



**BRITISH**  
SUPPORTING A SUCCESSFUL, INNOVATIVE  
**BEAUTY**  
AND INCLUSIVE BRITISH BEAUTY INDUSTRY  
**COUNCIL**

**IS BEAUTY INCLUSIVE?**

PANEL TALK  
AND THINK TANK  
14 NOVEMBER 2019

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# INTRODUCTION

The British Beauty Council hosted a Diversity and Inclusivity Panel Talk and Think Tank, on 14 November 2019 in collaboration with Glasgow Caledonian University's British School of Fashion. The event comprised two panel talks on consumer trends and needs and commercial imperatives for business. Attendees were then split into three groups and given a list of discussion topics to initiate conversation flow on different aspects of diversity and inclusivity. The Think Tank delivered valuable insights and will provide the basis for the British Beauty Council Education Pillar Report in 2020. This will help us create a roadmap for the work we undertake and ensure we are representative of the industry.

The Diversity and Inclusivity panel talk was moderated by Fiona Ibáñez-Leach, Head of Diversity and Inclusion for International Markets at Walgreen Boots Alliance, and was powered by industry thought leaders Kay Montano, Ateh Jewel, Anita Bhagwandas, Denise Rabor, Navaz Batliwalla and Trishna Daswaney. These panel discussions were followed by a Think Tank that included a diverse audience made up of industry members and postgraduate students from The British School of Fashion. Addressing issues surrounding diversity and inclusion underpins the British Beauty Council's Reputation Pillar.

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# **WHY DOES INCLUSIVITY IN BEAUTY MATTER?**

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# COMMERCIAL IMPERATIVE TO BUSINESS

“*Inclusivity matters because all consumers should see themselves represented and valued equally and it makes good business sense.*”

Inclusivity is undoubtedly one of the leading topics of conversation within the beauty industry, but why does it matter?

According to the participants in the discussion, it is essential that the beauty industry reflects society as a whole and genuinely represents the entire target market. The beauty industry can often be seen as an industry devoted to surface-level enhancement. Yet now more than ever before, the effects of the industry are reaching far deeper. It is time for the beauty industry to shift its focus to inspiring and empowering the consumer, to promoting positive self-image and celebrating all the different forms of unique beauty. The beauty industry has the power to create and reinforce stereotypes, however it also has the potential to dissolve them through projects that support inclusivity, diversity and holistic wellbeing.

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# THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY TODAY

HOW INCLUSIVE IS THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY AND WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

*“Seeing models that my young relatives can look up to and feel represented feels like a weight lifted off my shoulders.”*

All the participants agreed that the industry is continuously taking steps in the right direction when it comes to diversity and inclusivity. However, several participants voiced their concerns on the sincerity and depth of the actions taken by brands to boost inclusivity within their business practices. It is evident that the industry is at the very beginning of the journey to inclusivity, and most areas are still in desperate need of improvement and authentic leadership.

The gap between portrayed brand image and the reality of the product selection available to the consumer was identified as a crucial issue by the participants. Change is required at the core of the industry, and it is the responsibility not only of business leaders but also influencers, buyers and educators to drive that positive change. Diversity should be present across all levels of a company to support inclusive decision making and product development. The brand image upheld by marketing activities should be an accurate and authentic representation of reality, rather than being an illusory veil that is not echoed in the brand's products or services.

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# HOW CAN INCLUSIVITY DRIVE BRAND INNOVATIONS?

The conversation around brand innovations shed light on numerous ways in which inclusivity can be used to drive new ideas. The key focus areas identified by the experts were actions related to the hiring process as well as market research.

Establishing and supporting consumer communities and building value-based connections with consumers were also highlighted as being imperative factors to inclusivity driven innovation processes.

***"Brand innovations should move towards supporting and creating a community."***

Inclusivity throughout the company and at every stage, from development to distribution, is crucial. Inclusive hiring leads to diversity in employees which in turn leads to a broader representation of perspectives and cultures. Inclusivity may also instigate the creation of new business models as companies adapt to the requirements of a diverse team of employees.

Today's consumers expect companies to deliver value comprehensively - to be genuine, to empower and to support wellbeing in a holistic way. Companies can use these expectations to drive innovative approaches in order to reach them – through market research, "broadening the scope" and consumer involvement, businesses can promote inclusivity and innovation.

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# WHAT ARE THE GREATEST COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES?



The beauty industry is continually evolving, and as consumers are becoming more aware brands are being held to higher standards than ever before. To survive in the highly competitive beauty market and continue to cater to the ever-changing needs and wants of the conscious consumer, it is important for brands to be proactive in leveraging new commercial opportunities.

During the discussion, two main areas of focus were highlighted; product development and inclusive hiring. Carrying out product development in a value-based manner - celebrating uniqueness and creating solutions that support overall wellbeing were seen as essential factors to consider. Implementing inclusivity in both hiring and market research procedures can lead to new original approaches within product design.

***"Custom-made  
products and  
ingredients that fuel  
wellbeing in all  
aspects."***

Education on the value of diversity across the whole product journey was identified as one of the key commercial opportunities within the industry. Applying scientific knowledge from a wide range of disciplines during product development can lead to cutting-edge innovations and discoveries that may provide a competitive advantage. The education of employees, as well as consumers, is also seen as an underutilised commercial opportunity. Brands can use their voices to drive positive change; to educate consumers, break stereotypes and challenge existing beliefs within society.

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# CONSUMER NEEDS AND TRENDS

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# HOW HAS THE REPRESENTATION OF BEAUTY IDEALS CHANGED?

“*Being unique has started to be celebrated. For the first time being you is a good thing.*”

Globalisation and the social media revolution have had a significant impact on the representation of today's beauty ideals. Various platforms have provided a voice for individuals to showcase their unique interpretations of beauty; wrinkles, stretch marks, scars, freckles, tooth gaps and different body shapes are some of the features that have gained visibility through social media.

Even though beauty standards have changed drastically, there are still some prevailing stereotypes that dominate the industry. Further education is needed to raise awareness and broaden the scope of how beauty is represented within society. Gen Z and Millennials are identified as the key consumer sections that are demanding real transparency from brands and pressurising companies to take steps towards inclusivity.

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# INTERSECTIONALITY:

## HOW CAN THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY BETTER UNDERSTAND THE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS OF CONSUMERS OF ALL IDENTITIES?

We are each defined by an interconnected web of social categorisations or characteristics (ethnicity, age, gender identity etc), which carry varying levels of privilege and/or oppression. The experience and cultural frame of a black, gay cis-gender woman is inherently different to that of a white trans woman, for example, and so discussions about and championing the cause for 'women in leadership positions' within the beauty industry in this instance are incomplete without examining the effects of ethnicity, age, sexuality and other dimensions.

Intersectionality can be addressed throughout various areas of business operations. Consumer interaction can be seen as the crucial first step towards understanding the diverse needs of consumers. Engaging in conversations, conducting in-depth research and getting involved in the lives of consumers will bring forth a deeper understanding of their unique needs.

Consumer-focused product development is also a key element of inclusive business practice. Developing ways to deliver bespoke and customised solutions to each individual consumer can bring about innovations that evoke industry-wide changes, as well as offer a competitive edge to brands fighting for their share of the market.

There was also a consensus among the participants concerning the importance of inclusive hiring. It is seen as imperative to inclusivity that the team of employees behind a brand reflects the brand's target market. Values related to inclusivity and diversity should be echoed in the daily business activities across every department.

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# SUSTAINABLE INCLUSIVITY

IS THE FOCUS ON INCLUSIVITY TREND-DRIVEN?

HOW CAN WE ENSURE A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH TO INCLUSIVITY?

*“To ensure it’s here to stay, diversity needs to be at the heart of every business from the talent they hire to the products they provide.”*

Ultimately, beauty is a commercial, highly competitive industry that aims to create financial value. Strategies are determined by profitability and as businesses are not only accountable to consumers but other stakeholders as well, implementing drastic change is often a slow process.

Consumers, influencers and buyers also have significant power in affecting the strategic decisions of brands. By supporting small and niche businesses, the expenditure of consumers is distributed more evenly across the market, which in turn makes catering to diverse needs viable to companies. The environmental and political awareness among Gen Z is also one of the critical factors driving brands to increase transparency and develop ethical ways of conducting business.

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# BARRIERS TO INCLUSIVE BEAUTY

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO AN INCLUSIVE BEAUTY INDUSTRY AND  
HOW CAN THEY BE OVERCOME?

“*The barriers are the deeply-rooted beauty ideals that differ in various cultures.*”

There are numerous obstacles and barriers faced by brands on the path to becoming more inclusive. Deep-seated beauty ideals and societal norms govern the behaviour not only of brands but consumers, as well. Brands are met with challenges in various sectors, ranging from scrutiny on social media, insufficient levels of awareness and education within the industry and a lack of diversity at senior levels.

Beauty is slowly but surely moving in the direction of providing consumers with holistic solutions to support their wellbeing, in addition to the more traditional surface-level enhancement products and services. Brands that are able to align their products with the standards and values of the conscious consumer while providing experiences that positively affect wellbeing as a whole will have an advantage as the industry continues to evolve.

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# CONCLUSION

The beauty industry should be a celebration of everything that makes you, you. This is only achieved when we take a critical and holistic view of consumers' reality. The industry has made great improvements. We have seen beauty become more accessible, spearheaded by brands like Fenty, more democratised via the influencer model, and more appropriately recognised for the valuable, professional contribution to the UK economy. But there's more to be done.

We are not one-dimensional. Personalisation is not just for those with privilege, and diverse consumers deserve for their needs to be catered for as a matter of course, not as an 'other' or a separate add on.

The beauty industry can and should continue to move further away from tokenistic portrayals of diversity, and rather take a more holistic and integrated view of the real consumer. This starts with hiring and promoting to ensure diversity is represented at the decision-making table: with educators embedding knowledge of diverse skin, hair and wellbeing considerations for a broad representation of consumers into the curriculum; with brands authentically understanding, representing and building diverse community; with retailers providing the space and platforms for ranges that cater for diversity and for diverse-owned brands.

The need to be intentional when it comes to including and representing diversity not just at the superficial level, but in how the beauty industry educates and operates, is clear from both a consumer and commercial perspective.

# THANK YOU



University for the Common Good

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Images courtesy of Runway Beauty



# INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY IN MEDIA

It's worth noting that throughout the inclusive beauty event, the power and impact of media and advertising was referenced as pivotal to the conversation. Given this is a critical shop window for the beauty industry to show up and lead inclusively, we've signposted below the **Media Inclusion Rider** created by Grace Timothy to support an intentional review of existing practices.

Recognising the intersectional discrimination faced by people of colour and individuals from under-represented groups in the media, and employing them whenever possible in a manner that retains brand and/or story authenticity, will facilitate employment and create a stronger pipeline for more diverse representation in the media.

### MEDIA INCLUSION RIDER

- a. Consistent with story/campaign/brand authenticity and achieving a high-quality result, the team shall affirmatively seek opportunities to cast individuals from under-represented groups in all projects, specifically people of colour; disabled people; people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans or Queer; people over 40.
- b. The individual(s) responsible for hiring the crew involved with shoots will consider people from under-represented groups for off screen positions, specifically people of colour; disabled people; people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans or Queer. For example, production, hair, make-up, styling, photography, assistance and catering.
- c. All reasonable efforts will be made to ensure individuals involved who have a disability can access the location for working/shooting, and have access to a disabled toilet. Not all disabilities are visible, so the team will ensure they are aware of what each individual will require, including ample time.

