm competitiveness and innovation in terms of recruiting and retaining talent. (Craig et al., 2015) reports that inclusion can be used to increase market size, productivity, and entrepreneurial ecosystems-effects that are particularly helpful to developing economies aiming to find new growth niches. (Srivastava et al., 2024) the legal and social enmity of most nations implies that inclusive marketing may have reputational, regulatory, or safety risks on the consumers and employees. (Singh, 2020) the information on the purchasing power of the LGBTQ communities, as well as on ownership and management of businesses, is limited in most low- and middle-income nations, which makes it hard to conduct market analysis. The researchers emphasize that marketing should be accompanied by significant internal policies and community engagement in order to achieve economic benefits.

(Blenkhorn & MacKenzie, 2017) A number of apparent gaps are uncovered where future studies are required to contextualize the developing countries: more rigorous micro-level estimates of the ROI of inclusive marketing (sales, retention, innovation measures); longitudinal studies relating brand inclusion strategy to the performance of firms; comparative case studies across countries with varying legal regimes; research on how the public policy (tax incentives, supplier-diversity procurement) can scale-up the private inclusive marketing to more extensive economic development. (Skataric et al., 2021) the potential of this agenda is demonstrated by recent country research (with India-specific work on social costs of exclusion) but the localized, context-sensitive evidence connecting marketing practice with quantifiable economic benefits is also emphasized.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



### 1.3 Instruments and development of hypothesis

#### 1.3.1 Inclusive Representation

One of the pillars of LGBTQ-inclusive marketing is the inclusive representation. It entails the fair and clear representation of various sexual orientations and gender identity in advertisement, branding and promotion campaigns (Mariadoss et al., 2011). Instead of cliched stereotypes and symbolic gestures, the idea of inclusive representation aims at that of normalizing the presence of LGBTQ individuals as full-fledged members of society and consumers in the market (Dayananda, 2019). Such a strategy makes brands human, as the current communities are diverse, and this strategy makes consumers feel that they are viewed, respected and valued. In addition, the presentation of inclusivity in the media and marketing will also help to create social perceptions that lead to behavioural and cultural transformation (Mukonza & Swarts, 2020). Authentic representation not only help brands to build a positive image but also open potential markets and create long-term loyalty to customers, which eventually leads to inclusive economic development (Srivastava et al., 2024).

H<sub>1a</sub>: There is a relationship between inclusive representation and Customer Engagement.

H<sub>1b</sub>: Inclusive representation positively impacts Brand image.

#### 1.3.2 Authenticity

There is one important determinant of success in LGBTQ-inclusive marketing, which is authenticity because it determines the difference between the sincere intentions and performative acts (Craig et al., 2015). It is the genuineness, integrity, and the extent to which a brand supports the LGBTQ rights and inclusion, both in its marketing content and corporate behaviour. Authenticity is depicted in the situation when the public advocacy of a company conforms to its internal culture, employee policies, and in long-term interaction with the LGBTQ community (Ciszek & Pounders, 2020). Authenticity fosters consumer trust in developing countries, where the problem of representation and equality is a sensitive issue, protecting the brand against the charge of opportunism (Achyldurdyeva et al., 2023).

H<sub>2a</sub>: Authenticity positively impact Customer Engagement.

H<sub>2b</sub>: There is a positive association between Authenticity and Brand image.

#### 1.3.3 Cultural Sensitivity

The concept of cultural sensitivity has a critical role to play in the success of LGBTQ-inclusive marketing, particularly in emerging economies where social perceptions of gender deeply ingrained

in the culture over time, potentially in the form of tradition, religion, and social norms (Srivastava et al., 2024). It means being aware, respecting, and adjusting the marketing strategies to the cultural background without violating the principles of inclusion and equality. The challenge that brands have to walk this fine line is to ensure that they encourage diversity in a manner that is both locally viable and socially acceptable but at the same time refute the norms of exclusion (Jakubik et al., 2025). Provocative communication would lead to backlash, though culturally sensitive communication would provide openings to dialogue and step-by-step acceptance. Marketing which is culturally sensitive can involve emphasizing common human values, like love, family and respect, and thus make the inclusion a relatable aspect among various audiences (Yanikkaya & Altun, 2020). Cultural sensitivity, when carried out in a careful manner, will not only increase the acceptance of LGBTQ representation but also improve brand reputation, trust, and consumer connection. It enables inclusive marketing to be a connector between the global equality movements and the local socio-economic development to create the social harmony and market expansion.

H<sub>3a</sub>: There is a positive relationship between Cultural Sensitivity and Customer Engagement.

H<sub>3b</sub>: There is a positive association between Cultural Sensitivity and Brand image.

### 1.3.4 Customer Engagement

The involvement of customers in LGBTQ-inclusive marketing is an important aspect of success since it shows the level of interaction and emotional attachment between the brands and the various groups of consumers. Inclusive engagement is more than visible--it is focused on an active conversation, involvement, and relationship building with LGBTQ customers and allies (Tyson & Zysman, 2022). Brands can provide consumers with a sense of being heard, represented and empowered through social media platforms, community events, influencer partnerships and advocacy partnerships. In less developed nations, where the LGBTQ community is frequently not represented in the mainstream, this interaction offers attention and builds a sense of belonging (Roumate, 2024). It is also through meaningful interaction that brands can find out the needs, likes, and difficulties of LGBTQ consumers which results into more inclusive products and services (Merola, 2022). In addition, customer interaction turns the consumers into advocates of the brand that enhance inclusiveness by creating an atmosphere of word-of-mouth and digital network.

H<sub>4</sub>: There is a positive relationship between Customer Engagement and Economic growth.

### 1.3.5 Brand image

Brand image is a general feeling and emotional connection that customers develop with a company regarding their values, activity, and communications. The framework of creating a positive brand image on the LGBTQ-inclusive marketing presupposes genuine intention to be diverse and represented. By being often inclusive in their campaigns, community efforts, brands build an insight of transparency and responsibility. This is appeal to LGBTQ consumers and to social conscious allies who would want to support ethical and progressive brands. Inclusive brand image can be used in developing nations where inclusion is slowly becoming more noticeable, as it can make the company seem modern, progressive, and globally oriented.

H<sub>5</sub>: There is a positive relationship between Brand image and Economic growth

### 1.3.6 Economic growth

The final product of successful LGBTQ-inclusive marketing is economic growth, which is indicative of the economic advantages at a greater scale that will be achieved as a result of adopting diversity and inclusion in the market systems (Galaz et al., 2021). When the brands are the true embodiments of LGBTQ communities and foster equal engagement, they increase entry points to new consumer groups, encourage innovations, and improve market competitiveness. Inclusion promotes the inclusion of the marginalized communities in formal economic endeavours- enhanced consumption, entrepreneurship and employment. In the developing world, this wide-ranging strategy can fuel the development of the pink economy, the fast-growing industry that serves as the buying power of LGBTQ buyers and supporters (Abbas Khan et al., 2025). Moreover, inclusive marketing will also attract foreign investment and enhance the global economic image of a country as a progressive and socially responsible country. When marketing activities are in line with the principles of equality, the businesses will not only boost their profitability but also work towards achieving sustainable development objectives concerning inequalities and decent employment (Della Torre et al., 2020). Therefore, the idea of marketing that is LGBTQ friendly is not only the moral obligation but also a strategic boost in the long-term and inclusive economic development.

### 1.4 Statement of the Problem

Although the world is becoming more focused on equality, inclusion, and corporate social responsibility, LGBTQ-inclusive marketing is not evolved to its fullest and is barely exploited in most developing nations. There is limited empirical studies and market data on the part of LGBTQ consumers in developing areas and this means that businesses and policy makers do not know the size, preferences, and economic contribution of such a population group. Lack of inclusive marketing practice also propagates economic inequality and limits innovation, entrepreneurship and diversity in employment. The research is aimed at examining how the aspect of inclusive marketing can be a strategic force of inclusive economic growth, the obstacles that make it difficult to implement, and some of the policies that might enable it to be included in the overall development agenda.

### 1.5 Methodology

The research design selected in this paper is a mixed-method study involving a quantitative and qualitative analysis in order to fully explore the contribution of LGBTQ-inclusive marketing to the economic growth of the developing nations. The mixed-method technique is adopted to address the intricacy of the social, cultural, and economic contexts of inclusivity in marketing and its overall impact on the economy. The combination of statistical data and human opinions will help the research to contribute to the development of sustainable marketing by suggesting both empirical evidence and contextual insight regarding the contribution of inclusive marketing to the sustainable development.

The questionnaire was sent to 130 LGBTQ customers to collect information related with LGBTQ-inclusive marketing factors on economic growth. Of these, 118 (91%) questionnaire received and valid 111 (85%) valid responses were collected. Our sample features are presented in Table 1.

1.6 Data analysis and interpretation

Table 1

Sample respondents (N=111)

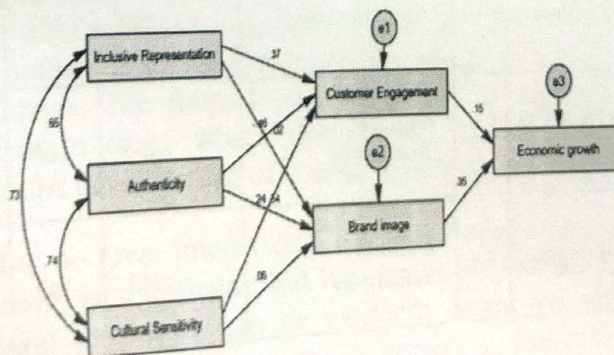
Feature	Distribution	Frequency	%
Age	Below 30	77	69.4
	30-40	28	25.2
	41-50	6	5.4
Gender	Male	66	59.5
	Female	45	40.5
Marital Status	Single	65	58.6
	Married	46	41.4
Educational Qualification	UG	53	47.74
	PG	32	28.82
	Other	26	23.42
Year of experience	Less than 5	36	32.43
	5-10	58	52.3
	More than 10	17	15.3

Source: Author's own creation

The demographic characteristics of the respondents show that most of them are young professionals with 69.4 percent below the age of 30, 25.2 percent between the age of 30-40 years, and only 5.4 percent of the respondents are aged 41-50 showing that the workforce is dominated by youth. Concerning the gender representation, 59.5 of the respondents are male, and 40.5 are female, implying the average gender representation. On marital status, 58.6% are single and 41.4% are married indicating that the majority of the participants are still in the early years of their personal and professional life.

A large percentage, 47.74 of the sample, has an undergraduate degree, 28.82 of the sample has postgraduate qualifications and 23.42 of the sample has shown other types of education, which means that the sample is well educated. Concerning the work experience 52.3% have 5-10 years of work experience, 32.43% have less than 5 years, and 15.3% have more than 10 years. This implies that the respondents are quite young and middle-aged professionals and they will present a great insight of people with increasing experience in their respective fields.

1.6.1 Structural model



**Figure 2: Research model results**

The above SEM diagram shows how variables are interconnected with each other, which are the most significant in affecting economic growth with the use of LGBTQ-inclusive marketing practice. The model demonstrates that Inclusive Representation, Authenticity, and Cultural Sensitivity represent the central predictors that determine Customer Engagement and Brand Image. Inclusive Representation is associated with Customer Engagement ( $\beta = 0.37$ ) and Brand Image ( $\beta = 0.24$ ) in a moderate positive way and a small positive way, respectively, meaning that the diverse and inclusive brand portrayals contribute to engaging customers and increasing brand perception to a small extent. Authenticity demonstrates a more favourable positive direction to Customer Engagement ( $\beta = 0.46$ ) and Brand Image ( $\beta = 0.34$ ), which implies that authenticity and natural representation are influential contributors to customer loyalty and enhance brand image.

The influence of Cultural Sensitivity on Brand Image ( $\beta = 0.06$ ) and Customer Engagement ( $\beta = 0.02$ ) is the least significant, which means that it is a vital factor, but its direct influence is not so significant. Customer Engagement has a positive impact on Economic Growth ( $\beta = 0.15$ ) but the impact is small in comparison with that of Brand Image, which has a stronger positive correlation with Economic Growth ( $\beta = 0.35$ ). Also, the fact that the Inclusive Representation (0.65), Authenticity (0.73) and Cultural Sensitivity (0.74) correlations are high reflects that these dimensions are connected and contribute to inclusive marketing achievement in a concerted effort.

The model shows that Authenticity and Inclusive Representation are paramount in their facilitation of Customer Engagement and Brand Image, which are key intermediates that result in Economic Growth with the use of inclusive and culturally sensitive marketing approaches.

**Table: 2**

**Path Analysis - Hypothesis testing**

Hypothesis	Path		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
H <sub>1a</sub> : There is a relationship between inclusive representation and Customer Engagement	Customer Engagement	<-- Inclusive Representation	.387	.137	2.821	.005	Supported
H <sub>1b</sub> : Inclusive representation positively impact Brand image.	Brand image	<-- Inclusive Representation	-.017	.125	-.134	.893	Not supported
H <sub>2a</sub> : Authenticity positively impact Customer Engagement.	Customer Engagement	<-- Authenticity	-.431	.128	-3.374	***	Supported
H <sub>2b</sub> : There is a positive association between Authenticity and Brand image.	Brand image	<-- Authenticity	.529	.117	4.525	***	Supported
H <sub>3a</sub> : There is a positive relationship between Cultural Sensitivity and Customer Engagement	Customer Engagement	<-- Cultural Sensitivity	.255	.160	1.588	.112	Not supported
H <sub>3b</sub> : There is a positive association between Cultural Sensitivity and Brand image.	Brand image	<-- Cultural Sensitivity	.063	.147	.428	.669	Not supported

Hypothesis	Path					Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
	Economic growth	<--	Customer Engagement							
H <sub>1</sub> : There is a positive relationship between Customer Engagement and Economic growth.	Economic growth	<--	Customer Engagement			.126	.076	1.656	.098	Not supported
H <sub>2</sub> : There is a positive relationship between Brand image and Economic growth.	Economic growth	<--	Brand image			.292	.074	3.937	***	Supported

Source: Primary Data

The results of hypothesis testing allow to see the structural connections of the variables of the study, i.e. the impact of Inclusive Representation, Authenticity, and Cultural Sensitivity on Customer Engagement, Brand Image and, Economic Growth. The results indicate that Inclusion Representation is positively correlated with Customer Engagement (Estimate = 0.387, p = 0.005) and it means that inclusive marketing activities can help to attract and engage customers. Nevertheless, it does not have a significant effect on Brand Image (Estimate = -0.017, p = 0.893). The Authenticity is a very important variable in this model as it is significantly correlated with Customer Engagement (Estimate = -0.431, p = 0.001) and Brand Image (Estimate = 0.529, p = 0.001). Despite the negative value of the Customer Engagement coefficient, the significance level suggests that authenticity does have a positive effect on customer interaction- maybe perceived inauthenticity contributes to lowering of engagement, and true representation is a crucial factor. Conversely, Culture Sensitivity has no significant impact on the Customer Engagement (Estimate = 0.255, p = 0.112) or the Brand Image (Estimate = 0.063, p = 0.669) meaning that although the concept of cultural awareness is deemed to be important.

Customer Engagement is not significantly connected with Economic Growth (Estimate = 0.126, p = 0.098), which could be interpreted as the fact that engagement is not necessarily directly correlated with the economic outcomes. Nevertheless, Brand Image exhibits a very high and meaningful positive influence on Economic Growth (Estimate = 0.292, p < 0.001), which is the indication that positive brand reputation is one of the major executives of economic progress.

Overall, the model highlights that Authenticity and Brand Image are critical attributes that should facilitate Economic Growth by LGBTQ-inclusive marketing. Although Inclusive Representation is designed to increase the engagement and preconditions inclusivity, genuine communication and good brand image will eventually transform such actions into quality economic results.

**1.7 Discussion**

The Customer Engagement is much higher when there is an inclusive Representation, which means that the relevant and inclusive marketing practices that reflect diversity and equality are effective in attracting and engaging customers. However, it does not have a strong impact on Brand Image, implying that inclusion is unlikely to be enough to create positive brand perceptions without other reinforcing elements like authenticity and emotional appeal. Authenticity is critical in the Customer Engagement and Brand Image. The findings indicate that the relationship with both variables is significant and proves that in cases where the brands convey authentic messages and actual representation, they lead to the development of a more trusted customer and better brand image.

The Cultural Sensitivity has no great impact on Customer Engagement or Brand Image, so in their theory, the cultural awareness is significant, but its impact on this model is not easily measurable. This can imply that cultural sensitivity can be indirectly acted via other intervening factors like

authenticity or inclusiveness. Brand Image is one of the outcome variables whose relationship is positive and significant with Economic Growth, which means that a positive brand image has a significant contribution to the economic results. Customer Engagement, despite a positive correlation with Economic Growth, is not statistically significant, which means that engagement activities should be accompanied by a good brand image in order to become fully economic gains. The most impactful drivers in the LGBTQ-inclusive marketing are Authenticity and Brand Image, whereas Inclusive Representation is a key factor of engagement but not essential. The authentic diversity will enhance economic prosperity through improved brand equity and relationships with customers in the long term.

### 1.8 Recommendations

The governments must be proactive in providing an enabling environment of inclusive economic participation. These involve the implementation and enforcement of anti-discrimination legislations, the acknowledgment of LGBTQ rights in the context of employment and business system, and the operations of the marketing and media industries under non-discriminatory laws and regulations. Inclusivity should also be incorporated into the national development agendas and economic reform strategies, which should be aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities). There can also be more incentives to get businesses to practice inclusive marketing by creating government-backed programs of diversity certification, or by providing incentives to businesses that have already implemented these programs.

The inclusion should be incorporated in the fundamental marketing and human resource strategies of business organizations. Firms must go beyond symbolic representation and concentrate on real, research-based campaigns that capture the lives and dreams of LGBTQ consumers. External marketing should be accompanied by internal policies that enhance diversity in employment, training of employees and work ethics, where inclusivity is attained internally as well as externally. Companies also ought to collaborate with local LGBTQ advocacy movements and community organizations to jointly develop marketing messages, which are respectful, culturally relevant and empowering.

### 1.9 Conclusion

The study identifies that the inclusive marketing is not a mere symbolic act, but an effective economic tool that can create quantifiable value to companies, consumers and to country economies. The inclusion of LGBTQ in the market as a significant stakeholder will enable the developing nations to access new demand, innovation, and entrepreneurship, which subsequently leads to the realization of inclusive and sustainable growth. The results prove that LGBTQ-friendly marketing helps to increase the size of consumer markets, brand loyalty, and corporate reputation, which in turn positively affect the business performance. At macroeconomic level, inclusion helps in formalization of informal markets, growth in tax revenues, and in the process of creating jobs and foreign investment.

Moreover, inclusive marketing fosters social cohesion, human rights protection and cultural modernization, which is key pillars of stable economic growth in emerging economies because of the promotion of equality and visibility. By businesses and policymakers of the developing countries making genuine commitments to LGBTQ inclusion, they are able to not just promote equality and social justice but also build the basics of their economies. Therefore, LGBTQ-inclusive marketing is

not just a marketing approach, but a new avenue of change toward a better, more dynamic, and sustainable world economy whereby the contribution of every member is appreciated and harnessed.

### 1.10 Limitations and Future Research.

The population size of LGBTQ, their buying patterns, and their role in the economic development of the most developing countries are poorly known because of the stigma, underreporting, and absence of legalization. The availability is not disaggregated data, which complicates the process of determining the true financial cost of inclusive marketing and the impact of it over the long term on the economy.

- Future studies should focus on data collection efforts that will record ethically and safely the involvement of the LGBTQ in markets and entrepreneurship.
- Comparative cross-country designs should be taken up in future research to establish what cultural, institutional, and policy environments facilitate inclusive marketing to flourish. This form of comparison would show best practice and flexible models to different levels of social acceptance.
- Longitudinal studies on the effect of inclusive marketing on national competitiveness, foreign investment, and innovation with time would also be of considerable contribution to the field.

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