

Marketing and Corporate Social Responsibility for Inclusion Mercadotecnia y Responsabilidad Social Corporativa para la inclusión

Caterine Lee Miranda Cortes^a, Alejandra Vega Barrios^b Juan Gabriel Figueroa Velázquez^c

Abstract:

In an increasingly diverse and inclusive world, marketing and corporate social responsibility are fundamental in representing and addressing the needs of various social segments. This study focuses on promoting inclusion through immersive theatrical experiences for people with visual impairments. A sensory theatre production was developed, led by eight people with visual impairment, engaging 100 undergraduate Marketing students as audience members. Subsequently, phenomenological qualitative research was conducted using semi-structured interviews with 15 of these students. The findings revealed a significant shift in the participants' attitudes regarding their roles as future marketing professionals, highlighting the importance of designing inclusive campaigns, and promoting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The study concludes that raising awareness about inclusion among students can contribute to more sustainable and ethical business management practices.

Keywords:

Visual Impairment, Inclusion, Marketing, Corporate Social Responsibility.

Resumen:

En un mundo cada vez más diverso e inclusivo, la mercadotecnia y la responsabilidad social corporativa son fundamentales en la representación y atención a las necesidades de los segmentos sociales. Este estudio se centra en la inclusión de las personas con discapacidad visual como objetivo principal, utilizando experiencias teatrales inmersivas. Se desarrolló una obra de teatro sensorial liderada por 8 individuos con discapacidad visual, con la participación de 100 estudiantes de la Licenciatura en Mercadotecnia como espectadores. Posteriormente, se llevó a cabo una investigación cualitativa fenomenológica mediante entrevistas semi estructuradas a 15 de estos estudiantes. Los hallazgos revelaron un cambio significativo en la actitud de los participantes hacia el papel de los mercadólogos, reconociendo la importancia de diseñar campañas inclusivas, promoviendo así la Responsabilidad Social Corporativa (RSC) Por lo que se concluye que, al concientizar a los estudiantes sobre la inclusión, podrán contribuir a una gestión empresarial sostenible y ética.

Palabras Clave:

Discapacidad Visual, Inclusión, Mercadotecnia, Responsabilidad Social Corporativa

Introduction

Marketing and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) are fundamental in representing and addressing diverse social needs. However, awareness of visual diversity among future marketing professionals has often been overlooked. In this context, a sensory theatre production, created by people with visual impairments, was developed to raise awareness among one hundred bachelor's degree in

marketing students at the Autonomous University of the State of Hidalgo.

The purpose of this study was to explore whether students' attitudes toward including people with visual impairments in their work as future marketing professionals had changed. Through qualitative interviews, the study sought to understand how participation as audience members in a sensory theatre production influenced students' perceptions and approaches to inclusive practices.

^a Estudiante de la Licenciatura en Mercadotecnia Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1240-4905>, Email: mi380269@uaeh.edu.mx

^b Corresponding author, Doctora en Proyectos Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2368-7939> Email: vbarrios@uaeh.edu.mx

^c Doctor en Planeación Estratégica Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8846-1359> Email: jfigueroa@uaeh.edu.mx

Social Marketing

Social marketing, according to Fernández Lorenzo et al. (2020), "[1], is a useful concept employed for the construction of competitive advantages aimed at enhancing public welfare through marketing tools, to address social issues (p. 4). Furthermore, [2] state that "social marketing becomes highly relevant, applying it for the common good of society to improve various aspects of daily life" (p. 30). Additionally, [3] establish that social marketing is extending to various contexts and new behaviours, involving multiple actors committed to adopting innovative technologies and different marketing theories.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) entails that companies should consider the impact of their activities not only on their shareholders but also on their stakeholders, which include individuals, groups, and institutions (Ott, 2009, [4]. Additionally, although CSR is inherent to the company, it has recently become a new way of management and doing business, where companies ensure their operations are sustainable economically, socially, and environmentally, recognizing the interests of their various stakeholders [5]. According [6], CSR not only represents a positive image for the company but is also a transparent style of efficient resource management that guarantees economic results based on the legal principle of respecting the rights of others.

Importance of Inclusion in Society

Inclusion in society is crucial for development and equity. It involves ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their gender, age, race, sexual orientation, or disability, have the same opportunities and rights. Inclusion promotes diversity, equality, and non-discrimination, which contribute to building fairer and more cohesive societies. In the business context, inclusion becomes essential for achieving responsible and effective marketing. By including all individuals in marketing strategies, a company extends its reach and fosters a stronger connection with consumers. Moreover, it promotes a positive image of the company and strengthens its reputation in society.

Visual Impairment in Mexico

Visual impairment occurs when an ocular condition affects the visual system, and its functions related to vision [7]. According to the Population and Housing Census 2020 conducted by the National Institute of Statistics, Geography, and Informatics [8], 6,179,890 people have some type of disability in Mexico, representing 4.9% of the total population. Of these, 2,691,000 people have visual impairments. This population faces significant challenges

in their quality of life, particularly evidenced by their lower employment rates compared to the general population.

Theater Company "¿Cómo ves?" ("How Do You See?")

The company was formed in November 2022 in the "Ricardo Garibay" library in Pachuca, Hidalgo, with a unique perspective. It comprises visually impaired artists who create theatrical experiences for people with normal vision. Its innovative approach and commitment to inclusion make its productions special (¿Cómo ves?, 2024).

Sensory Theater (Sensoramas)

Sensory theatre is a representation in which the audience interacts through the five senses. As the story unfolds, the production and actors provide different elements that can be experienced through touch, smell, and even taste [9]. Although theatre is a form of entertainment, inclusive-themed works have not been prevalent in Mexico. However, according to [10], Sensory Theatre combines elements that seek to stimulate the senses and create a holistic experience.

Inclusive Marketing Strategies

Experiential events arise from the combination of experience, sensory input, and emotions, connecting with experiential marketing through their ability to evoke multiple sensations and create unique occasions through sensory experiences [11]. The successful implementation of inclusive marketing strategies allows companies and brands to build stronger relationships with their audience, foster customer loyalty, and promote equality and diversity in society [12]. Therefore, as an inclusive strategy, qualitative research should initially be employed to understand different experiences, perspectives, and needs, aiming to learn about diverse cultures, identities, and demographic groups to avoid stereotypes and develop truly inclusive messages and content in both images and communications.

Methodology

A phenomenological qualitative research approach was employed to comprehend phenomena through the lived experiences of the subjects, making it particularly useful for exploring the meanings and intentions of individuals involved in educational activities [13] and for understanding life experiences from the subject's perspective [14]. This study focused on understanding marketing students' sensitization to visual diversity through sensory theatre.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, consisting of 15 seventh-semester bachelor's degree in

marketing students from the Autonomous University of the State of Hidalgo. The selection criterion was attendance at the performance of "La Princesa y el sapo" ("The Princess and the Frog") by the company "¿Cómo ves?" on October 18, 2023, at the Institute of Economic and Administrative Sciences (¿Cómo ves?, 2024). In-depth interviews with semi-structured questions were conducted to explore participants' experiences, perceptions of inclusion, and visual diversity within the marketing context (Table 1).

Table 1. Interview Guide Categories and Questions

Experience of Sensitization through Sensory Theatre	Impact on the Formation of Future Marketing Professionals
How would you describe your experience attending the sensory theatre performed by people with visual impairments?	How do you believe this sensory theatre experience could influence your future marketing practices?
What aspects of the sensory theatre production caught your attention or impacted you the most?	In what ways do you consider sensitization towards visual diversity to be relevant in the field of marketing?
What emotions did you experience during the production, and how do you think they influenced your perception of visual impairment?	Do you think this experience helped you better understand the needs and perspectives of people with visual impairments as consumers?
Was there any specific moment or scene that left a lasting impression on you? Why?	How could you apply what you learned from this experience in your future work as a marketing professional?
What do you think you learned from this experience in terms of sensitization towards visual diversity?	What recommendations would you give to promote greater sensitization towards visual diversity in the field of marketing?

Source: Miranda, C; Vega, A y Figueroa, J(2023).

The interviews were recorded with the participants' informed consent. Data confidentiality was ensured, and participant identities were protected through numerical coding. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed

using a phenomenological approach. Open coding identified key ideas, followed by organizing and grouping codes into thematic categories using ATLAS.ti 24 software. This systematic process enabled the identification of patterns and recurring themes in the data.

Results

Of the 15 participants, 60% (9) were female and 40% (6) were male. The analysis identified 568 codes, which were grouped into 13 categories. For this study, a key emergent code was considered: the experience of sensitization through theatre as described by participants during the interviews. This code includes specific moments where participants described how the sensory theatre experience enhanced their understanding of the needs and perspectives of people with visual impairments.

Representative participant quotes include:

Participant 1: *"Experiencing the sensory theatre was truly impactful. I realized how much we take sight for granted in our everyday lives. It made me aware of the barriers faced by people with visual impairments and how we can work to overcome them in our marketing practices."*

Participant 2: *"I had never considered what it feels like to be in a space where you can't rely on your sight. The sensory theatre experience really opened my eyes to the importance of creating products and marketing campaigns that are accessible to everyone, regardless of their visual ability."*

Additionally, the analysis focused on two key questions regarding the influence on future marketing practices. As marketing students, participants reflected on policies they could implement in their professional careers.

Participant 10: *"Experiences in sensory theatre enhance empathy towards people with visual impairments."*

Participant 5: *"The importance of developing proposals and advertising focused on the needs of this demographic group is now clearly recognized."*

Regarding the relevance of sensitization towards visual diversity in marketing, participants considered it essential for designing inclusive marketing campaigns. They proposed organizing and promoting similar events to foster sensitization within the region and among the student community.

The sensory theatre experience helped participants better understand the experiences and perspectives of people

with visual impairments as consumers. Participants suggested highlighting successful individuals with visual impairments in various fields to challenge stereotypes and promote inclusion in society.

Conclusions, Contributions, and Future Lines of Research

The literature review reveals a significant gap in marketing professional training regarding sensitization towards visual diversity. One of the primary benefits of incorporating sensory theatre into marketing education is the enhanced awareness and empathy towards visual diversity. Through immersive sensory experiences, students can explore the challenges faced by individuals with visual impairments. Sensory theatre creates a bridge between marketers and the diverse needs of their target audience.

This study has notable limitations. The sensory theatre production was presented once to an audience of 100 people, with only 15 participants interviewed in depth. Therefore, while the findings are valuable from a phenomenological perspective, they cannot be broadly generalized.

Future research should consider how students in training and professionals can collaborate to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly regarding inclusion, as highlighted by GARCETA UNAM (2021). This could provide valuable directions for future studies and practical applications in the field.

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