The State of Accessible Marketing in 2023

With each passing year,

the accessible marketing industry continues to grow and progress. By 2023 this crucial space will have seen **incredible innovation** over an impressive decade-long journey – from standards driven advances in design, through to increased understanding of **diversity and representation within marketing campaigns.**

dozanü innovations team members engaging in a photoshoot with a Deaf photographer

Companies across all sectors are now fully embracing accessibility as a way of engaging with their customers - creating unique opportunities for business owners everywhere looking to target these valuable markets. 2023 is predicted to be a milestone year for businesses, with creative solutions gaining ground as an innovative way of addressing accessibility. Private corporations are leading the charge in bridging inclusive viewpoints and workplace culture; these endeavors seek to make authentic content available for people from all walks of life - regardless if they have disabilities, identify across different genders, cultures, or races.

It's time that **diversity fosters inclusion!**

This is done by shifting the perception that accessible marketing means that you're making your information, products, and services available and accessible to people with disabilities, to making them accessible to everyone.

As a brand, you can achieve this by promoting authentic representation, diversifying people in campaigns, and providing universal content.

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What does the future of this strategy look like? Over the next few years, we will see monumental shifts in how companies, businesses, governments, and small business owners are able to reach people across all demographics with their marketing strategies. With the right investments in an inclusive team and adaptive technology now more available than ever before, it is time for organizations to take a proactive approach towards making their brands more accessible – both existent ones as well as new products they plan on releasing over the coming years. This begins with integration of authentic representation into your brand's campaigns **from ideation to implementation.**

In the following pages we will review five brands using campaigns launched in 2022, heralding changes to come in 2023 and beyond. These five brands are **Degree**, **L'Oréal**, **Diageo**, **Kohl's**, and **Apple**.

Components of Accessible Marketing

The HAPTA applicator is a computerized tool that allows users to precisely apply lipstick / Credit: L'Oréal

Authentic Representation
One way to ensure that your messaging is inclusive is by making sure it reflects authentic representation. This means avoiding performative approaches that use language or images that don't accurately represent the diversity of your target audience. For example, if you're creating an ad geared towards parents in rural areas, make sure the imagery used reflects the real-life experiences of parents in these areas.

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Inclusive Viewpoints

Another key aspect of inclusive marketing is incorporating a variety of viewpoints and perspectives into your messaging. This means taking a step back from what you think would be best for the customer and instead considering their individual needs and concerns. For example, if you're creating content about parenting tips, consider highlighting advice from different cultures or backgrounds. Doing so will help show customers that you value diverse experiences and understand their unique perspectives.

Universal Messages

The goal of any successful marketing campaign should be to create universal messages that resonate with as many people as possible. To do this, it's important to use language that everyone can understand. Avoid jargon or complex words when possible, as this can make it difficult for non-native speakers or those who have difficulty reading/comprehending English to understand your message. Instead opt for simple words and phrases that get straight to the point without sacrificing clarity or accuracy.

It's important to focus on authentic representation by using imagery reflective of real life experiences, incorporating varying viewpoints into your messaging, and using language everyone can understand clearly.

Doing so will not only help build trust among current customers but also attract new ones who appreciate seeing themselves reflected in your campaigns.

Diageo celebrates Pride and reminds inclusion is for everyday / Credit: Diageo

By investing in design-for-all standards and consciously prioritizing marginalized audiences' experiences at each stage of development; brands can make sure they're creating space and an inclusive environment.

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This means integrating authentic representation into your brand's campaigns **from ideation to implementation** -- throughout the entire process.

You've thought all about how to increase your reach, and to spread the word about your business's products and services to as many people as possible. Your ideal customer profile has been set and you're zeroing in on the audience you are targeting. When do you ask yourself whether your brand and marketing are accessible?

When talking about accessibility in marketing, most people think it means something as simple as optimizing a web page for people with disabilities. But, true accessibility in marketing benefits everyone – and the way to reap these benefits is to integrate accessibility from day one.

People with disabilities transcend communities, cultures, and borders, accounting for 15 percent of the world's population. According to the United Nations, people with disabilities are the largest minority group in the world. They command a presence in every market with buying power, but you would never know that from the ads we see.

Simply put, accessible marketing happens when you implement the least restrictive and most intuitive customer experience.
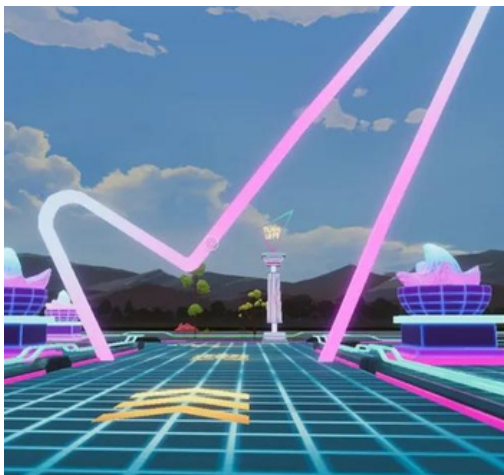
Degree's Metathon is the first ever virtual marathon / Credit: Degree

For example, imagine this scene.

Your website is a long, wide staircase with a gentle incline that welcomes those who tread upon it with an immersive experience -- speckled by ambient clouds of lighting, bringing you to the top before you even realize it. This is the true user experience – to feel like your needs and desires are being met.

This staircase seems pretty nice... until you realize that only able-bodied people with leg functionality can access it. No matter how much gold you paint it with, the staircase is inherently inaccessible.

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A model in a wheelchair shows Kohl's adaptive clothing / Credit: Kohl's

Those who are on the bottom step are marveling at the pretty lights, their necks craned in wonder looking at the top. But they aren't there, so they are missing out on key aspects of the user experience.

A ramp, on the other hand, is accessible to a much broader range of people including those with limited mobility, those who use wheeled modes of transportation and those with leg functionality.

In other words, **everyone**.

When we apply this comparison to marketing, we see that traditional marketing may rely on the auditory deployment of information in English, which means that information only appeals to people who both speak English and can hear. But if we deploy the same message in a video format that has an English voice-over, a person signing in American Sign Language (ASL), and using visual cues/graphics on the video, this marketing appeals to those who speak English, those who can't hear and use Sign Language, those who have limited English proficiency, and those who learned English as a second language.

As a vital, under-served market, people with disabilities are frequently disappointed by their interactions with businesses. In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 1 in 4 adults have some form of disability. These conditions include impairments or difficulties with vision, hearing, cognition, mobility, independent living, and self-care – and they're not afraid to vote with their wallet.

Many businesses unintentionally exclude this large group of people from accessing their websites and digital marketing materials. As a result, businesses that do not provide an independent, accessible experience lose out on billions of dollars every year. By making your brand accessible to a marginalized segment of the population from ideation to launch, accessibility becomes a core principle from the start and saves you money.

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Accessible + Universal Marketing Checklist

Let's take a look at where inclusive and authentic representation in marketing has been, where it is now, and where it's going. To do this, we picked five brands that are integrating representation and accessibility into their messaging and branding. Each brand was evaluated based on three categories in the **Accessible + Universal Marketing checklist.**

Accessible marketing helps to eliminate any barriers that may stand between you and your audience. By making sure that your content is accessible, you're demonstrating to your audience that you actively care about their experience and want to guarantee an equal experience for everyone. Lead by example, starting with the item on this checklist.

Authentic Representation

Authentic representation in your marketing shows that you are committed to diversity, and not just in a token form. Instead, be committed to making your content as authentic and with as much intention as possible. This includes everything from the early stages of development and research, to the production, process, casting, and to the make-up of your employees.

Use a **non-performative approach** in your marketing and lead by example, instead of a simple statement that you intend to function as an action. Considering all the points on this list will help you authentically present your message in a genuinely non-performative manner.

Diversity includes disabled people. People with disabilities command a presence in every market with buying power, but you would never know that from the ads we see. Does your message respect **inclusive representations and viewpoints**? These create welcoming spaces. If we aren't considering overlapping identities such as gender, sexuality, or race, it's easy to lack the awareness of the ways in which we are creating less than welcoming spaces, both in person and online. For members of marginalized communities, this is an all too common experience.

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Remember that it's about **progress, not perfection**. Accessible marketing is the use of inclusive design practices that make it possible for users of all abilities to fully experience the brand, receive and understand communication, and take advantage of opportunities to engage with and become fans. This is a process that takes time to consider inclusion in all aspects of the campaign, and keeping a diversity and inclusion lens in mind with each marketing deployment takes practice and commitment.

Use **narratives** that are applicable to the larger, multidimensional nature of all human beings. A narrative is infinite. it's open-ended and has no resolution. It's always in the process of unfolding, and often includes an invitation to participate within its unfolding. With your marketing, narratives from **inclusive viewpoints** help us see a situation from a different perspective.

Universal Access

Using **simple and straightforward language** in your marketing is important because it lessens the potential for misunderstanding or misinterpretation. This allows your reach to include a wider age range and those who are not native speakers. **Native speakers** are people whose first language is the language in which your marketing is deployed. There are many second-language learners (and beyond) that also see your messages.

What will your message portray to people who aren't native speakers of your language? When referring to cultural events, be sure they are **relevant across spectrums**. How will your product or service be **used by people with disabilities**? These questions are important considerations when it comes to **universal marketing**, which happens when your marketing message is truly accessible -- i.e. understood by everyone who comes across it. To achieve true universal marketing, you must consider various **inclusive representations** and viewpoints, as well as customer and user experiences.

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Accessible Imagery

Use an **accessibility checklist** for your digital deployments, such as the Accessible Digital Marketing Checklist published by dozanü innovations, Factors such as the use of **contrasting colors** in graphics and text, and large size text for easier understanding, i.e. on billboards along the highway. Contrast and color use are vital to accessibility. Colors must have sufficient contrast, for example, between the text color and the background color. This includes text on images, icons, and buttons. Also colors used to convey information on diagrams, maps, and other types of images must be distinguishable.

Does your video **show a story rather than simply telling** it? Strong and vivid imagery can convey your message through visual representation that can be understood by people across the spectrum and from different cultures.

Authentic Representation

- [ ] Use a non-performative approach
- [ ] Diversity includes disabled people
- [ ] Does your message respect inclusive representations and viewpoints?
- [ ] Remember that it's about progress, not perfection
- [ ] Use narratives that are applicable to the larger, multidimensional nature of all human beings

Universal Access

- [ ] Use simple and straightforward language
- [ ] When referring to cultural events, be sure they are relevant across spectrums
- [ ] How will your product or service be used by people with disabilities?
- [ ] What will your message portray to people who aren't native speakers of your language?

Accessible Imagery

- [ ] Use an accessible digital marketing checklist for your digital deployments
- [ ] Use contrasting colors in graphics and text
- [ ] Use large text for easier understanding i.e. billboards while driving
- [ ] Are you showing the story or simply telling it?

The State of Accessible Marketing in 2023

Degree: An Inclusive Virtual Marathon

The Metaverse is touted as a new virtual world uninhibited by physical limitations and societal stereotypes. But it's not there just yet.

People with disabilities feel that digital spaces lack inclusivity and are calling for more accessibility. So the brand Degree hosted a virtual marathon that included disabled avatars. By doing this the company addressed lack of inclusivity in digital spheres, which can lead to the marginalization of certain communities online. and the growing need to build a more diverse and inclusive world.

THE CAMPAIGN

Everyday we become more cognizant of the potential of the virtual world, and now we have a true opportunity to include often marginalized groups of people into the new digital sphere. As part of the brand's mission to shape a more inclusive world, Degree partnered with disability experts and polled the Decentraland community and found that 98% of landowners support making movement more accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities. Following the Metathon, the brand will expand on this initial work and partner with additional experts on disability, race, and gender inclusion.

THE BRAND IN 2023..

is a leader in disability and representation in the digtal world.

Degree® Deodorant Hosts the World's-First Marathon in the Metaverse | Credit: Degree

ACCESSIBILITY FACTORS

BRAND: Degree

CAMPAIGN: Metathon

AUTHENTIC REPRESENTATION

This is as authentic as you can get in the Metaverse, and Degree shows they recognize that diversity includes disabled people.

UNIVERSAL ACCESS

With the Metathon everyone is able to see themselves represented as movers in the Metaverse by accessing features such as: adding audio description for people with visual impairments, implementing a non-binary experience when creating an avatar, constructing a variety of body shapes and sizes, and more.

ACCESSIBLE IMAGERY

"Showing people in the virtual world who are running with blades and other prostheses is something that I think will inspire confidence in people with disabilities to get involved and feel welcome to join in on this experience and will ultimately contribute to increased representation," said 8x Paralympic Medalist Blake Leeper.

The State of Accessible Marketing in 2023

L'ORÉAL

L'Oreal: A motorized makeup applicator

Beauty has come a long way when it comes to diversity and inclusion but not when it comes to disability. Makeup is not 100% accessible for more than 50 million people around the globe that have limited fine motor skills, including those who have cerebral palsy or have suffered a stroke.

This recognition is part of the cosmetics industry's push to develop products for people with disabilities – a generally untapped market.

THE CAMPAIGN

L'Oréal debuted a motorized, handheld device that allows people with limited hand and arm mobility to apply make-up steadily. Named the HAPTA applicator, the slender new product uses motion sensors and magnetic attachments that enable make-up application in 360 degree rotations and 180 degree flexions, with a "clicking" feature to set positions.

So far, their efforts have largely focused on creating ergonomic products, such as make-up brushes that can bend and are easier to grip, and easy to open moisturizers. This product was piloted with a lipstick from L'Oréal brand Lancôme.

THE BRAND IN 2023..

is a groundbreaker in making high-end and low-budget makeup accessible.

The HAPTA computerized makeup applicator creates precise lipstick looks | Credit: L'Oréal

ACCESSIBILITY FACTORS

BRAND: L'Oréal
CAMPAIGN: HAPTA applicator

AUTHENTIC REPRESENTATION

In its marketing messages, L'Oréal included a diverse cast in terms of race, gender, and disability. People with disabilities are overlooked in the beauty industry and as a result L'Oréal states they will "augment and reach every individual's ultimate desires, expectations, and unmet needs."

UNIVERSAL ACCESS

L'Oréal is getting the ball rolling. on access to beauty products and tools. The World Health Organization reports that around 15 percent of the world's population lives with some form of disability, and yet only 4 percent of beauty and personal care brands create products that cater for physical disabilities.

ACCESSIBLE IMAGERY

Strong imagery is delivered with authentic representation of an individual with limited mobility using the computerized applicator. This evokes feelings of enjoying the self-expressive power of beauty.

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KOHL'S

Kohl's: Adaptive clothing for adults

Designed to empower people with disabilities with confidence and self-expression, the retailer Kohl's designed an adult adaptive clothing line. The products recognize the unique needs of the customer making everyday realities a little easier and more rewarding.

Featuring different functionalities in each garment, Kohl's adult adaptive apparel was created with three core principles in mind: physical functionality, comfort first, and everyday staples.

THE CAMPAIGN

Kohl's adaptive clothing is made with a focus on ease of dressing, promoting independence and increased wearability. Wider necklines and plackets at shoulder seams for easier accessibility, as well as functional leg openings and built-in waistline adjustability for seated comfort, allow increased functionality. By focusing on the comfort of the wearer and incorporating soft fabrics, heat sealed tags and engineering extra features to ensure all details are comfortable against the skin, Kohl's design team created comfortable and soft options for adult customers.

THE BRAND IN 2023..

continues to encompass a diverse audience with its clothing lines.
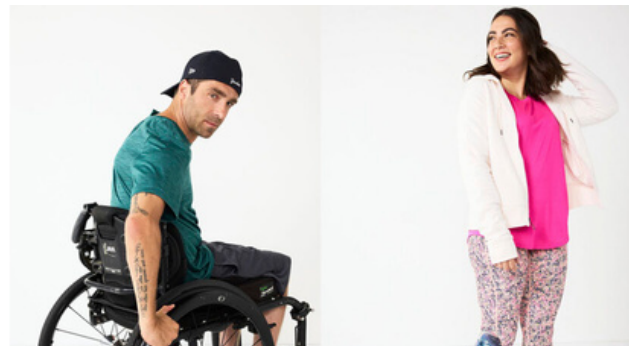
Two models show Kohl's adaptive adult clothing line | Credit: Kohl's

ACCESSIBILITY FACTORS

BRAND: Kohl's
CAMPAIGN: Adaptive clothes

AUTHENTIC REPRESENTATION

People with disabilities modeled the clothing to show genuine use. The design process also included disabled experts. From initial concept through design, the adaptive assortment was crafted with the customer at the center. They hosted focus groups with people with disabilities, which provided valuable insights.

UNIVERSAL ACCESS

The new adult adaptive offerings join Kohl's existing assortment of adaptive apparel, footwear, costumes, and toys for children. This welcomes previously excluded age groups. Kohl's adult adaptive apparel extends the use-ability of customers' wardrobes.

ACCESSIBLE IMAGERY

Kohl's adult adaptive collection is the latest step from Kohl's to make progress on the company's diversity, equity and inclusion goal to offer more relevant products that help more customers see themselves reflected and represented in Kohl's brands.

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DIAGEO

Diageo: Schooling Employees on Inclusive Design

Diageo's commitment to training its entire marketing and innovation team on inclusive design and removing unconscious bias is creating a sense of belonging. The parent company, which owns several brands such as Smirnoff and Guinness, uses their media budget to support progressive voices and celebrate diversity in their marketing.

THE CAMPAIGN

To achieve their public commitment to inclusion, Diageo aims to work to combat harmful stereotypes in advertising starting with being members of the World Federation of Advertisers' Diversity & Inclusion Taskforce. As industry leaders, Diageo is working to change the landscape of the creative industry, ensuring those agencies, content creators, directors, producers and beyond represent the rich diversity of their consumers. As the top company for female Board-level representation and an Empower Ethnic Minority Role Model for five years and counting, Diageo has scored a perfect 100 on the Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index for 14 years consecutively.

THE BRAND IN 2023..

is an innovative changemaker in integrating inclusivity on every level.

Team members during a team training session | Credit: Diageo

ACCESSIBILITY FACTORS

BRAND: Diageo

CAMPAIGN: Company Culture

AUTHENTIC REPRESENTATION

Diageo aims to create an environment within the business where every individual feels a sense of belonging and can thrive and contribute to their fullest. To realize this, they depend on recruiting, retaining and developing diverse talent with a range of backgrounds, skills and capabilities.

UNIVERSAL ACCESS

The company emphasizes inclusion and diversity in our entire value chain, working closely with our suppliers and agencies to advance positive, sustainable economic impact in the diverse communities where they source. As part of their 10-year action plan Diageo continually increases the percentage of diverse suppliers.

ACCESSIBLE IMAGERY

Diageo's commitment to channeling diversity shows in their marketing imagery, which shows viewpoints and inclusive representations of the broad diversity of Diageo customers.

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Apple: Featuring the Diverse Possibilities of Accessible Tech

Apple is no stranger to exploring the possibilities of assistive technology. In its latest ad, "The Greatest," Apple has shown how its products can help differently abled people lead more fulfilling and independent lives.

The ad once again highlights how Apple takes a different path from many of its competitors, who tend to focus more on specs and features. "The Greatest" joins Apple's library of great ads because it shows the difference technology can make to all our lives, instead of trying to sell a product.

THE CAMPAIGN

In an empowering new ad from Apple, accessibility features of the brand's products take center stage. Apple markets these features and functions on its devices. Apart from bringing these functions to its devices, Apple also focuses on the 'hows' and the 'whats' of those functions that many tend to ignore. Apple puts extra effort into communicating how the feature on the device can make the life of the user easier.

THE BRAND IN 2023..

is a reliable pillar of innovation in technology and inclusion.

A pair of feet uses a phone to scroll eye makeup inspiration | Credit: Apple

ACCESSIBILITY FACTORS

BRAND: Apple
CAMPAIGN: The Greatest

AUTHENTIC REPRESENTATION

Showcasing people from all walks of life and with all types of viewpoints, Apple hit the mark in terms of representation and inclusion.

UNIVERSAL ACCESS

Apple tried to position its brand as accessible to individuals across the globe, with a non-performative approach to its marketing. The thing with technology is that while a lot of it exists, not all of it is accessible. Apple's marketing evokes a sense of possibility for more people than before.

ACCESSIBLE IMAGERY

The commercial shows a story instead of telling it through real-life representations. Scenes emphasize the features of phones, watches, and computers. A deaf mother is alerted to her child crying, a performer uses his camera to access the stage door, and a man makes various facial expressions to edit photos.

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In closing,

these five brands are channeling how inclusive viewpoints, authentic representation, and strong imagery in their messages show their commitment to diversity and inclusion. By doing so they are expanding universal access to their products and services. By understanding what inclusion and accessible marketing looks like, we can learn from the successes of these five brands.

Degree, L'Oréal, Diageo, Kohl's, and **Apple** have all made strides in making their products accessible to diverse audiences. As a result, they've been able to increase sales and build a loyal customer base. While some companies are still struggling with inclusive language and messages, these five brands demonstrate that it is possible to create advertising that is both authentic and accessible.

With the right strategy and approach, **your brand can be an example** of accessible and inclusive marketing. Use our Accessible and Universal Marketing Checklist as a starting off point for how you can make your brand more accessible to everyone. Implementing even just a few of these ideas will help you create more inclusive content that appeals to a wider audience.

In today's climate, it is more important than ever for brands to consider how they are marketing their products and services. The five companies we've highlighted here have set the standard for inclusive and accessible marketing, and we believe that all businesses can learn from their example.

Let's make 2023 accessible. Are you in?