The Power of Inclusivity in Branding: A Systematic Literature Review on Trends, Theoretical Perspectives, and Research Landscape

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: 2025-06-10 Revised: 2025-07-20 Published: 2025-08-01 **Keywords:** *Brand Inclusivity;* *Systematic Literature Review;* *Marketing Strategies;* *Consumer Loyalty;* *Branding Theory.*	This study aims to explore the role of inclusivity in brand strategy through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of 21 peer-reviewed articles indexed in the Scopus database. The articles were analyzed based on research trends, theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, publication outlets, and geographical distribution. The findings indicate a significant increase in academic attention to brand inclusivity beginning in 2022, with a peak in 2024. The reviewed studies applied various theoretical perspectives, including Transformative Service Research, Social Identity Theory, Moral Foundations Theory, and the Technology Acceptance Model, reflecting conceptual diversity in examining inclusive branding. Methodologically, qualitative approaches, particularly case studies, are the most dominant, followed by experiments, surveys, and mixed methods. Most articles were published in high-ranking journals (Q1 and Q2), suggesting strong academic interest and relevance. Geographically, the majority of studies focused on developed countries, especially the United States and the United Kingdom. A key limitation is the exclusive use of the Scopus database, which may affect generalizability. Future research is encouraged to diversify data sources and methodological approaches.

Artikel Info	Abstrak
Sejarah Artikel Diterima: 2025-06-10 Direvisi: 2025-07-20 Dipublikasi: 2025-08-01 **Kata kunci:** *Inklusi Merek;* *Tinjauan Literatur Sistematis;* *Strategi Pemasaran;* *Loyalitas Konsumen;* *Teori Branding.*	Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi peran inklusivitas dalam strategi merek melalui pendekatan Systematic Literature Review (SLR) terhadap 21 artikel ilmiah yang telah melalui proses peer review dan terindeks di database Scopus. Artikel dianalisis berdasarkan tren penelitian, teori yang digunakan, pendekatan metodologis, outlet publikasi, dan distribusi geografis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan signifikan dalam perhatian akademik terhadap topik inklusivitas merek sejak tahun 2022, dengan puncak publikasi terjadi pada tahun 2024. Studi-studi tersebut menggunakan berbagai perspektif teoritis, termasuk Transformative Service Research, Social Identity Theory, Moral Foundations Theory, dan Technology Acceptance Model yang mencerminkan keberagaman pendekatan konseptual. Secara metodologis, pendekatan kualitatif, khususnya studi kasus, mendominasi, disusul metode eksperimen, survei, dan pendekatan campuran. Sebagian besar artikel diterbitkan dalam jurnal bereputasi tinggi (Q1 dan Q2). Secara geografis, penelitian lebih banyak difokuskan pada negara maju, terutama Amerika Serikat dan Inggris. Keterbatasan utama studi ini adalah penggunaan tunggal basis data Scopus, sehingga penelitian selanjutnya disarankan untuk memperluas cakupan sumber dan metode analisis yang digunakan.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the global business era that increasingly emphasizes sustainability and social responsibility, inclusive and ethical marketing approaches have become strategically essential for organizations. (Trkulja et al., 2024) assert that socially responsible marketing plays a pivotal role in fostering values of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within organizational environments. Through the integration of ethical principles and corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, companies can shape inclusive perceptions, dismantle structural barriers, and create more equitable workplaces.

These findings are consistent with empirical research by (Goedertier et al., 2024), which involved over 24,000 participants across 20 countries and one special administrative region. The study revealed that consumers particularly those from Generation Z and female respondents demonstrate a higher willingness to pay for brands that emphasize sustainability and inclusivity, as opposed to brands that focus primarily on exclusivity or trendiness. While exclusivity remains appealing to certain

consumer segments, particularly men and older generations, the study highlights a global shift in consumer preferences toward brands that promote positive social impact. These two studies reinforce the notion that inclusive and socially-oriented marketing practices not only enhance brand perception in the public eye but also have a direct influence on consumer purchasing decisions across demographic groups.

However, as noted by (Kim & Kim, 2023), the implementation of inclusive and sustainability-focused marketing is not without challenges. Consumers often scrutinize the authenticity of corporate social responsibility (CSR) claims, particularly when there is a perceived misalignment between the brand's core business model such as fast fashion and the values it promotes. Their study demonstrated that a strong CSR–brand fit enhances perceived authenticity and reduces consumer skepticism, ultimately leading to more favorable brand evaluations. Moreover, consumers with an incremental mindset, who believe that brands can evolve and improve, are more receptive to CSR initiatives even when these efforts originate from traditionally unsustainable business models. This underscores the importance of aligning ethical marketing strategies with both brand identity and consumer psychology to foster trust and long-term loyalty.

Wilkie et al., (2023) also explain that inclusive advertising is highly dependent on the cultural context and the way the narrative is delivered, which affects how the message is received by consumers. On the other hand, more complex challenges arise in the balance between inclusivity and exclusivity, particularly in branding luxury brands. While user-generated content can strengthen the relationship between brands and communities, luxury brands often struggle to maintain exclusivity while introducing inclusive messages that resonate with a wide range of audiences (Basile et al., 2024).

This poses a dilemma for brands that want to maintain their elite image, but also need to expand their consumer base through inclusive strategies. In order to expand the consumer base through inclusive strategies, it can be done by representing the inclusivity brand itself authentically. According to (Lee et al., 2024), credible disability-related storytelling in branding can open up opportunities for broader representation. However, Pérez Curiel et al., (2023) state that despite progress in portraying diversity, stereotypes often remain that can undermine the credibility of a brand's inclusivity efforts. This suggests that authentic representation should involve a deep understanding of the diversity that exists, without falling prey to stereotypes that undermine consumer trust.

One important factor in the success of inclusivity strategies is consumer response, which is influenced by their cultural background. Consumers in East Asia respond positively to inclusive beauty products in advertisements, especially if they promote diversity while respecting the essence of local culture (Baek et al., 2023). This shows how important it is to understand the cultural context in implementing inclusivity strategies in order to be widely accepted in various markets. While much research has been done on inclusivity in branding, there is a gap in the literature that systematically addresses how inclusivity strategies can be implemented effectively and sustainably. According to (Wilkie et al., 2023), further research is needed on consumer reactions to various inclusivity strategies. Therefore, this study aims to conduct a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) so as to answer the following questions:

What are the trends in brand inclusivity in published research? What theories are most commonly used to support the study of brand inclusiveness? What research methods are most commonly used in brand inclusivity studies, and how diverse are the research designs? What is the distribution of publication outlets based on the ranking level of journals that publish research on brand inclusiveness? Which countries are the focus of research related to brand inclusiveness?

II. METHOD

The methodology of this study employed a systematic literature review, which is a research method designed to identify, evaluate, and synthesise all available research relevant to a specific research question using a rigorous and verifiable methodology (García-Peñalvo, 2022). SLR follows a pre-defined methodology that includes several stages such as formulating a research question, developing a review protocol, conducting a comprehensive literature search, screening studies, assessing their quality, extracting data, and synthesising findings (Visic, 2022). This research was conducted in a structured manner to identify publication trends,

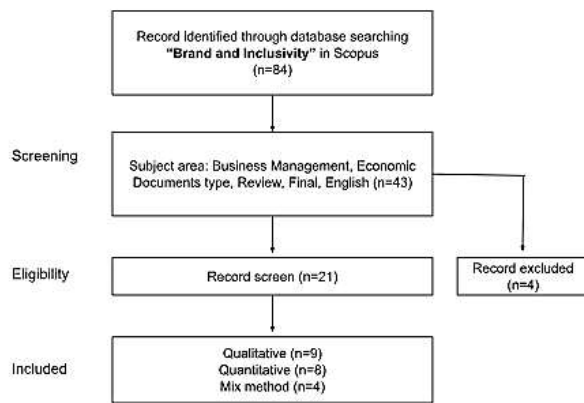methods, theories, publication sources and research results.

Ficture 1. Research protocol

In this study, a literature search was conducted using the Scopus database with the keywords 'Brand and Inclusivity' which resulted in 84 articles. The selection process was carried out through several stages, starting from screening based on the criteria of relevant scientific fields, namely Business Management and Economics, document type (Review and Final), and English language, resulting in 43 articles. Next, an eligibility assessment was conducted to review the suitability of the article with the research topic which resulted in 21 articles that met the criteria, while 4 other articles were excluded. From the articles that passed the selection, they were classified based on the research methodology approach, namely qualitative (n=9), quantitative (n=8), and mixed methods (n=4). This selection process was conducted systematically to ensure that the articles analysed had relevance and validity in supporting the scientific studies conducted.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION
1. Trends of Brand Inclusivity

The trend in research publications on brand inclusivity from 2014 to 2025 shows a gradual emergence with significant growth in recent years. This topic initially received limited attention, with only one publication recorded in 2014, 2019, and 2021. In 2022 and 2023, there were four publications each. The peak was reached in 2024 with nine publications, indicating a surge in academic interest and the importance of brand inclusivity in contemporary marketing discourse. However, a sharp decline to just one publication in early 2025 suggests the possibility of incomplete data for that year or potential saturation. Overall, this trend reflects increased academic engagement with brand inclusivity, while highlighting the need for ongoing research to explore the underlying factors behind this evolving trend.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study identifies key theories underpinning brand inclusivity research from 2014 to 2025. Perceived common fate (Lv et al., 2025) fosters group consciousness and cooperation (Zhang, 2019), while Transformative Service Research (Anderson et al., 2024) emphasizes services that enhance consumer well-being. Moral Foundations Theory (Chowdhury et al., 2024) links religiosity to five core moral values (Haidt & Graham, 2007), and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1986) explains group-based self-concepts, applied by Chowdhury et al., (2024), Chohan & Schmidt-Devlin (2024), and Wilkie et al., (2023). Identity and Categorization Theories (Anand et al., 2024) explore how donors align with organizations, while Organizational Justice Theory (Rahman et al., 2023; Sordi et al., 2022) and Instrumental Stakeholder Theory (Rahman et al., 2023) examine fairness and strategic stakeholder engagement. Attribution Theory (Baek et al., 2023) analyzes how consumers interpret advertising motives, and the Technology Acceptance Model (Nathan et al., 2022) links brand trust with fintech adoption. Authentic and hubristic pride theories (Lu et al., 2022) associate pride with inclusive brand attitudes, while conspicuous consumption theory (Rice, 2022; Veblen, 2017) sees material goods as social signals. Masculine Habitus Theory (Bourdieu, 1990) and Socialization Theory (Topić, 2021) address how gender norms and early interactions shape workplace behavior. Further, Social Systems Theory (Luhmann, 1995; Omholt, 2019) and Organizational Design Theory (Galbraith, 1983; Weick, 2015) discuss structural complexity and inclusivity adaptation. Lastly, Gerontology (Sudbury-Riley, 2014) and Inclusive Design Theory (Jordan, 2000) advocate for addressing aging and disability in inclusive product development.

3. Methodological Approach

This study identifies methodological trends in brand inclusivity research across 21 articles, categorized into qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods. Qualitative methods are most common, particularly the

case study approach, used by (Anderson et al., 2024; Bisani et al., 2024; Omholt, 2019; Pérez Curiel et al., 2023), which explore inclusivity through detailed, contextual consumer experiences. Phenomenology appears in (Chohan & Schmidt-Devlin, 2024; Topić, 2021), focusing on lived experiences. Literature reviews are employed by (Rice, 2022; Sordi et al., 2022), while Qualitative Diary Research is used by Sudbury-Riley (2014). For quantitative methods, experiments are most frequent, conducted by (Baek et al., 2023; Chowdhury et al., 2024; Ferraro et al., 2024; Lu et al., 2022; Lv et al., 2025), testing causality between variables. Surveys are used by (Lee et al., 2024; Nathan et al., 2022), and secondary data analysis by Rahman et al., (2023). Mixed-methods are used in four studies (Anand et al., 2024; Carrasco-Santos et al., 2024; Wilkie et al., 2023; Yadav & Kumari, 2024), combining qualitative depth with quantitative breadth.

4. Publication Outlets

Research on brand inclusivity is gaining prominence in academia and practice, reflecting growing consumer awareness of diversity and inclusion. Many high-quality journals, including Journal of Product and Brand Management, Journal of Business Research, and International Journal of Advertising (mostly Q1), contribute to understanding inclusive branding strategies. Additionally, Marketing Intelligence & Planning (Q2) provides insights into strategic planning for diverse consumer needs. Related literature in Gender in Management and Journal of Business Ethics highlights inclusivity as both a trend and a strategic necessity for brands to foster stronger emotional connections with their audience.

5. Countries Under Study

Out of a total of 21 studies, 18 studies explicitly mentioned the country, while the other 3 studies did not mention the country specifically. Some studies even used two countries as the object of comparison. Research on countries studied in the context of inclusivity shows the dominance of studies in the United States (US) with 9 studies, which account for 47.37% of the total studies. The UK ranks second with 5 studies (26.32%), followed by China with 2 studies (10.53%). Other countries such as India, South Korea,

and Vietnam each contributed 1 study or 5.26%.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

This study reveals that brand inclusivity research from 2014 to 2025 predominantly employs qualitative methods, especially case studies, alongside surveys and experiments in quantitative designs. The findings reflect methodological diversity and high academic interest, with most articles published in Q1 and Q2 journals. However, the exclusive use of the Scopus database limits the study's generalizability. Future research should increase the use of quantitative and mixed-methods approaches and ensure clarity in research instruments, including validity and reliability measures.

B. Suggestion

The discussion related to this research is still very limited and requires a lot of input, suggestions for future authors are to study this more deeply and comprehensively about The Power of Inclusivity in Branding: A Systematic Literature Review on Trends, Theoretical Perspectives, and Research Landscape.

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