



From Windows to checkouts: Analysing inclusivity in visual merchandising and interior design through quantitative research

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Abstract

The focus of the quantitative study is on the often-overlooked element of inclusiveness in visual merchandising and interior design in retail environments, from eye-catching window displays to transactional checkouts. Determining how much visual and spatial aspects accommodate different demographic groups is the main research challenge. Research makes use of questionnaires, observational analyses and statistical methods to quantify overall inclusiveness across a varied sample of retail formats, as well as to appraise accessibility for a range of abilities and the representation for different identities. Preliminary findings suggest a significant gap between theoretical inclusivity and practical implementation. This study contributes to the evolving discourse on diversity in retail, providing insights crucial for businesses aiming to align with modern consumer values.

Keywords: Visual merchandising, inclusivity, window display, interior design, customer satisfaction

Introduction

In the ever-evolving landscape of retail, Visual merchandising in interior design is a strategic and creative practice that involves the deliberate arrangement and presentation of products, displays, and overall aesthetics within a retail or commercial space. It aims to create visually appealing and cohesive environments that not only showcase merchandise but also communicate the brand's identity, engage customers, and enhance the overall shopping experience. This multidimensional approach considers factors such as spatial layout, lighting, colour schemes, signage, and display techniques to maximise the visual impact of a space. The goal is to influence customer behaviour, evoke emotions, and ultimately drive sales by crafting an environment that is both aesthetically pleasing and strategically aligned with the brand's objectives.

Background

19th Century: Department stores first appeared in Europe and the US in the 19th century, which is when visual merchandising first began. Retailers started to realise how crucial it was to display merchandise in an eye-catching manner in order to draw in customers.

Early 20th century: Pioneers such as Harry Gordon Selfridge highlighted the value of window displays in drawing in customers in the early 20th century. In order to highlight products, Selfridge, who established the renowned Selfridges department store in London in 1909, created elaborate and themed window displays.

1920s: The Golden Era of Window Dressing: The 1920s witnessed a significant increase in the value of window dressing. Professional window dressers were hired by retailers, and their responsibilities grew beyond simple product placement to include crafting eye-catching scenes that told narratives.

Mid-20th Century: Visual merchandising included significant innovation during this time. Mannequins were used extensively, enabling retailers to present apparel and accessories in a more eye-catching and realistic way. Additionally, during this time period, lighting techniques for product highlights were improved.

In the 1950s, planograms were introduced. The planogram concept emerged for the first time in the 1950s. Visual

merchandising plans, which defined where products should be placed on shelves and displays, were first used by retailers. The objective of this methodical approach was to maximise product visibility and promote particular customer behaviours.

1960s: Pop Art Influence: During this decade, visual merchandising was influenced by pop art. Vibrant colours, striking patterns, and unconventional exhibitions proliferated. This historical period opposed conventional styles in favour of more creative and experimental techniques.

1980s: Visual merchandising placed more emphasis on branding during this decade, along with store layout. Retailers started to focus more on establishing a unified brand identity through displays, signage, and store layouts. Improving customer loyalty and brand recognition was the aim.

Technology Integration in the Late 20th Century: Visual merchandising saw the incorporation of technology in the late 20th century. The emergence of digital displays and electronic signage offered new avenues for product and information showcases.

21st Century - Omni channel Integration: In the 21st century, visual merchandising was impacted by the growth of e-commerce and the move toward omni channel retailing. By maintaining consistency in branding and visual components, retailers sought to create a seamless experience for customers interacting with their products both online and offline.

Current Day - Experience-Based Method: These days, the goal of visual merchandising is to create engaging and unforgettable shopping experiences rather than just showcasing products. Retailers use interactive displays, sensory elements, and storytelling to connect with customers more deeply.

Visual merchandising and interior design have long been considered the silent storytellers of commercial spaces. Product placement, colour schemes and spatial configuration speaks volume about the brand's identity and aspirations. While the impact of these elements on consumer behaviour has been widely studied, the lens of inclusivity is relatively unexplored. In this context, it refers to the presentation and placing of different products, backgrounds and abilities in the visual and spatial aspects of retail environments.

The retail industry is at a turning point as people recognize the value of inclusivity and diversity more and more. Stores now have to actively work to create environments that speak to the diverse range of customers they serve, rather than just catering to a homogeneous ideal. The goal of this study is to close the gap between the theoretical conception of inclusivity and its actual application in the fields of interior design and visual merchandising.

Literature review

This study focuses on the impact of visual merchandising on consumer attitudes and buying behaviour in the retail

industry. The review examines various aspects of visual merchandising, including store ambiance, product display, signage, lighting, and store layout. It also explores the role of technology in reshaping the retail landscape and the emotional response of shoppers to visual stimuli.

The findings suggest that visual merchandising plays a crucial role in influencing consumers' impulse buying behaviour. Customers perceive the ambiance of a store, discount and offer signage, lighting, and free space for movement as important factors that affect their purchasing decisions. However, there is no significant relationship between demographic variables and perceptions of visual merchandising. The importance of creating an inviting and attractive store environment to attract and retain customers. Visual merchandising elements such as display screening, store layout, graphics, and signage are identified as key factors in creating a positive impression of the store.

Overall, it emphasises the importance of visual marketing in the retail sector and its capacity to affect consumer attitudes and purchasing patterns. It gives businesses insightful information that they can use to improve their visual merchandising plans and give customers an engaging shopping experience.

Case study

Doki Doki Concept Store

- The Doki Doki concept store is a vibrant testament to innovative interior design. Embracing a fusion of contemporary and traditional elements, the store captivates visitors with its bold, playful and immersive design. Inspired by the eclectic world of Japanese pop culture, it seamlessly blends vibrant colours, quirky patterns and thematic sections to create a unique and captivating space.
- The interior design is characterised by its flexibility, allowing seamless transitions from retail displays to interactive zones. It showcases the effectiveness of modular furniture and fixtures, which can be easily configured to adapt to changing product displays and customer preferences. The store's vibrant colours and thematic decorations create a visually stimulating environment, enhancing the overall shopping experience.
- The concept store leverages the power of storytelling through design, fostering a strong emotional connection with customers. Its mix of cultural references, unique visual merchandise placement, and immersive displays transforms shopping into an engaging and memorable journey. The incorporation of technology, such as interactive screens and AR displays, adds a futuristic touch, aligning with contemporary retail trends.
- In conclusion, the Doki Doki Concept Store's interior design masterfully marries creativity and functionality, making it a compelling case study for retail design enthusiasts. Its ability to transport visitors into a world of Japanese pop culture and evoke a sense of wonder through design exemplifies the profound impact of interior design on brand identity and customer engagement

Adidas Asia Pacific flagship store, Seoul

- The Adidas Asia Pacific Flagship Store in Seoul, South

Korea, stands as a remarkable testament to the convergence of cutting-edge interior design and immersive brand storytelling. This store represents a masterful synthesis of aesthetics, technology, and the spirit of inclusivity.

- The interior design of the store is a symphony of clean lines, contemporary aesthetics, and sustainable materials. It effortlessly merges the functionality of a retail space with an immersive, artful experience. The design thoughtfully considers spatial dynamics, utilising dynamic zoning and thoughtful product placements that guide customers through an engaging journey.
- The store is its embodiment of inclusivity. The design incorporates diverse elements that resonate with a wide range of customers. Whether it's the cultural nuances incorporated into the interior, the accessibility features ensuring an inclusive shopping environment, or the thematic installations that celebrate diversity, this flagship store goes beyond aesthetics to create a welcoming space for all.
- Moreover, the store integrates innovative technologies, including interactive displays and AR experiences, offering customers an engaging and dynamic retail journey. The result is an environment that not only showcases Adidas products but tells a compelling brand story, inviting customers to become part of a global sports and lifestyle community.

Surveys and Results
Demographic Information

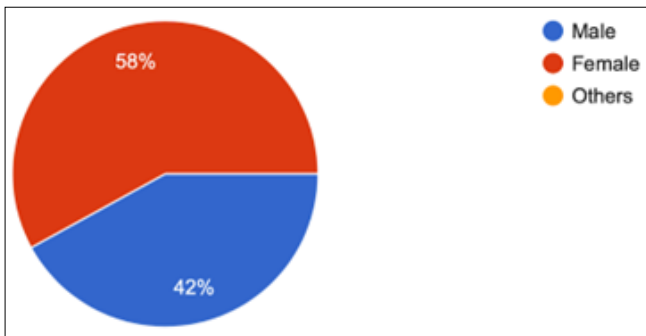


Fig 1: Gender

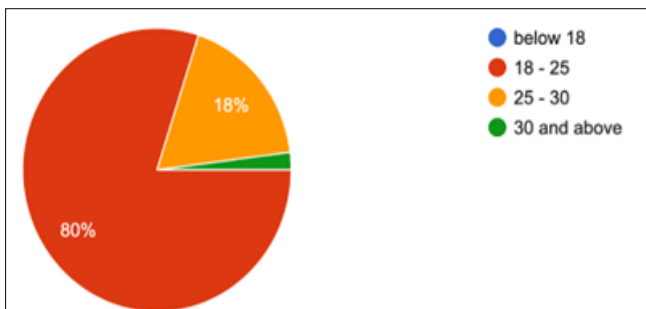


Fig 2: Age group

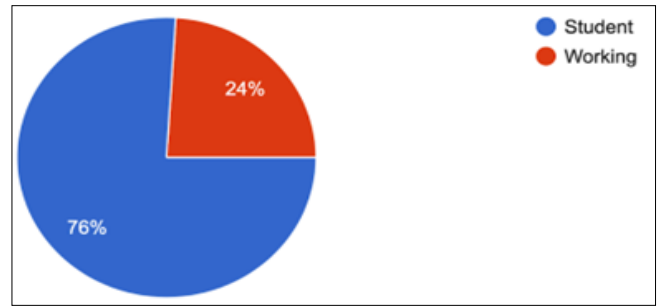


Fig 3: Occupation

Results

- The Survey was conducted with 50 participants, 58% of the respondents are Male and 42% of the respondents are Female.
- The Age group of the respondents are 80% were of the age group between 18 - 25, 20% were of 25 - 30 and 2% were 30 & above.
- Of the participants 76% were students and 24% were working professionals.

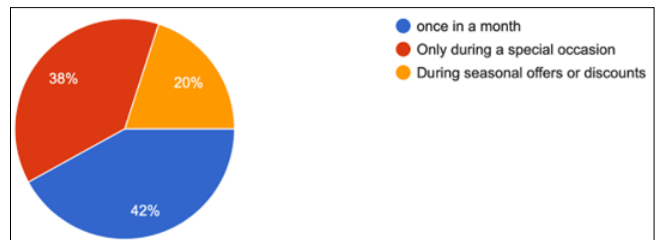


Fig 4: How often do you go for shopping

Results

42% of the respondents go shopping once in a month, 38% of the respondents do their shopping only during special occasions, whereas the 20% of the respondents go shopping only when there are some seasonal offers or discounts. As we can understand, the majority of the population goes shopping once a month.

Awareness and Perception

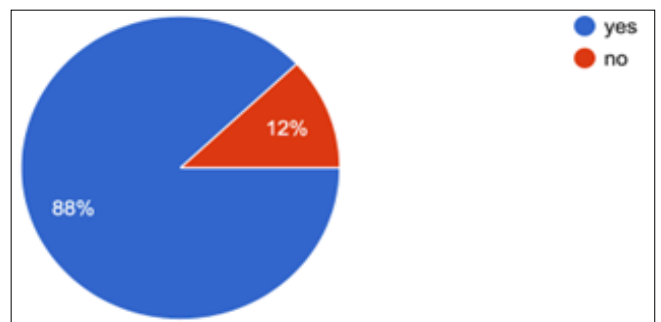


Fig 5: Are you aware of the concept of "visual merchandising" in retail stores ? Visual merchandising – the art of presenting products in a way that makes them urs, lighting, and arrangement of the product etc.

Results: we have gauged the level of awareness and general perception of the importance of visual merchandising i.e 88% respondents are aware about the concept, whereas the 12% of the respondents aren't aware about the concept called visual merchandising.

Visual Appeal

Are there specific visual elements that stand out to you in a store's design?

Lighting, store layout and Display elements: The insightful usage of lighting was appreciated by the respondents, who also noted how well it increased product visibility. It was acknowledged that the design of the store and its display features enhanced the shopping experience.

Product placement and window displays: When it comes to window displays and product placement, favourable input was given. The aesthetically pleasing product arrangement and the appealing window displays were recognized by the participants.

Wall decors, Interiors and colour combination: Attractions were obtained when wall décor, interior design, and carefully specified colour schemes were included. These components were emphasised because they enhanced the store's overall visual appeal.

Mannequin Display and Product Presentation: The mannequin displays and the overall product presentation were cited by the respondents as noteworthy, highlighting the merchandising strategies of the store's visual impact and efficiency.

Texture, Design principles and Aesthetic Values: Key factors influencing respondents were found to be texture, design concepts, and the store's overall aesthetic. In order to create an environment that is both visually cohesive and appealing, great focus on specification was required for these elements.

Delightful Customer Experience: Creating a delightful user experience through design was acknowledged as a primary objective. The efforts made to create a welcoming and appealing atmosphere with the products on display were well-received by the respondents.

Typography, Elegant Interior, wall art, and mirrors: A classy interior, wall art, typography, and well-placed mirrors were among the features that were recognized for their beneficial impact, especially in the apparel and jewellery industries.

Results: The survey results highlight the elements that resonate with respondents and contribute to Understand the significance of visual appeal in attracting and engaging customers.

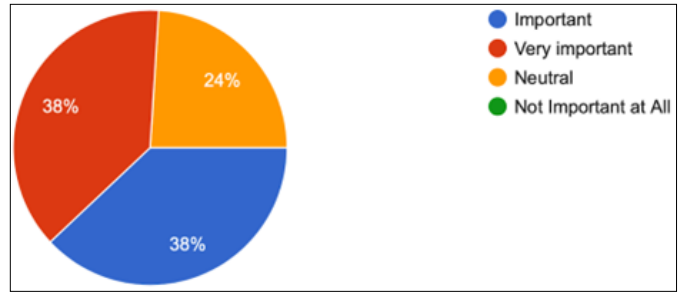


Fig 6: How important is interior design and visual merchandising in influencing your shopping experience?

Results: 38% of the respondents agree it is important, 38% of respondents agree it is very important, 24% of the respondents say it is neutral. Since the majority of the respondents agree that interior design and visual merchandising influence the shopping experience.

Inclusiveness in Visual Merchandising

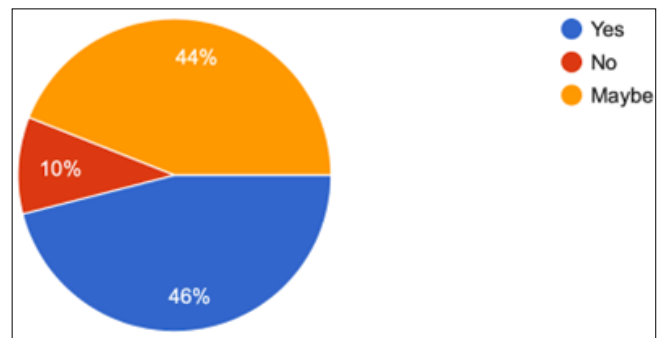


Fig 7: Do you feel the retail stores you visit are designed to be inclusive for all customers, regardless of age, gender or abilities?

Results: 44.7% of the respondents say yes, 10.6% of the respondents said no whereas 44.7% of the respondents said maybe, the overall results have assessed how customers perceive regardless of age, gender or abilities in retail interior design.

Accessibility and Navigability

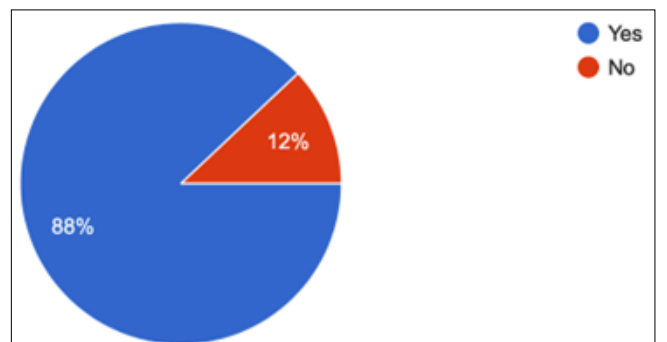


Fig 8: Do you find that stores are easy to navigate, with clear signage and pathways?

Results

88% of the respondents agree and 12% of the respondents disagree. This provides insights into how accessible and

navigable stores are for customers.

Emotional Connection

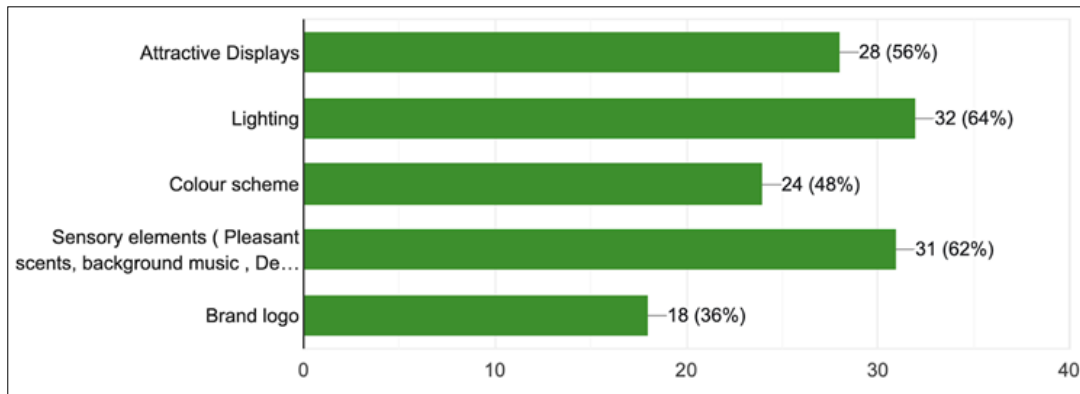


Fig 9: What elements in a store’s design evoke emotions or feelings in you ?

Results: 56% of the respondents agree on attractive displays, 64% of the respondents agree on lighting, 48% of the respondents agree on colour scheme, 62% of the respondents agree on sensory elements such as pleasant scents, background music, decor, 36% of the respondents agree on brand logo. Since the majority of the population have agreed that sensory elements have the emotional impact of interior design on customers.

displayed by Chumbak - was an effective practice. Better product placement, serene lighting, and minimalist design were among the preferences voiced by the participants. Better signage, distinct displays for each category, and more aesthetically pleasing mannequin arrangements were among the suggestions. In order to achieve a more unique aesthetic, respondents also suggested using striking textures and patterns.

Purchase Behavior

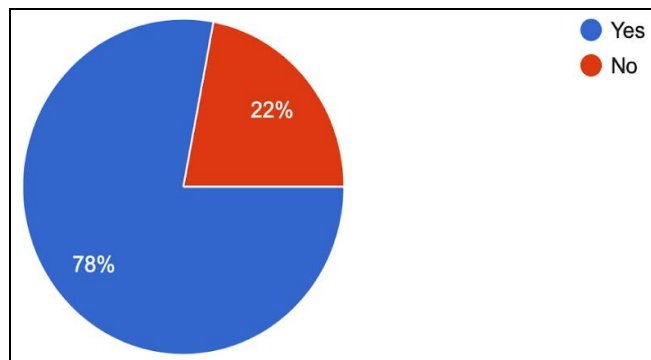


Fig 10: Has the interior design of a store ever influenced your purchasing decisions?

Results: 78% of the respondents have agreed and 22% of the respondents have disagreed. Since the majority of the respondents have been influenced by store interiors design and buying behaviour.

Results: These insightful comments and ideas for improvement from survey respondents offer a road map for improving the store environment and making shopping more pleasurable and customer - focused.

Suggestions for Improvement

Are there any specific elements you'd like to see in stores to enhance your shopping experience?

The results of the survey indicate a number of areas where better store layout and design could improve customer satisfaction. For customer convenience, respondents recommended including seating areas with tiny sofas, chairs, or stools, particularly close to trial rooms. Improvements were called for in terms of colour schemes, display layouts, and general ambiance, with an emphasis on adding more creative design elements. It was observed that matching merchandise to the store's interior design as

Overall Satisfaction

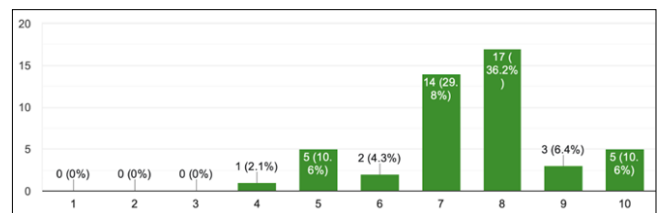


Fig 11: On a scale from 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with the interior design and visual merchandising in the stores you visit?

The majority of the respondents have been satisfied and willing to recommend others to visit the store.

Additional Comments

Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experiences with interior design and visual merchandising in stores?

Apart from the survey outcomes, the respondents provided insightful remarks. Others stressed how important it is to match the clothing price range to the store's interior simplicity, pointing out that an excessively ornate look could turn away some customers. Reiterated were the benefits of improving store organisation and designing with user - friendliness, along with recommendations for future research in these areas. A respondent conveyed a preference for a sophisticated interior design, emphasising the significance of a meticulously planned floor plan and a

smooth transition throughout the store. Furthermore, the reference to "smart displays" suggested a preference for cutting-edge and contemporary presentation techniques.

These additional remarks highlight the intricate factors that must be taken into account when designing a warm and approachable retail space, striking a balance between style and functionality to ensure a satisfying shopping experience.

Hypothesis

H₁: The importance of inclusivity in interior design and visual merchandising positively correlates in influencing people to make a purchase in retail.

It is hypothesised that a positive perception of inclusivity in both interior design and visual merchandising will impact customers' purchasing behaviour in a retail setting. Being inclusive makes stores more welcoming and comfortable, which may have a favourable effect on consumers' propensity to buy. According to a survey conducted with 50 respondents, 78% of the respondents have agreed and 22% of the respondents have disagreed. Since the majority of the respondents have been influenced by store interiors design and buying behaviour there is a relationship between consumers' propensity to make purchases and how inclusive they think a store is.

H₂: Stores with easy navigation, clear signage, and well defined pathways are perceived as more inclusive, and positively impact on customer satisfaction and enhance their shopping experiences.

According to the hypothesis, customer satisfaction will be positively impacted by the easy navigation, clear signage and well – defined pathways. Customers are likely to be less frustrated, and spend more time exploring and ultimately have a better shopping experience if the store is easy to navigate. According to a survey conducted with 50 respondents, 88% of the respondents agree and 12% of the respondents disagree. This study seeks to quantify and analyse these aspects through quantitative research, aiming to provide empirical evidence on the relationship between store design, inclusivity and customer satisfaction.

H₃: There is a positive relationship between the perceived inclusivity of retail stores, considering age, gender and abilities and customer satisfaction, as measured through quantitative analysis.

This hypothesis suggests that customers are more likely to utilize overall satisfaction with their shopping experiences when they believe that retail establishments are made to be inclusive of all individuals, regardless of age, gender or ability. In this context, inclusivity refers to a range of components that accommodate a variety of abilities and demographics, including visual merchandising and interior design. According to a survey conducted with 50 respondents, 44.7% of the respondents say yes, 10.6% of the respondents said no whereas 44.7% of the respondents said maybe. In response to the hypothesis there is a positive correlation between customers' satisfaction levels and their perception of inclusivity because they value and appreciate inclusive design practices.

Inferences and conclusion

Inclusivity in visual merchandising and interior design is a critical aspect of creating welcoming and accessible retail environments. The quantitative research conducted in this

study sheds light on the current state of inclusivity in retail spaces, revealing significant gaps and opportunities for improvement. From windows to checkouts, the analysis highlights deficiencies in diverse representation, universal design elements, signage clarity, and tactile accessibility.

Moving forward, it is imperative for retailers to prioritise inclusivity as an integral part of their design strategies. This involves embracing diversity in visual displays by showcasing products that appeal to a variety of demographics, including different ages, lifestyles, and ethnicities. Additionally, retailers must invest in universal design elements to ensure accessibility for people with varying abilities, from ramps and elevators to clear pathways and adjustable shelving.

Furthermore, clear and concise signage using easily readable fonts and symbols can aid individuals with different language proficiencies and cognitive abilities, while tactile signage and floor markings provide essential guidance for customers who are blind or visually impaired.

By addressing these gaps and implementing inclusive design practices, retailers have the opportunity to create more welcoming and inclusive retail environments. Not only does this benefit customers by enhancing their shopping experience, but it also demonstrates a commitment to diversity, accessibility, and social responsibility. Ultimately, inclusive visual merchandising and interior design contribute to a more inclusive society, where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered.

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