Central Global University, Georgia

Professional Doctorate in Communications & Marketing via VAE

Designing Neuro-Inclusive Digital Campaigns: A Framework for Calmer, Clearer Brand Communication in an Overstimulating World

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Introduction

I recall a moment in my living room, overwhelmed by digital noise from my phone. Notifications, advertisements, and loud videos all clamored for my attention. I felt exhausted and distracted. Amid this, I saw my younger sister in the corner, hands over her ears and visibly distressed. This was a clear sign of how intrusive and insensitive our digital environment can be to those with different neurological needs. My sister, who has Angelman Syndrome—a neuro-genetic disorder affecting communication and sensory processing—feels the impact of such overstimulation. Watching her struggle prompted me to question how modern digital marketing tactics might alienate her and many other neurodivergent individuals. This personal realization, plus observations at Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity's international headquarters, ignited my passion for ethical and inclusive communication. There, simple changes—like providing large-print newsletters for visually impaired alumni and using inclusive language for LGBTQ+ members—significantly boosted engagement.

Problem Statement

To achieve equity, dignity, and business effectiveness, digital campaigns must pivot from maximizing stimulation for neurotypical users to providing a calm, clear, and controlled experience for all. This neuro-inclusive approach is essential for empowering users, central to the thesis that digital environments must enable, not disable.

Purpose and Significance

This doctoral research creates and tests the Calm-First Neuro-Inclusive Communication Framework for accessible digital campaigns. Its five pillars help brands reduce sensory overload, stand out for inclusion, and expand their reach—demonstrating that neuro-inclusion is strategic, not just ethical.

To illustrate the social model of disability in action, consider a standard e-commerce website interface. In its original form, the site features autoplay ads, pop-up promotions, and a busy color scheme. This clutter can overwhelm users. The design inadvertently excludes neurodivergent users, such as those with ADHD or autism, who find it difficult to focus amid such sensory clutter. By reimagining this environment using the Calm-First Framework, the interface is transformed. The revised design removes or mutes autoplay ads, adopts a simpler layout with a calming color palette, and introduces user-controlled navigation elements. Visitors can set their sensory preferences. This enables rather than disables, underscoring the principle that disability often arises from the environment.

The argument is built on the social model of disability: exclusion arises when digital environments don't accommodate neurological differences. By asking, 'How many people does our design disable?', we highlight that neuro-inclusive choices remove barriers—advancing both ethical responsibility and strategic brand benefits. This thesis positions neuro-inclusive design as an imperative for modern marketers.

Overview of Methodology and Scope

This research is primarily conceptual and case-based. It uses an interdisciplinary literature review from disability studies, human-computer interaction, marketing, and design. The work also analyzes real digital content from selected brands using the calm-first lens. Three brands are examined as case studies. Tesla, an electric vehicle innovator, provides material to explore sensory design trade-offs with its sleek, tech-forward branding. Calm, a mindfulness app, centers on calm experiences. Apple, a tech company, is known for accessible design and a consistent user experience (or, alternatively, a contrasting brand with stimulating campaigns). These cases allow us to see the framework in action and identify both best practices and pitfalls. Based on case insights, the thesis then distills a practical 4-step toolkit for marketers: Discover, Design, Deliver & Test, Iterate & Govern. To show real-world application, a 'mini playbook' supports three hypothetical scenarios: robo-taxis serving an elderly user, a caregiver of a disabled child, and a neurodivergent professional. Finally, the thesis reflects on how my journey—from early-career lessons to lived experience as a neurodivergent individual and sibling—shaped the creation of this framework. It also discusses limitations and future research.

In summary, this thesis contends that prioritizing neuro-inclusion in digital campaign design is both an ethical obligation and a strategic necessity in today’s overstimulating world. The following sections build the case for why accessible, calm design must be at the center of digital marketing strategies.

Background and Key Concepts

Embracing Neurodiversity in Digital Communication

Neurodiversity describes the natural variation in how human brains are wired and how people interact with the world. Rather than seeing neurological conditions as defects, the neurodiversity

paradigm views them as part of the normal spectrum of human diversity. There is no single "right" way to think or sense, and differences are not deficits. This perspective shifts the focus from deficits to strengths and sensitivities, requiring digital campaigns to accommodate this diversity. An estimated 15–20% of the global population is neurodivergent in some way, representing a significant user segment for marketers. (How Many People Are Neurodivergent? 10 Famous Neurodivergents, 2025) Neurodivergent individuals may have unique strengths—such as pattern recognition and creativity—and distinct sensitivities that shape how they consume digital media. For example, many autistic people experience hypersensitivity to certain sounds, known as hyperacusis, or feel overwhelmed by excessive visual or audio noise. Some neurodivergent users prefer predictable, structured digital interactions and may become anxious in chaotic environments.

These differences highlight the importance of neuro-inclusion in digital communication. Designing exclusively for the "average" user excludes those outside neurotypical norms, but addressing extreme use cases improves experiences for everyone. This approach reflects universal design and is supported by the social model of disability, which states that people are disabled more by inaccessible environments than by their conditions themselves. For instance, a user with ADHD who struggles with website pop-ups is disabled by poor design choices, not by ADHD itself. Such digital disabling can be avoided by adapting content rather than expecting users to endure discomfort. By adopting a neurodiversity-affirming mindset, marketers and designers can proactively remove barriers and enhance access for all users.

The Reality of Digital Overstimulation

The contemporary digital media landscape is rife with features that can overload the senses. Consider a typical web browsing or social media session: you might encounter autoplaying video

ads, pages with multiple flashing banners and animated GIFs, bright neon pop-ups urging you to subscribe, and notification badges that continuously update in the corner. Individually, any one such element might be merely irritating; in combination and in constant succession, they create a cumulative sensory barrage. According to GoodRx (n.d.), digital overload can lead to anxiety, irritability, and fatigue by exposing the brain to more stimuli than it can process. (Digital Detoxing: Reclaiming Mental Clarity in an Always-Connected World, n.d.) This concept ties into my thesis by explaining how overstimulating campaigns contribute to sensory overload, affecting user well-being and engagement. In fact, psychologists use the term sensory overload to describe a situation in which our senses are bombarded with too much information at once, making it difficult to focus or respond appropriately. (Sensory Overload, n.d.) Importantly, what counts as "too much" stimulus varies from person to person. Neurotypical adults may find an autoplay video with sound merely annoying, whereas an autistic or highly anxious person could have a much stronger adverse reaction – ranging from acute stress to a shutdown or panic response. People with sensory processing disorder or sensory sensitivities can even experience physical pain or nausea from certain visual patterns or loud sounds. (Sensory Processing Disorder in Adults: Symptoms, Treatment, More, n.d.) The stakes are especially high for individuals with photosensitive epilepsy: exposure to flashing content at certain frequencies can trigger seizures, a risk that web standards explicitly seek to mitigate (for instance, by limiting flashing to under 3 times per second). (Understanding Success Criterion 2.3.1: Three Flashes or Below Threshold, n.d.)

To concretize the problem, it is useful to enumerate some common digital marketing practices and why they can be problematic:

Practice	**Impact**
Flashing or strobing visuals: Animated ads or graphics that blink/flicker rapidly to grab attention.	Can trigger migraines or seizures in sensitive individuals, and generally cause discomfort or distraction for many users.
Auto-playing videos and audio: Content that begins to play without user initiation (often with sound).	Violates user control and consent; can startle users and induce anxiety or sensory distress. Autistic users and those with PTSD or anxiety are especially vulnerable to feeling “attacked” by sudden media.
Excessive motion and animation: Parallax scrolling effects, GIF stickers, bouncing banners, or frequent scene cuts in video ads.	Increases cognitive load and dizziness for some (those with vestibular issues, for example); makes it hard for users with attention differences to concentrate. When multiple elements move simultaneously, it can be overwhelming and confusing.
Cluttered layouts and information overload: Pages dense with text,	Users (especially older adults or those with ADHD) may struggle to find focus; memory and processing limits are

multiple calls-to-action, sidebars, pop-ups, and competing visuals.	exceeded. This can lead to frustration or abandonment of the page.
Urgency and fear appeals: Many campaigns use tactics like countdown timers (“only 5 minutes left!”) or alarmist language to spur action.	While effective at conversion in the short term, such tactics can heighten anxiety in vulnerable users and erode trust. Anxious individuals may find these messages distressing rather than motivating.
Constant notifications and interruptions: Frequent pings, alerts, or modals asking for engagement (e.g. “Allow notifications?” “Chat with us now!”).	Fragment attention and can overwhelm users who need longer continuous focus. For neurodivergent folks who hyper-focus or who rely on routine, constant interruptions can be derailing and stressful.

It is important to note that none of these design choices intends to exclude users. In fact, they arose in an effort to include everyone, in the sense of maximizing reach and engagement (think of A/B tests that showed more people click when a button flashes, so now all buttons flash). However, brute-force inclusion of attention is a false form of inclusion. The metrics may go up, but so do the silent costs on user well-being and genuine accessibility. Digital products often inadvertently disable certain users. According to Nielsen Norman Group (2019), many interfaces

have “illegible text, tiny targets, [and] startling sounds” that make the online world unfriendly to older people – a critique equally applicable to neurodivergent users of any age. (Nielsen & Jakob, 1996) This observation ties into my content by highlighting how common design elements can exclude users, reinforcing the need for calmer alternatives. When faced with such overstimulation, neurodivergent and disabled individuals often have to employ coping strategies just to participate: turning down volume, installing ad blockers, enabling reader modes, or avoiding certain sites and apps entirely. Each of those workarounds is a signal that the default design is not welcoming to them.

Accessibility Guidelines: A Starting Point, Not the Finish Line

Fortunately, the issue of sensory overload in digital content is not entirely unrecognized. The field of web accessibility provides some relevant guidance. The most influential standards are the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), which offer a set of success criteria to make web content accessible to people with disabilities. (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Overview, n.d.) WCAG’s principles say content must be Perceivable, Operable, Understandable, and Robust (often abbreviated as POUR). (Understanding WCAG 2.0, n.d.) Several WCAG criteria directly touch on our topic. For example, WCAG 2.2.2 requires that users be given the ability to pause, stop, or hide any moving or blinking content that lasts more than a few seconds – a nod to the need for user control over animations. (2.2.2 Pause, Stop, Hide, n.d.) WCAG 2.3.1 (Level A) and 2.3.2 (Level AAA) deal with flashing content, prohibiting flashes above a certain frequency to prevent seizures. (Understanding WCAG 2.0, n.d.) There are also guidelines about providing text alternatives for audio and visual content, using sufficient color contrast, and avoiding content that could induce vestibular discomfort (for instance, WCAG advises against parallax motion without a disable option).

These standards have been instrumental in advancing the technical accessibility of the web. However, compliance is a minimum threshold – it does not guarantee a comfortable or inclusive experience. Meeting WCAG might ensure that a neurodivergent user can technically access the information on a page (they can tab through links, or won't have a seizure from flashing). But it doesn't guarantee a welcoming or stress-free presentation. A site could pass all WCAG checks and still assault the senses with fast-paced, noisy content (for example, WCAG doesn't forbid autoplay video if muted by default, nor does it limit the sheer density of on-screen elements). In essence, traditional accessibility focuses on removing barriers to access, whereas what we are proposing goes further to proactively design for emotional safety and ease. There is a gap between making a campaign technically accessible and making it truly inclusive of neurodiverse comfort levels. Recognizing this gap is what sets the stage for a new framework. The next section introduces the Calm-First Neuro-Inclusive Communication Framework, which aims to fill this void by offering guiding pillars for reducing sensory overload and enhancing clarity and control in digital campaigns.

Conceptual Framework: Calm-First Neuro-Inclusive Communication

To address the need for more thoughtful design, I propose the Calm-First Neuro-Inclusive Communication Framework. This framework is the core conceptual contribution of this thesis, and it revolves around five interrelated pillars: Sensory Load, Clarity, Control, Consent, and Continuity. Each pillar represents a principle that can guide the design and evaluation of digital campaigns to ensure they are calmer and more accommodating to neurodiverse and sensitive audiences. Importantly, these pillars are not meant as a simple checklist; they constitute a mindset shift from "attention at all costs" to "respect and inclusion by design." A campaign that

embodies these principles from the creative planning stage onward will likely be both effective and humane.

Let us define each pillar and illustrate what it entails with memorable metaphors:

- Sensory Load: Picture it as a volume knob that can be turned up or down. This metaphor helps in moderating what users see, hear, and feel in a campaign, essentially controlling the intensity of sensory stimuli.

- Clarity: Visualize this as a clear window pane, where information is transparent and straightforward. This helps ensure that communication is visually and linguistically clear, facilitating easy understanding for everyone.

- Control: Think of it as a remote control device that puts the user in charge of their experience. This imagery underscores the importance of providing users autonomy over how they interact with media and content.

- Consent: Imagine this as an open door with a welcome mat, signifying the importance of inviting users into an experience rather than forcing them into it, respecting their autonomy and choices.

- Continuity: See it as a well-maintained path, consistent and predictable, guiding users smoothly from one point to another, ensuring seamless and reassuring experiences across interactions.

1. Sensory Load: Manage the intensity and amount of sensory stimuli. This pillar is about consciously moderating what users see, hear, and feel in a campaign. High sensory load, such as loud audio, glaring colors, and multiple moving parts, should be used sparingly

and only with purpose. To be clear, calm-first does not mean that all advertising must be dull or devoid of richness. It means that unnecessary sensory clutter is avoided, and any intense element is added deliberately, not by default. For instance, a calm-first video ad would avoid rapid-fire cuts or jarring transitions; if it includes a bright flash or a burst of sound for effect, it would do so only once, at a key moment, rather than consistently. Research validates this approach: reducing extraneous stimuli can help users focus on the core message without stress. For users prone to sensory overload, a lower sensory load can be the difference between engaging with the content and having to escape it. Even for neurotypical users, a moderate sensory load often improves comprehension and recall, since cognitive resources aren't spent filtering out noise. In practice, adhering to this pillar might involve design choices such as using softer color schemes or gentle contrasts instead of clashing colors, limiting animations to subtle fades rather than screen-shaking effects, keeping background music ambient and at a low volume, and avoiding any content that flashes faster than 3Hz to comply with seizure safeguards. By keeping the sensory load of a campaign as low as is reasonably possible while still achieving the objective, we make the communication more digestible for everyone.

1. As an exercise, consider pausing to reflect on your most recent campaign. Rate it on a scale from 1 to 5 in terms of sensory overload: 1 representing a calm, easily digestible sensation, and 5 indicating high stimulation with potential overwhelm. This self-assessment can prompt reflection and reinforce the importance of embedding the Sensory Load pillar through personal experience.

1. Clarity: Present information clearly and straightforwardly. Clarity refers to both visual and linguistic clarity. Visually, a clear layout uses whitespace and simple composition to highlight what's important – it isn't overcrowded with competing elements. Text is legible (adequate font size, high readability) and organized under headings or logical groupings. There is a clear visual hierarchy, so the eye knows where to look first. In copywriting, clarity means using plain language and unambiguous wording. Complex jargon, idioms, or figurative language can confuse those who interpret language literally (a common issue for many autistic individuals). A clarity-focused approach favors concrete terms and direct messages: say "Subscribe for updates" instead of "Don't miss out on the buzz" – the former states exactly what action to take, whereas the latter is abstract and emotionally charged. The benefit of clarity is twofold. First, it aids users with cognitive processing differences or lower literacy by making content easier to understand. Second, it actually strengthens the campaign's impact, because the key message doesn't get lost in flourish. Apple's Human Interface Guidelines emphasize clarity as a core design principle: interfaces should be "legible and easy to understand" with a strong focus on essential content. (Inc., 2014) Clear design reduces the mental effort required to engage with a message, which in turn reduces anxiety and increases trust. Practically, ensuring clarity might involve conducting a plain-language review of marketing copy, simplifying navigation paths (e.g., one call-to-action per email rather than five different links), and using consistent icons and symbols across materials so users instantly recognize functions (a continuity aspect as well). Clarity is closely tied to accessibility guidelines under the Understandable criterion of WCAG, but here we extend

it to stylistic choices, not just technical ones. An example of clarity in action: the Calm app's ads often feature very simple text like "Take a deep breath" or "Sleep better" on a serene background – the viewer immediately grasps the message without any cognitive puzzle.

1. Control: Give users as much control as possible over their experience. This pillar recognizes user autonomy. In practice, it means providing controls to adjust or opt out of sensory content. For example, if a video is included on a landing page, include obvious play/pause and mute buttons (and have the media start in a paused or muted state by default). If there are animations, allow users to disable them (leveraging the browser's "reduced motion" preference if possible). For interactive marketing content (like a game or a dynamic infographic), ensure there is a way to slow it down or skip ahead. Control also means accommodating different input methods and preferences – for instance, some neurodivergent users might navigate via keyboard only or use voice controls, so respecting standard operability (per WCAG's Operable principle) is key. The rationale for control is that neurodivergent individuals often need to regulate their sensory intake. A person with ADHD might want to pause a video ad to absorb the information before moving on. Someone with sensory sensitivities might immediately lower the volume when visiting a site. Lack of control, conversely, can induce helplessness or frustration – the feeling of being hijacked by the interface. A common offender is the pre-roll video ad that cannot be skipped for a fixed duration; if the ad is overstimulating or simply unwanted, the user is forced to endure it, possibly in distress. A calm-first approach treats

user control as sacred: nothing in the campaign should trap the user in an uncomfortable state. Even beyond accessibility, general UX research shows that users strongly prefer having control (a heuristic for good design identified by Nielsen Norman Group, for example). (Nielsen & Jakob, 1994) Applying this pillar might involve decisions like refraining from hard-disabling of scrolling (some sites lock your scroll to force you through a sequence – this can be disorienting), or providing alternate ways to consume content (e.g., a transcript for a video, so the user can read at their own pace). Control is empowering; it signals respect for the audience's agency.

1. Consent: Do not force content onto users without their consent. This pillar overlaps with control but is distinct in emphasis. It's about the ethical stance that users should opt into intense experiences rather than have them imposed on them. In the context of neuro-inclusive design, consent primarily means avoiding unexpected triggers. For example, no surprise audio or haptic effects—a calm-first design would never have a banner ad suddenly blare a sound without a user click, nor a mobile ad vibrate the phone out of the blue. Those tactics violate consent and can be especially distressing for individuals with trauma histories or sensory sensitivities (a sudden loud sound can set off a startle response or panic attack). Consent also relates to the frequency of contact: sending someone dozens of notifications or emails per day can be considered overstimulation without consent. A user may have signed up for updates, but bombarding them was not the expectation. From a regulatory perspective, privacy laws such as GDPR and CCPA have brought consent to the forefront for data and cookies. (Intractable Cookie

Crumbs: Unveiling the Nexus of Stateful Banner Interaction and Tracking Cookies, 2025) Aligning the concept of sensory consent with these emerging privacy regulations can strengthen the business case for neuro-inclusive communication. By illustrating that experiential consent is part of a broader legal trend towards user empowerment and control over personal interactions, hesitant stakeholders might be more motivated to adopt such practices. A practical guideline is the principle of least surprise: content should behave in a predictable way and should not 'ambush' the user. If clicking a link is going to autoplay a video with sound, warn the user (e.g., label it clearly as '[Video]' or use a cue). If a marketing email includes animated GIFs, consider adding a hint like '(Gif below)' or providing a static fallback. Transparency builds trust. The Calm-First framework suggests that campaigns that respect user consent will likely foster goodwill, whereas aggressive tactics such as pop-ups or forced engagements might yield short-term clicks at the expense of long-term brand sentiment. In essence, ask, don’t assume. For instance, an app could ask if the user would like sound on before playing a guided meditation advertisement, rather than assuming it. By honoring consent, we create a safe environment, a prerequisite for engagement, especially for vulnerable users.

1. Continuity: Ensure consistency and predictability across the user's journey. Continuity refers to the coherence of the experience over time and across channels. Humans, and particularly those who crave routine like many autistic individuals, find comfort in familiar patterns. When each interaction with a brand feels wildly different, it requires extra cognitive effort to orient oneself. Thus, a calm-first approach values consistent use

of design elements, such as stable navigation layouts, repeated color themes, and a uniform tone of voice, so that users know what to expect. This reduces the surprise factor and cognitive load: the user isn't having to learn a new interface or interpret a new tone from scratch on every page or platform. Continuity also covers cross-channel transitions. For example, if a brand's Instagram ad leads to a website that then invites users to download an app, the look and messaging across both should remain congruent. A lack of continuity can be jarring; imagine a serene, minimalist social media ad that, when clicked, redirects you to a cluttered, loud website with a totally different aesthetic. The user might feel deceived or disoriented. In inclusive design, predictability is a known need for many neurodivergent people; that's why features like consistent headers, breadcrumb trails, and repeating UI patterns are beneficial. (The Inclusive Design Guide, n.d.) In marketing terms, continuity reinforces brand recognition and trust because the brand presents itself reliably. To illustrate this, consider the journey of a customer with Theo, a travel booking app. Theo sends a promotional email with a clean layout and warm, welcoming tone, inviting users to explore new travel deals. Upon clicking the email, the user is taken to Theo's website, where the same color palette and tone are mirrored, providing a seamless experience. From the site, downloading the Theo app continues this journey, with identical ease of navigation and consistent style, ensuring all interactions are unified and predictable. To operationalize this pillar, brands can establish style guides not only for visual identity but also for interaction patterns and content tone across their campaign materials. For instance, Apple is a brand that exemplifies continuity: whether you see an Apple billboard, a website, or a device interface, there is a throughline of sleek, understated design and intuitive layout. This is not accidental;

> Apple's HIG encourages developers to maintain consistency with platform conventions to minimize user confusion. In a calm-first framework, continuity might also include maintaining a steady pace for content. If a user signs up for a series of informational emails, do not start sending them daily sales pitches out of the blue. Keep promises and follow predictable rhythms. Continuity builds a sense of environmental stability in an otherwise frenetic digital world.

These five pillars – Sensory Load, Clarity, Control, Consent, Continuity – form the backbone of neuro-inclusive campaign design. They apply to virtually all digital formats: social media posts, video ads, display banners, emails, app interfaces, and even emerging media like VR experiences. One can think of them as five lenses through which to evaluate any piece of content: Does it minimize sensory load? Is it clear? Do users have control? Is it consensual? Is it continuous with the overall experience? If the answer is "yes" for all, it's likely a calm-first design. If "no" in some areas, those signal opportunities for improvement.

It is worth emphasizing that the Calm-First Framework is not about sanitizing all marketing or stripping away creativity. On the contrary, designing within these guidelines can spur a more thoughtful kind of creativity. Constraints often drive innovation. How might we convey excitement about a product without using a blaring promo video? Perhaps through a cleverly crafted narrative or a visually soothing animation that still intrigues. How can we compete for attention on social feeds without flashing "LOOK HERE!"? Perhaps by being the calm oasis in the feed – something that stands out because it's gentle. Some brands have already begun moving in this direction intuitively, as we will see in case studies. The Calm-First framework provides a language and structure for what might have been done instinctively, allowing it to be replicated and taught.

In the next section, we transition from theory to analysis. I will examine how the five pillars manifest (or fail to manifest) in real-world brand campaigns. By applying the framework to Tesla, Calm, and Apple (or a comparable brand), we can extract practical insights and validate the usefulness of calm-first principles in contemporary digital marketing.

Methodology and Case Study Approach

This study employs a qualitative, case-study-based methodology appropriate for an exploratory investigation at the intersection of marketing practice and accessibility. The research design has two main components: (1) Conceptual development of the Calm-First framework (covered above through synthesis of literature and personal insights), and (2) Case study analysis of selected brands to illustrate and test the framework's applicability.

Case Selection

Three brands were chosen to provide a mix of contexts and comparisons:

- Tesla – an electric vehicle and clean energy company known for innovation and a futuristic vision (including autonomous "robo-taxis"). Tesla is interesting because it generally eschews traditional advertising yet still communicates its brand and products through videos, social media, and web content. Tesla's brand identity emphasizes simplicity and elegance (e.g., its cars feature minimalist interiors with few physical controls), suggesting potential alignment with low sensory load. However, Tesla also generates significant hype and excitement around its technology, which can manifest in high-intensity promotional content at times. Thus, Tesla provides a rich case to explore tensions between calmness and futuristic excitement in branding.

- Calm – a popular mindfulness and meditation app whose core mission is literally to help people relax. Calm, by nature of its product, likely exemplifies many calm-first design principles (indeed, it might serve as an informal benchmark). Its marketing often turns the typical advertising model on its head: instead of stimulating users, Calm's ads deliberately soothe them. Analyzing Calm provides evidence that campaigns can be effective without high stimulation. It also offers lessons on how to translate a calming product value into equally calming marketing content.
- Apple is a major technology company with a reputation for user-friendly, accessible design and a consistent marketing aesthetic. Apple was selected (as per the prompt's suggestion) as a tech brand that has made concerted efforts in inclusive design. Apple's marketing campaigns (think of their product launch videos or website) are typically slick and polished, but seldom chaotic – they often use clear visuals, voiceover narration at a measured pace, and a strong continuity of style. Furthermore, Apple integrates accessibility features (such as VoiceOver, text size adjustment, and "Reduce Motion" settings) into its products and sometimes highlights them in promotional materials. This makes Apple a fitting case to see how a mainstream brand balances sensory engagement with inclusion. (In lieu of Apple, one could also examine another brand known either for high-intensity ads or for accessibility focus, to provide a point of contrast with Calm. For the purposes of this thesis, Apple serves as the example of a large-scale brand leaning into inclusive principles.)

Data Sources

For each brand, the analysis uses publicly available digital content, including: official video advertisements (from platforms like YouTube or the brand's site), social media posts (both paid

ads and organic content), website landing pages or microsites related to campaigns, and, where applicable, app interface elements that double as promotional (like Calm's onboarding screens, or Tesla's in-car promotional graphics). All content examined is from approximately the 2020–2025 period to ensure recency. Industry articles, press releases, or case studies about the brands' marketing approaches are also referenced to provide context (for example, news about Calm's election night sponsorship, or Apple's accessibility marketing campaigns). Throughout the case studies, references to the five pillars are made through observation and, when available, through external commentary (such as marketing analyses or UX reviews) to support the evaluations.

Analytical Procedure

Each piece of brand content is evaluated against the Calm-First pillars using guiding questions: How is sensory load handled – is it high or low, and how might a neurodivergent user feel? Is the communication clear in layout and language? What control does the user have (e.g., can they skip, pause, or customize anything)? Does the content respect consent (no unexpected intrusions)? And is there continuity in style and tone with other brand touchpoints?. These qualitative evaluations are documented, noting strengths (e.g., "this Tesla promo video uses slow, sweeping visuals and soft music – good sensory moderation") and weaknesses (e.g., "this section of Apple's website has an autoplay product demo that violates control/consent"). Patterns within each brand are identified, and then cross-case patterns are drawn out in the subsequent Findings section.

It should be noted that this methodology is interpretive. As a researcher-practitioner (and a neurodivergent individual myself), I bring an informed perspective to judging what likely constitutes a calm or overstimulating experience. Wherever possible, I corroborate these

judgments with external evidence, such as user comments on social media (did people complain that an ad was 'too much?') or known best practices from the accessibility literature. The approach is akin to an expert heuristic evaluation of the campaigns from a neuro-inclusion standpoint.

While it does not involve primary user testing due to scope, it lays the groundwork for future studies to validate the identified issues with actual neurodiverse focus groups. Future research could empirically test the framework through various methods. For example, user studies could be conducted in which individuals from diverse neurodivergent backgrounds engage with campaign materials and provide qualitative feedback on their experiences. Additionally, A/B testing could compare the engagement levels and perceived comfort between traditional campaigns and those designed with calm-first principles. Such empirical validation plans would enhance the perceived impact and rigor of the framework.

To establish scholarly rigor, a proposed empirical research plan should include conducting user studies with at least 50 participants from diverse neurodivergent groups to ensure diverse insights. Collaborations with academic institutions and accessibility organizations could provide valuable partnerships and resources. Utilizing mixed-method approaches, researchers could gather quantitative data on engagement metrics and qualitative insights through interviews and focus groups. These methods could offer comprehensive insights into the framework's effectiveness and further substantiate its impact on user experience.

If the Calm-First pillars are a useful construct, we would expect that they can capture essential differences between, say, Calm's advertising and a more typical high-octane campaign. I would also expect that even the more inclusive brands have room to improve when viewed through this lens (since very few, if any, have explicitly applied neurodivergent design principles yet). The case studies thus serve to demonstrate the framework's descriptive power and generate hypotheses (e.g., 'users will respond better to Option A with lower sensory load than Option B') that could be tested empirically in the future.

Having set the methodology, we now delve into the Case Insights – the findings from analyzing Tesla, Calm, and Apple through a calm-first, neuro-inclusive lens.

Case Insights

A. Tesla: Futuristic Innovation Meets Minimalist Branding

1. Communication Style: Tesla famously spends very little on traditional advertising, relying instead on word of mouth, Elon Musk's social media, and the allure of its products. However, Tesla does produce promotional content and maintains a strong online brand presence. Tesla's communication style, in line with its product design, often employs minimalist visuals and clean design. For example, Tesla's website homepage is stark and focused: it typically shows a single, beautiful image of one of its vehicles against a simple backdrop (a highway cutting through a desert, or a city skyline at dusk). The color palette skews towards neutral tones – white, black, metallic grays – with occasional bold accent colors (like a red Model S) used sparingly to draw attention. The site's text is minimal and straight to the point (e.g., just the car model name, a one-line value proposition, and a clear "Order" or "Test Drive" call to action). This approach

avoids information overload and long paragraphs or multiple competing messages, which aligns with our Clarity pillar. Visually, Tesla's choice to focus on one product per page with ample white space inherently reduces cognitive load for users – there's a clear focal point and not much else vying for attention.

In video content, Tesla often highlights the sensory experience of its cars in a subdued way. Promotional videos or product launch clips feature smooth, sweeping camera shots of the car gliding quietly on roads or through scenic landscapes. Notably, because electric vehicles are quiet (no engine roar), Tesla's marketing sometimes uses that as a theme – moments of near silence or soft ambient sounds of wind and wheels, emphasizing the tranquil aspect of driving electric. Background music, if present, tends to be atmospheric and modern, but not overly aggressive. The pacing of Tesla's official videos is often slower than typical car commercials; rather than rapid-fire cuts of stunts and revving engines (as one might see in a sports car ad), Tesla's footage lingers on design elements or the car moving calmly, which can impart a sense of futuristic serenity. In many respects, Tesla's style is calm by design – reflecting the brand's sophistication and tech elegance.

1. Neuro-Inclusive Strengths: Several aspects of Tesla's communication are naturally aligned with neuro-inclusive principles:

- Lower Sensory Load: Compared to the high-octane montages common in automotive advertising, Tesla's visuals are relatively restrained. There is generally only one primary subject (the vehicle) on screen, avoiding clutter. The editing does not rely on strobe-like flashiness; cuts are fewer and transitions often gentle. This moderation reduces the risk of sensory overload. A person who is sensitive to rapid visual changes would likely find

Tesla's videos more comfortable than, say, a fast-cut racecar commercial with jump cuts every second.

- Clarity of Focus: Tesla's messaging focuses on core selling points (range, performance, safety, etc.) delivered in simple statements on the site. The visual hierarchy on web pages is strong – big image, bold heading, small supporting text. It's pretty obvious where to look and what to do (the CTA buttons are prominent and labeled clearly, like "Order Now"). This clarity benefits users with attention difficulties by reducing the need to search around. The cognitive effort to parse Tesla's content is low: you see the car, the price or spec highlight, and the next step.
- Implied Calm/Control: Tesla's brand imagery often conveys a sense of control and ease – an open road with Autopilot engaged, or a person at the wheel, relaxed. For users who might be anxious about driving, the narrative is that Tesla technology can reduce stress (e.g., the car can handle tedious traffic). Campaigns subtly play up themes of calm and trust in technology, which could resonate with neurodivergent folks who prefer predictable, computer-assisted environments. For example, scenes of the car parking itself or staying centered in a lane show predictability, a continuity aspect that can be reassuring.

These qualities suggest Tesla's communications provide a good baseline for calm-first design. Indeed, one could argue Tesla has succeeded in making its marketing sensory-efficient – it achieves a feeling of luxury and innovation without bombarding the viewer. In a way, Tesla leverages the absence (of noise, of clutter) as a distinctive marketing asset, a notable divergence from competitors. Minimalism Markets Calm Luxury: This approach of using minimalist design

to convey calm and luxury helps Tesla differentiate itself and create a memorable brand impression.

1. Risks and Gaps: Despite these strengths, Tesla is not uniformly calm or inclusive in all its communications. There are potential gaps when viewed through our framework:

- Hype-driven content bursts: During major product unveiling events or social media promotions, Tesla sometimes releases highlight reels or teaser videos that feature faster montages and dramatic effects. For instance, to build excitement for a new model or feature (like Full Self-Driving software), they might compile footage with quick transitions, on-screen text pop-ups, and high-contrast scenes (think bright blue Autopilot visuals on dark backgrounds, rapid switching between interior UI and exterior shots). These "launch hype" videos can approach the territory of overstimulation. From a neurodivergent perspective, such content could be challenging to follow – the sensory load suddenly spikes compared to Tesla's usual calm tone.
- Intense Futuristic Messaging: Tesla's marketing language sometimes leans into excitement about the future ("The future of driving," "Insane acceleration," etc.). At times, especially on social media, the tone can be exuberant or urgent (for example, limited-time referral programs or end-of-quarter delivery pushes might be promoted with some urgency). While Tesla doesn't use caps-lock or flashing text, the emotional intensity of some messaging might heighten anxiety for certain users. Also, discussions of autonomous driving can be double-edged – for some neurodivergent folks, the idea of giving control to AI is calming, but for others, it may provoke anxiety if not explained clearly. If promotional materials gloss over caveats or use technical jargon, it could reduce clarity for those not well-versed in the subject.

- Multimedia Interface Complexity: It's worth noting that the Tesla in-car interface (the large touchscreen) itself, while minimalist in design, consolidates many controls into one place. Some older or cognitively impaired users have reported finding touch interfaces less tactile and more distracting than analog controls. If Tesla ever uses shots of the in-car UI in ads, it might look a bit complex (maps, visualizations of cars around, etc.). Though not a direct marketing issue, it intersects with continuity – the promise of simplicity in ads must meet actual simplicity in use. There is a risk of cognitive load when a user first interacts with Tesla's many features, despite the clean look. Educational content or tutorials could be needed, and if those aren't calm-first, it's a missed opportunity.

Identifying these tensions shows where Tesla could further align with calm-first principles. For example, toning down the rare fast-cut video or ensuring any high-energy marketing moments are balanced with clarity and user control (like making those videos skippable, or providing a slow-paced version for those who want detail). It's quite feasible that Tesla could refine these areas without sacrificing its innovative image.

1. Future Robo-Taxi Angle: A particularly relevant area for Tesla's neuro-inclusive marketing is its vision for autonomous robo-taxi services. In the near future, Tesla (and competitors) plan to offer self-driving taxi rides – essentially, you'd hail a Tesla with no driver. This scenario opens a huge opportunity to shape the narrative in a neuro-inclusive way. Imagine Tesla's campaign highlighting how robo-taxis could serve people who struggle with traditional transport. I can sketch a few mini-scenarios (to be elaborated in the Playbook section later) as examples:

- Elderly Shopper: Tesla could depict an older adult using a Tesla Network robo-taxi for errands. The ad shows an intuitive app with large text for booking (Clarity, Continuity for seniors), a calm confirmation (Consent – no surprises, the car arrives when expected), and then the ride itself: quiet electric motor (low Sensory Load), gentle voice prompts or none at all (Control – user maybe sets “quiet ride” mode). The visuals might show the senior, relaxed in the back seat, perhaps reading or enjoying the view. The messaging focuses on independence and safety (“Your ride, your pace”). This directly appeals to older users and also demonstrates the experience's calm simplicity to the general public.
- Parent of a Disabled Child: A scenario could feature a parent scheduling a Tesla robo-taxi to take their child (with a disability, e.g., a wheelchair user or an autistic child) to appointments. The campaign could emphasize predictability: the same car arrives every day at the same time, the interior environment can be customized in advance (lighting, temperature, maybe even a playlist) to suit the child’s sensory needs. The ad would highlight features like real-time tracking (so the caregiver feels in control – Control pillar) and an interface that allows the parent to communicate any special instructions. Visuals might show the child feeling comfortable and secure during the ride, with no blaring ads or unexpected stops. This angle stresses trust and routine – values highly regarded by caregivers and neurodivergent users.
- Neurodivergent Professional: Envision an autistic young professional who dislikes the unpredictability of ride-shares or the social interaction of taxis. A Tesla robo-taxi campaign could show how this individual can commute peacefully – they get into a driverless car that may have a “Do Not Disturb” setting enabled by default. They can use the transit time to either focus on their laptop or just decompress without small talk

(Consent – no forced interaction). The interior might be shown as a calm space (perhaps even featuring a built-in meditation or ambient sound option courtesy of Calm – cross-brand idea!). The tagline might emphasize "a quiet space of your own, wherever you go." This scenario not only markets robo-taxis to a wider audience but also directly signals understanding of neurodivergent preferences (quiet, control, solitude on their terms).

Tesla has not yet marketed specifically to these angles, but incorporating calm-first thinking, it could easily do so. In doing so, Tesla would broaden its appeal (to seniors, caregivers, ND individuals with disabilities) and position its tech as inclusive innovation. It aligns perfectly with the strategic case for calm marketing – by showing ethical benefits, they can differentiate themselves and tap new customer loyalty. The robo-taxi context basically forces the question: how do you make someone trust an unfamiliar tech? The answer likely involves showing how comfortable and user-friendly it is – precisely through calm-first design.

(The above scenarios will be revisited in Section VIII as part of a broader playbook for marketers in emerging mobility services.)

In summary, Tesla's case reveals that a cutting-edge brand can naturally embody many calm-first principles, even if unintentionally. Tesla's minimalist aesthetic and smooth messaging work in its favor for neurodiverse inclusion, but there are pitfalls when the brand leans too heavily into tech hype. Overall, Tesla demonstrates that calm can be cool– an invaluable lesson for an industry (automotive) that historically equated excitement with loudness. Next, we turn to a brand that is intentionally all about calm: the Calm app itself.

B. Calm: Marketing a Mindful Lifestyle

1. Brand Overview: Calm is a leading wellness platform focused on meditation, stress reduction, and better sleep. Its value proposition is tranquility. From the name “Calm” to its content (guided meditations, “Sleep Stories,” relaxing music), everything is designed to induce a state of peace. This ethos extends strongly into Calm’s marketing and communications. Unlike many apps that try to hook users with flashy growth-hacking tactics, Calm’s growth strategy has been to align every touchpoint with a promise: to make you feel a little better and calmer than before. The company’s visual identity uses gentle imagery – think sunsets, ocean waves, soft gradients of blue and purple (colors commonly associated with relaxation). Its logo itself is the word “Calm” in a flowing script on a blue background, evoking sky or water. By positioning itself as the antidote to stress, Calm has essentially built calm-first design into its brand DNA.
2. Sensory Design Choices: Calm’s campaigns and digital content exhibit deliberate sensory curation:

- Audio: Calm often uses the voices of well-known narrators (such as Matthew McConaughey or Stephen Fry) in soft, slow-paced tones. Whether in ads or in the app previews, you’ll hear hushed, reassuring narration – never a yelling salesperson or an alarm tone. The background music in Calm’s videos or ads is typically ambient – gentle piano, mellow synth pads, or nature sounds like rain. The audio is engineered to be soothing even if heard unexpectedly (which, ideally, it wouldn’t be without consent, but if it is, it’s unlikely to jar someone).
- Visuals: Calm’s imagery relies on serene scenes: a person meditating by a lake at dawn, a breeze through trees, simple animations like a glowing orb expanding and contracting to guide breathing. Advertisements sometimes have abstract, slowly moving backgrounds

(e.g., colored smoke gently swirling), which are captivating but low in sensory intensity. The color palette is dominated by cool tones like blues and greens, with high saturation balanced by darkness or gradients to avoid harshness on the eyes. There is liberal use of "white space" (or rather, negative space) in layouts – Calm isn't afraid to have an uncluttered screen with just a short phrase and a simple image.

- Pacing: Everything in Calm's content has a slower, more mindful pacing. Their TV ads, for instance, often do not follow the typical 30-second spot formula. One famously innovative campaign was "The 30-second vacation," which was 15 or 30 seconds of tranquil footage with minimal voiceover, effectively giving viewers a short break rather than a sales pitch. Even their social media videos will hold a single shot longer than usual, encouraging the viewer to relax rather than jolting their attention around.
- Messaging Simplicity: Calm's marketing copy is extremely concise and on-message. Words like "breathe," "slow down," and "unwind" frequently appear as standalone prompts. Slogans have included "Take a deep breath" or "Sleep more, stress less." These phrases double as actions the user can take in the moment they see the ad, providing immediate value. The language is positive and gentle; you won't see fear-based FOMO copy from Calm. If anything, Calm's challenge is to communicate the absence of something (stress), which they handle by inviting the audience into a mini-experience of calm through the ad itself.

1. Neuro-Inclusive Strengths: Calm's marketing exemplifies many best practices that benefit neurodivergent and anxious users:

- Reduced Sensory Load: There are no sudden loud noises or fast flashes. A neurodivergent person encountering a Calm ad is less likely to need to look away or mute

it out of discomfort. By keeping visuals and audio gentle, Calm avoids triggering sensory defensiveness. This makes their content accessible to people with sensory processing issues, PTSD (who might be startled by sudden stimuli), and even those with photosensitive conditions (since Calm doesn't use rapid flashing sequences).

- High Clarity: The simplicity of Calm's messaging means it's easy to digest. Someone with ADHD or autism doesn't have to parse sarcasm or multiple meanings – "30 seconds of calm" is literal. The calls-to-action are straightforward ("Try Calm for free" etc.), and the benefits are plainly stated (e.g., "Better sleep" as a headline). This straightforwardness aligns with cognitive accessibility principles and ensures users immediately understand the value being offered. It also reduces decision fatigue; the user is often just one click away from trying it, without being overwhelmed by choices.
- Emotional Safety: Calm's tone is nurturing and non-judgmental. Many marketing tactics inadvertently shame or pressure the audience (think of fitness apps that use slogans like "No excuses!" that might alienate or stress someone). Calm, however, frames its messaging in a welcoming way – "Find your peace," "We're here to help you relax." For neurodivergent individuals who may face anxiety daily, seeing a brand that acknowledges stress and offers kindness can create a sense of trust and safety. Calm's ads often feel like a service rather than an intrusion – some users have even commented that encountering a Calm billboard or ad reminded them to breathe and actually improved their day, a stark contrast to most ads. In essence, Calm makes its advertising a microcosm of its product: a mini relaxation moment.
- Opt-in Engagement: Although Calm does plenty of advertising, they tend to use user-initiated channels effectively. For example, content marketing via YouTube (like

10-minute meditation clips) or social campaigns that users can choose to engage with. When Calm does interrupt (like a pre-roll ad on YouTube), the effect is much less abrasive than typical ads – one might not even skip if it's just gentle rain sounds. This respects Consent and Control; even if the ad autoplays, it's not violating your senses. And if you interact, Calm gives you control (e.g., the app itself is built to let you choose what kind of content to do – sleep story, meditation, etc., reinforcing user agency).

A telling metric of Calm's success in neuro-inclusive design is its broad adoption: it has over 100 million downloads, appealing to demographics ranging from high-powered professionals to children to elderly users seeking better sleep. (ABOUT CALM, 2025) Its ability to attract users through calmness rather than loud promises demonstrates that a calm-first strategy can indeed be commercially effective. Advertising for Calm often feels almost like a public service or a gift, offering a "moment of calm" to non-users as well. This flips the usual script (where ads take something from you – attention, time) and instead gives something: a brief respite. For neurodivergent audiences who might be predisposed to skip or avoid ads (due to overload), this approach can engender a positive brand association. They might think, "I usually hate ads, but that Calm ad was actually nice."

1. Lessons for Other Brands: The Calm case illustrates that any brand, not just a meditation app, can benefit from calm-first tactics. Key takeaways include:

- You don't have to be a wellness brand to dial down sensory intensity. A bank, a car company, even a fast-food chain could choose gentler music, simpler visuals, and a reassuring tone in their campaigns. It might seem counterintuitive in categories defined by excitement (e.g., "extreme" sodas or sports cars), but even there, one could find a

calming angle (e.g., the comfort of a reliable car, the relaxation of a cola break). Calm's success shows that there is an appetite for advertising that doesn't stress people out.

- Advertising can serve as a moment of relief, not just a call for attention. Calm effectively uses a soft sell approach. Rather than aggressively pushing the product, they demonstrate its value in the ad (by actually calming you a bit). This builds reciprocity – the user feels benefited and thus more open to what Calm offers. Other brands could similarly frame ads as providing value (educational, gently entertaining, or calming). For instance, a tea brand could run an ad that is basically a guided relaxation, set to imagery of tea brewing – selling by example rather than by exhortation.
- Inclusivity and broad appeal: By aiming for a calmer communication style, you inherently widen the audience who can comfortably engage. Calm's content is accessible to people with sensory sensitivities, those with low literacy (very little reading required), and people in different languages (some campaigns have no words at all, just visuals and ambient sound), etc. A calm-first design often overlaps with universal design. It's reminiscent of how curb cuts help wheelchair users and parents with strollers: Calm's ads help anxious or autistic viewers, frazzled workers, and tired students – basically everyone in today's high-stress society. This is a persuasive point to make to brands: calmer campaigns can actually reach people who tune out or block out hyper-stimulating ads.

In conclusion, Calm stands as a near-ideal model of the Calm-First Framework in practice. While not every brand can replicate Calm's exact aesthetic (nor should they, for authenticity), every brand can ask itself, "How can we offer our audience a moment of clarity or calm through our messaging?" The next case, Apple (or, alternatively, a high-intensity advertiser), will either show

the extension of these principles into mainstream tech or contrast them when they are not applied, thereby further reinforcing the framework's importance.

C. Apple: Consistency and Accessibility in Marketing (with a Note on High-Intensity Ad Contrasts)

1. Brand Overview: Apple Inc. is a technology company acclaimed for its design philosophy, which centers on simplicity and intuitive user experience. Apple's marketing and product materials often showcase its commitment to accessibility and inclusive design. For instance, Apple's website has a dedicated Accessibility section that proclaims: "Our long-standing commitment to accessibility is fundamental to everything we do. This is not just PR—Apple regularly introduces new assistive features (such as VoiceOver for the blind, Live Listen for the hard-of-hearing, and Guided Access for individuals with attention or sensory needs) — and highlights them at product launches and in ads. Apple's marketing tone is generally polished, minimalist, and focused on how technology empowers users. Given that Apple products serve a massive, diverse user base, their communications tend to avoid extremes that might alienate sub-groups. That said, Apple also delivers exciting visuals in its ads to convey innovation and creativity. Thus, Apple provides an interesting case of balancing dynamic content with inclusive principles.
2. Application of Calm-First Pillars in Apple's Campaigns:

- Sensory Load: Apple's advertising aesthetic, much like its product design, favors a clean, uncluttered presentation. Iconic examples include the silhouette iPod ads (high contrast but visually simple) and the recent iPhone and Apple Watch ads, which often use a single continuous shot or a consistent background. Although Apple is not as overtly "calming"

as Calm, it usually avoids garish sensory elements. Videos are tightly edited but smooth; soundtracks are often energetic yet carefully mixed so they don't become piercing. Crucially, Apple's content rarely involves disorienting effects. Even when showing flashy graphics (like an AR demo), Apple typically ensures they meet accessibility standards (e.g., no intense strobe sequences beyond safe thresholds). Additionally, Apple gives users sensory control in products (e.g., the iOS "Reduce Motion" option to disable parallax animations), and this sensitivity tends to carry over to marketing choices. For example, an Apple promo video for iOS features might mention the new Reduce Motion setting—a subtle nod that Apple cares about sensory comfort.

- Clarity: Apple's marketing copy is famously concise and slogan-driven ("Think Different", "Shot on iPhone", "Privacy. That's iPhone."). They communicate complex technologies in simple terms and visuals. Product pages on Apple's site are well-structured, with large headings, short paragraphs, and clear images that embody clarity and a strong visual hierarchy. For instance, the page for an iPhone might break down features into digestible sections ("Display – Brighter and more vibrant", "Durability – Ceramic Shield"), each with one key stat or sentence. Apple also invests in consistent iconography and terminology: a user who has seen an Apple keynote will find the same labels and icons in the ads and then on the device, fulfilling Continuity and Clarity together. This helps neurodivergent users who rely on pattern recognition and consistency to understand and predict usage across contexts.
- Control and Consent: While Apple's ads themselves don't typically involve user interaction (they are one-way media), Apple's broader marketing ecosystem gives users control over how they consume information. For example, Apple provides full transcripts

of its product launch events (which is great for those who prefer reading at their own pace – Control) and often posts ASL-interpreted or audio-described versions of videos for those who need them. In the App Store, Apple carefully curates content without auto-playing random videos or sounds – any video preview is user-initiated (this is partly to avoid annoyance, but it also respects neurodiverse users' need for stable, non-surprising interfaces). Apple's email marketing and notifications offer easy opt-out and frequency customization, reflecting a culture of user consent for communication. There's also a notable absence of "dark patterns" in Apple's UX (they tend not to nag or trick users into engaging, unlike some digital services). All this flows from a user-centric philosophy: marketing should entice but not coerce. This stance aligns with the Consent pillar. As one of Apple's privacy ads humorously suggested, "What happens on your iPhone, stays on your iPhone" – while about data, the subtext is Apple doesn't intrude on your life the way some other tech might.

- Continuity: Apple is arguably the gold standard for brand consistency. Every piece of communication – from the typography and color schemes to the tone of voice – is consistent across platforms and over the years. This continuity means an Apple ad is instantly recognizable as one. For users, especially those who like predictability, Apple's consistency can be comforting. An Apple Store experience, an Apple website, and an Apple product GUI all feel related; one doesn't have to reorient one's expectations. For instance, Apple often uses the same background music tracks or styles across a campaign (the upbeat piano in many iPad ads), so if you've heard one, the next feels familiar. When Apple changed style (as they did by introducing more playful, colorful ads for the new

iMac in 2021), they still kept the narrative straightforward and design clean, just with more color – so they expanded their style without breaking continuity drastically.

1. Inclusive Marketing Features: Apple's marketing sometimes directly highlights accessibility features, effectively normalizing disability inclusion. A notable campaign is the "Accessibility – Sady" video (also known as "The Greatest") Apple released in 2022, depicting a day in the life of disabled users leveraging Apple tech (e.g., a blind musician using Logic Pro with VoiceOver, a quadriplegic coder using Switch Control). It's set to uplifting music and tells human stories without sentimentality. This ad is calm-first in its respectful, matter-of-fact portrayal. It doesn't shout about features; it shows them in use. The editing is at a moderate pace, focusing on the user interactions. By doing this, Apple's marketing not only reaches disabled audiences (showing this product is for you too) but also educates mainstream viewers that inclusive tech benefits many. The tagline was "Built for today – for everyone tomorrow," underscoring that designing for extremes benefits all (an echo of the "better for all" principle). For neurodiversity specifically, Apple has not run a neurodivergent-themed ad that I'm aware of, but their communication often implicitly addresses it – e.g., showcasing focus features or mindfulness apps in product reveals, implying they consider cognitive needs.
2. Pain Points (or Contrast with High-Intensity Brands): It's worth noting areas where Apple could, or occasionally does, deviate from calm-first ideals:

- Launch Event Hype: Apple events themselves (though not ads) are highly produced and can be sensory-heavy – giant graphics on stage, loud product videos, rapid demonstration of multiple features. This hype is part of their marketing strategy to build excitement. For some neurodivergent viewers, these can be a lot to take in live. However, Apple mitigates

this by offering replays and breakdowns that one can absorb at their own pace. The marketing takeaway is that context matters: a live event for enthusiasts can be intense (since viewers opt in knowing what to expect), whereas mass advertising should be more universally calm/inclusive.

- Music Choice: Sometimes Apple picks very vibrant tracks for ads (e.g., for AirPods dance-oriented ads). While the visuals remain simple (usually just dancing silhouettes or people with AirPods in a city), the music could be overstimulating to some. However, Apple often balances this by ensuring the visuals do not flash as well. In contrast, a brand like Samsung or Google might, in some campaigns, use fast montages, loud music, and dense info – a combination Apple tends to avoid. So even when Apple increases one sensory element (music energy), they decrease others (visual complexity) – a good practice.
- Feature Overflow: Apple packs many features into its products, and sometimes its ads try to cover too much. A minute-long iPhone ad might enumerate 8–10 features rapidly. This could challenge viewers with information processing difficulties. Apple addresses this through companion media: its website or print ads break down features in a calm, step-by-step way, allowing individuals to explore at their own pace. A more problematic scenario is a high-intensity advertiser (to contrast): for example, some e-commerce flash-sale commercials or movie trailers – these throw a barrage of text, imagery, and sounds in a short span, assuming the viewer will catch it all or watch it repeatedly. Those are decidedly not calm-first. If we were evaluating such a campaign: we'd likely see High Sensory Load (bright, clashing colors and multiple animations), Lower Clarity (lots of text in different fonts, maybe all-caps or moving, causing cognitive strain), Minimal

Control (these are typically forced pre-rolls or unskippable ads), Weak Consent(pop-up ads that obscure content), and Inconsistent Continuity (tone might shift from platform to platform, adding to confusion). Such campaigns might get attention, but at the risk of excluding or irritating many users. By juxtaposition, Apple's steadiness stands out as both more accessible and, arguably, more trust-building with audiences.

1. Synthesis: Apple demonstrates that a mainstream, highly successful brand can adopt many neuro-inclusive practices without compromising on style or effectiveness. Its focus on clarity, consistency, and user empowerment in messaging aligns well with Calm-First pillars and likely contributes to its wide appeal. After all, a product that "just works" needs marketing that "just communicates" (clearly and respectfully). The Apple example also shows that inclusive marketing is a continuum – Apple gets a lot right, but there's always room to consider if even launch ads can be made gentler or if feature communication can be paced out more for those who need it.

Having analyzed these cases (Tesla's quasi-minimalism, Calm's deliberate soothing, Apple's polished inclusivity, and, by contrast, the idea of a high-intensity campaign), we now turn to cross-cutting findings. What patterns emerge across these cases? What common pain points did we observe? This will be addressed in the next section, distilling insights that will directly inform the recommended toolkit for practitioners.

Findings: Patterns Across Cases and Common Pain Points

Analyzing the above cases through the Calm-First Framework yields several recurring patterns that either support neuro-inclusive experiences or commonly undermine them. These patterns transcend any single brand and appear to be broadly applicable in digital marketing:

Patterns that Support Neuro-Inclusive Experiences

- Intentional Moderation of Sensory Load: Brands that consciously dial down the intensity of visuals and sound can still create content that is engaging and premium. Both Calm and many of Tesla's campaigns illustrate that less can be more. A video without constant cuts or a webpage with a single focal image can captivate interest while also respecting users' sensory limits. The key is intention: instead of following the default assumption that "flashy = attention-grabbing," these brands showed that focused = attention-holding. Tesla's slower pace and Calm's gentle audio prove that one can maintain aspirational, high-quality branding without cranking everything to 11 on the sensory dial. For marketers, this suggests an opportunity: try a campaign with reduced sensory elements and see if engagement remains strong. The case evidence indicates it likely will, and you might draw in viewers who otherwise tune out noisy ads.
- Clear Visual Hierarchy and Information Design: Across the inclusive examples (Apple's site, Calm's ads, Tesla's layouts), a clear structure was common. When content is presented in a clean, organized way with obvious next steps, users experience less cognitive strain. Autistic and ADHD users, in particular, benefit from visual order and explicit cues about where to focus. Even in dynamic media like videos, having a single narrative thread (instead of disjointed scenes) and minimal, legible on-screen text helps comprehension. This pattern of clarity not only helps neurodivergent individuals but also the general audience – clarity improves message retention for everyone. It's a classic universal design win. Therefore, brands should invest in strong information design: one message per screen, one concept per ad, use of bullet points or short segments in content (like Apple's segmented feature clips or Calm's single-word prompts). Simplifying

appearance does not mean dumbing down content; it means making the content's organization intuitive.

- Predictability and Consistency: When users encounter consistent styles, layouts, or tones, they can relax their guard – they know what to expect and how to navigate. This emerged in how Apple maintains continuity across its materials, and how Calm's ads always "feel" like Calm ads (so users are not thrown off by, say, an aggressive tone one day and a soft tone the next). For neurodivergent users who might have anxiety or need routine, this continuity is not just a "nice to have" but a factor that determines whether they feel comfortable engaging continuously. If every ad from a brand is wildly different in style, it can be jarring – think of it like UI consistency: if every page of an app had a different interface, users would struggle. The same goes for campaigns. Tesla's consistent minimalist vibe and Apple's uniform design language likely made it easier for users to follow their content. Predictability also extends to functionality: e.g., if I know an email newsletter from X brand comes at a regular time and in a consistent format, I'm more likely to actually read it rather than stress about its content. Brands adopting style guides (for design and messaging) and adhering to them across campaigns will find that audiences develop trust – trust that engaging with the content won't require extra effort each time.
- Non-Aggressive Persuasion (Calm Marketing): Calm's case showed that presenting benefits in a calm manner ("Here's a moment of peace" instead of "Buy this now or miss out!") can be highly effective without triggering stress. This pattern was echoed by Tesla's generally non-harassing calls to action (they invite a test drive, they don't scream "LIMITED DEAL!") and Apple's matter-of-fact highlighting of features (rarely using

alarmist language). When brands avoid hyperbolic or fear-driven copy, they reduce the risk of inducing anxiety. This is important not only for anxious individuals but for anyone who is tired of being yelled at by ads. A calmer appeal ("We think you'll love how this makes life easier") can be as or more compelling than a sensational one, with the added benefit of not raising defenses or stress hormones in the viewer. Thus, a neuro-inclusive pattern is advertising as an invitation, not as an assault. Brands that "speak" to the consumer respectfully are seeing better long-term engagement through trust and positive sentiment.

These positive patterns closely align with the Calm-First pillars and offer tangible ways to put them into practice. However, our analysis also surfaced common pain points – recurring features in marketing that undermine neuro-inclusion and often overall user experience:

1. Eliminate Forced Auto-Play:

- Stop-Doing Checklist: Avoid Common Offenders in Digital Campaigns
- - Do not let videos, audio, or any media start automatically without user consent. This is a common complaint among users, especially neurodivergent individuals, who find it intrusive and distressing. Instead, use click-to-play with clear labeling.

2. Silence Unwanted Noise:

- - Ensure that any media content defaults to muted or provides the user with volume controls. Surprising audio can disrupt and alienate users, and it should be avoided to ensure a pleasant user experience.

3. Be Mindful of Pop-Ups:

- - Avoid using pop-ups that appear without warning. They can frustrate users and push them to use ad blockers or abandon your platform altogether.

4. Limit Excessive Motion and Flashing Elements:

- - Rapid animations and flashing visuals can cause discomfort and even serious reactions in sensitive individuals. Keep animations smooth and imperative, ensuring they enhance rather than detract from the user's experience.
- Excessive Motion and Flashing Elements: Rapid animations, GIF overload, background videos, marquee texts – these often came up as issues. They can cause not just discomfort but physical illness (vestibular triggers) or neurological events (seizures) if extreme. Even at milder levels, they distract and make it hard to process content. For example, if a page has a looping product demo video next to a paragraph of text, some users cannot focus on the text at all – the motion repeatedly draws their eyes. Autistic individuals and those with ADHD often mention that such pages are very hard to read and can lead to frustration or abandonment. The cases showed that static or gently animated content is usually sufficient. Tesla's use of slow-mo shots or Calm's subtle animations (like a breathing orb) are fine; it's the fast, looping ones that hurt. The recommendation is to limit motion: prefer static images with optional play buttons for motion, and if motion is present, follow guidelines (gentle motion, not too many elements moving at once, obey the 3 flashes/second rule). If using animated transitions in emails or UI, provide a non-animated alternative via settings. Basically, think twice before animating something

– is it necessary? Often, the answer is no. And where it is yes (maybe a game or creative effect), give the user control or at least a warning/indicator.

- Information Overload and Complexity: The counterpart to cluttered visuals is cluttered information. Many ads or marketing pages try to say too much at once: multiple offers, multiple CTAs, dense fine print, etc. This emerged as a pain point, especially for older adults and those with cognitive processing differences. If a user is bombarded with text and choices, they may experience decision paralysis or simply fatigue. The findings suggest "one at a time" works better: one message per ad. If there's more to say, use a sequence (carousel with discrete cards, or a scroll story) rather than all simultaneous. Some campaigns use overly complex sentences or marketing jargon that mean little to laypeople. That breaks Clarity. Instead, brands should aim for a ~5th-8th grade reading level in consumer-facing text (tools like the Hemingway App help enforce this), as recommended by plain language and accessibility experts. Winsome Marketing's advice for seniors applies widely: avoid jargon, break content into smaller sections, and use bullet points for key info. When information is presented in manageable chunks, users feel more in control and less overwhelmed.

Beyond these, an interesting "notable surprise" from the analysis was that some brands not explicitly focused on inclusion still sometimes produce calm-first content, perhaps by accident or aesthetic choice, while brands that loudly promote diversity might still use high-intensity tactics that undermine that message. For example, a trendy youth brand might champion mental health in a PR campaign but then blast flashy TikTok ads that could heighten anxiety – an inconsistency between values and practice. Conversely, a luxury brand might create a beautifully minimalist, calm ad purely for style, which ends up being very accessible too. This underscores that

neuro-inclusive design is as much a choice in each campaign as it is an overall brand identity. Every marketing team, regardless of industry, can choose to incorporate these principles on a project-by-project basis. The opportunity is often missed simply because it's not considered.

In summary, the cross-case findings affirm that the Calm-First Framework's pillars are relevant and that many current practices in digital advertising need rethinking. The patterns of success show it's entirely feasible to be both calm and effective; the pain points highlight where attention is needed.

These insights now inform the creation of a practical toolkit for marketers – a step-by-step guide on how to implement the Calm-First framework in real-world campaign development. That toolkit is presented in the next section, translating the analysis into actionable guidance.

The Calm-First Neuro-Inclusive Digital Campaign Toolkit

Translating the Calm-First principles into practice requires a structured yet adaptable process. This section proposes a four-step toolkit – Discover, Design, Deliver & Test, Iterate & Govern – to guide marketing teams in creating and sustaining neuro-inclusive, calmer communications. Each step includes specific guidelines spanning visual design, audio, copy, and channel strategy, synthesizing best practices from our research and case analyses.

Step 1: Discover – Understand Your Neurodivergent Audience

Every inclusive campaign should start with empathy and insight. In the Discover phase, the goal is to map out who in your audience (or potential audience) has sensory or cognitive accessibility needs and what those needs are. This involves research and listening. To bridge this phase into a real-life application, I propose setting a concrete task: arranging a brief 15-minute call with a neurodivergent user this week. This small commitment can significantly enhance understanding

and empathy by moving from theoretical insights to personal connection. Such practical engagement not only fuels discovery but also builds real-world momentum for developing empathetic campaigns.

- Identify Audience Segments: Begin by recognizing that neurodivergent and disabled users are part of your audience (even if they aren't explicitly targeted in your current strategy). Use existing data or logical inference to segment groups such as autistic customers, customers with ADHD, anxious customers, users with sensory impairments, older adults with changing cognition, etc. For instance, an e-commerce retailer might realize a portion of its users are older and easily overwhelmed by busy interfaces. A media platform might know some users have epilepsy (thus a seizure risk from content). Aim to understand the size or significance of these segments – e.g., remember the stat that ~15-20% of people are neurodivergent, and virtually everyone experiences sensory overload at times. This justifies why designing for these needs has a broad impact.
- Gather Qualitative Insights: Numbers alone don't guide design – you need stories and specifics. Engage with neurodivergent individuals to learn about their experiences. This could be through user interviews, surveys, focus groups, or community forums. If you have employees or customers who are open about being neurodivergent or having disabilities, invite their input. Questions to explore: What types of ads or online content do you find overwhelming or off-putting? What kind of communication do you prefer or appreciate? Can you recall a particularly good or bad digital experience with a brand in terms of sensory or cognitive load? Capture direct quotes if possible – hearing someone say "I love when a video has captions so I can turn sound off, it makes me feel in control" is powerful. There may be surprises; for example, autistic users might say they appreciate

straightforward, literal product descriptions and get turned off by marketing hype. ADHD users might share that they hate long emails and pop-ups that break their focus, but they respond well to interactive content they can control. A Microsoft study on inclusive design emphasizes co-design: involving users with specific limitations in brainstorming solutions yields more innovative ideas. So consider forming a small advisory panel of neurodivergent users for your campaign.

- Identify Common Triggers and Comfort Factors: From research and our earlier discussion, compile a list of typical triggers to avoid (e.g., flashing lights, sudden loud noises, very busy layouts, long blocks of text, time-limited tasks that create urgency pressure) and comfort factors to include (e.g., predictable structure, option to reduce brightness or volume, clear heads-up about content of videos, imagery that is soothing, language that is positive/reassuring). Prioritize the triggers by severity. For instance, anything seizure-inducing or panic-inducing is the highest priority to eliminate. Others, like "excessive scrolling," might be moderate triggers. On the comfort side, note which pillars matter most to your audience: do they want more control (maybe your platform auto-advances content too aggressively), or more clarity (maybe previous campaigns left them confused about the message)? Mapping these needs will directly inform design choices. For example, a discovery might be that your older customers are overwhelmed by phone menus (interactive voice response systems), preferring a clear, human-like prompt – that insight could lead you to simplify not just visual campaigns but also voice interfaces in marketing.

By the end of Discover, you should have a neurodiversity brief: a set of personas or use-cases representing neurodivergent users, each with key dos and don'ts gleaned from real input. This

will ground the design phase in real-world considerations and ensure you're solving for actual user needs rather than assumptions.

(For instance, a persona might be "Alex, 30, autistic web user – hates autoplay videos and metaphorical taglines, loves step-by-step info and the ability to customize his view (dark mode, text size). Metric of success for Alex: he can browse our site without enabling his ad-blocker or feeling the need to leave due to sensory overload.")

Step 2: Design – Apply Calm-First Principles

Armed with insights, the design phase is where you craft the campaign assets – whether that's a landing page, a video ad, an email series, a social media graphic, etc. Here, systematically apply the five Calm-First pillars. Let's break this into sub-guidelines:

Visual Design Guidelines

- Limit Animation and Motion: Use motion only when it adds clear value (e.g., demonstrating how a product works), and keep it as smooth and slow-paced as possible. Avoid rapid or perpetual looping animations – give them a natural end or play them only on user initiation. For transitions, prefer fades or gentle slides over bouncy or zooming effects. Use the web/CSS prefers-reduced-motion setting: ensure your web content respects users' OS settings to reduce motion (by offering static alternatives). For example, if you have a parallax scroll effect on desktop, have a fallback static image for those who opted out of motion. Keep GIFs to a minimum; if using in social media, consider using the platform's image descriptions to mention "[animated GIF of X]" so users know it moves.

- Simplify Layouts and Use Clear Focal Points: Embrace white space (or background space). Don't cram everything above the fold – a breathable layout is more inviting and easier to parse. Use one primary image or visual focus per screen or section. Ensure that the focus point aligns with your key message. For multi-panel content (like carousels or slides), treat each panel as a singular focus experience (one idea per panel). Visually distinguish sections with clear headings, and consider using images or icons to support text rather than add more complexity. On a page, guide the eye with a logical reading order (often Z or F patterns in design) and make important elements, like CTAs, clearly stand out (Apple often uses high-contrast buttons on simple backgrounds for this).
- Ensure Sufficient (but not jarring) Contrast: Good contrast is needed for readability (WCAG recommends a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 for normal text). But "high contrast" doesn't mean garish. Avoid clashing colors that vibrate. A trick is to use a neutral background (white, off-white, dark gray, etc.) with one accent color that aligns with your brand, and use it sparingly. For example, Calm uses a lot of deep blues and white text – high contrast, but because the hues are cool, it's not an eyesore. Test your color scheme in grayscale to ensure important elements still pop (a sign of good contrast). However, avoid extremely saturated complementary colors adjacent to each other (like pure red text on a pure blue background) – that can be visually stressful. The PMAC guideline suggested using at most three complementary colors plus lots of white space – that's a good rule of thumb.

Audio Design Guidelines

- Avoid Abrupt Volume Changes and Startling Sounds: If your campaign includes audio (in videos, podcasts, radio, or in-app), be mindful of the mix. Do not have audio that suddenly spikes in loudness – e.g., don't go from a quiet scene to a blaring siren effect for "attention." Keep a relatively consistent volume level through the piece, and ensure it's below typical speech volume if it's background. Any sound effects should be soft (unless absolutely necessary for comprehension). Steer clear of high-pitched or shrill noises entirely. If using voiceover, pick a voice that is clear and pleasant, not shouting (think of Calm's voiceovers vs. a monster truck rally ad voice – we want the former). Background music should complement, not overpower; consider using music that sits in frequency ranges that don't clash with speech (mid- to low-frequency ranges, mellow tones). Also, prefer melodic ambient music over thumping bass or jarring techno for inclusive campaigns, unless your target neurodivergent segment explicitly loves heavy music (which you'd know from research). If your video has multiple scenes, use cross-fade transitions for the audio to keep it smooth.
- Always Provide User Controls for Sound: A must-do – any video or audio content on web pages should come with visible controls: play/pause and volume or mute. Better yet, default to muted or paused and let the user opt in. If you're doing Instagram or Facebook video ads, remember that those platforms auto-play muted by default; design them such that they're understandable without sound (use captions or on-screen text) so users aren't forced to enable sound. In email marketing, avoid embedding auto-playing media (most clients block it anyway). Instead, use a static image with a play button overlay that links to a controlled environment (e.g., a landing page or a YouTube video with controls). In apps, if your marketing includes sound (like a promo screen that pops up), never play it

without asking. Instead, you could show “Tap to hear an example” if trying to demo a sound-related feature. The user should feel in charge of audio.

- Offer Alternatives: Captions and Transcripts: Ensure all video content is closed-captioned. This helps not only deaf/hard-of-hearing users but also those who prefer reading or turning sound off (commonly folks who get overstimulated by audio). It’s also beneficial in busy environments; many people watch ads on mute by choice. Provide transcripts for longer multimedia (like a webinar or a voice-over ad story) either directly or upon request on your site. This goes beyond compliance; it’s about giving users more control (they can skim the text faster or search within it). As Harvard Health noted regarding neurodiversity, some people simply prefer alternative ways to consume information.
- Use Plain, Direct Language: Write as if you’re explaining to an intelligent friend who doesn’t know jargon. Avoid figurative or abstract language that could be misinterpreted. Many autistic individuals take words literally, so make sure your core message doesn’t rely on a nuanced idiom. For example, instead of “Unleash your productivity beast,” say “Get more done each day” (unless your brand voice absolutely demands quirkiness; even then, be cautious). Keep sentences short and in the active voice. One thought per sentence, ideally. Tools like Hemingway Editor can flag complex sentences; aim for grade 6-8 readability for broad audiences. Also, use positive phrasing – frame benefits as gains or improvements rather than using fear of missing out or negative wording. E.g., “Enjoy calmer commutes with our app” versus “Don’t suffer through another stressful commute.” The former is encouraging and less likely to trigger anxiety.

- Maintain Predictable Structure in Messaging: Present information in a logical order. A useful structure is often: Headline – one line benefit, Body – two or three lines of elaboration, Call to Action – what to do next. If every ad or email you produce follows some variant of this (with clear headings), users know where to find the info. For longer content, such as an article or white paper, use clear subheadings, bullet lists (like we do here), and an upfront summary. Consistency extends to tone: if one email is jokey and the next is very formal, that could throw people off. Develop a style guide for tone (friendly, authoritative, or tranquil) and stick to it so users feel continuity. For example, many successful newsletters always start or end the same way, giving readers a sense of familiarity – which can reduce the cognitive effort required to engage each time.
- Avoid Unnecessary Urgency or Guilt: While scarcity marketing ("Only 2 left!") might boost short-term sales, it can cause anxiety and decision paralysis in many. Use urgency sparingly and genuinely (like a clear deadline for a sale), and do it in a neutral tone ("Sale ends in 2 days" rather than "Hurry or you'll regret it!"). Remove any language that shames the user ("Don't be lazy, sign up now" is obviously bad). Instead, encourage ("You're invited to join us" or simply present the opportunity). As our findings show, calm persuasion builds trust better. If you must emphasize urgency (e.g., for an emergency alert service, maybe), do so with straightforward facts and guidance, not with dramatic language.

Channel-Specific Adaptation Guidelines

Different channels have different constraints and opportunities for calm-first design:

- Social Media (Feed ads, Stories, Reels): For visually-rich quick content (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook feeds), craft ads that are simple and steady. In a sea of jumpy TikToks, a steady, slower video will stand out by contrast. Consider using gentle motion or static scenes as discussed. Keep text overlay minimal and large (since many view on phones). Provide captions for videos, since many watch them muted. Avoid flashing transitions popular in some editing trends. Hashtag usage: don't overload, use a few relevant ones if needed – too many hashtags or handles can visually clutter and distract. Test your story/reel by having someone watch it once – did they grasp the message in one viewing calmly? If not, simplify further. Also, remember accessibility features: e.g., on Instagram, use alt text to describe images for screen reader users (which can include neurodivergent folks who use text-to-speech to avoid reading overload).
- Email: Use clean, template designs with clear headings. Large print option (e.g., ensure your CSS allows user scaling and uses accessible font sizes ~16px or more, as older users often prefer larger text). Don't embed media that auto-plays; instead, use clickable thumbnails. Keep the content focused – better to send two separate emails on two topics than to cram one email with five topics. Subject lines: avoid all-caps or excessive punctuation (seen as shouting). Instead of "LAST CHANCE!!! 50% OFF SALE ENDS TONIGHT!!!", a calm-first subject might be "Reminder: Sale ends tonight (50% off)". One exclamation at most, or none, punctuation can affect tone reading. Also consider "pre-header" text effectively – that little preview line should reassure or summarize positively ("Save on items to make life easier," etc.). Generational formatting awareness: older adults might prefer slightly more formal or clearly structured emails (intro, bullet

points, sign-off), whereas Gen Z might respond to shorter, emoji sprinkled but still clear messages – tailor but keep clarity either way.

- Websites/Landing Pages: Ensure any landing page linked from an ad meets the ad's expectations (continuity) and is free of surprise elements. No sudden pop-ups asking for subscription right as someone arrives – give people at least a minute or a scroll depth before triggering anything, or better, use less intrusive banners if needed. Provide accessibility options prominently: e.g., a "Text size" toggle or a "Dark mode" toggle if possible – many neurodivergent users prefer dark mode to reduce visual strain at night. Implement a "pause animations" or "stop autoplay" if you have carousels – WCAG requires a way to pause moving content that lasts over 5 seconds. So have visible pause/play buttons in slide shows. Also, test page load performance: heavy scripts and videos can not only annoy users with slower internet but also create a sensation of things popping in unexpectedly (layout shifting, etc.), which can be disorienting. Use skeleton loaders or at least ensure a stable layout to avoid content jumping when ads load (Google's CLS metric is relevant here – good for everyone).

By integrating these design guidelines, your campaign materials will inherently be more calm and neuro-inclusive. It's essentially applying a filter at every design decision: "Is there a way to make this simpler, clearer, or give the user more control here?"

Document these guidelines in your creative brief or team checklist. You could even create an internal "Calm-First Design Checklist" that designers and writers must go through, e.g.:

- Did I avoid auto-play?
- Did I ensure readability and captioning?

- Did I test with sound on or off?
- Is any motion optional or minimal?
- Is the key message obvious within 5 seconds?
- Did I use inclusive language (no idioms or slang that confuse)?
- Would this potentially overwhelm someone? If yes, revise.

Now with designs ready that adhere to these principles, it's time to bring them to the audience and see how they perform, which leads to step 3.

Once your campaign content is created, it's critical to test its effectiveness – not just in terms of clicks and conversions, but in terms of user experience for neurodivergent and other target users. The Deliver & Test phase ensures that calm-first design choices are actually resonating and identifies any issues to fix before full rollout (or in iterative improvements). Key actions in this phase:

- A/B Testing Calm vs. Traditional Variants: To make a case internally (and to learn externally), run experiments comparing your calm-first approach to a more conventional high-stimulation approach. For example, you might have two versions of a Facebook ad: one with lots of text and bright animation (as previously done), and one with a simplified, calm version. Serve them to statistically significant audiences and compare engagement metrics and sentiment. Do users watch the calm video longer? Do they share or comment positively more? Are the conversion rates different? Our hypothesis (backed by literature) is that calmer content can maintain or even improve conversion by engaging a more comfortable user. But if the traditional one outperforms in clicks, dig deeper: perhaps the calm one builds trust for a later conversion (which might show up in repeat visits or

lower bounce rate). Use qualitative measures too – e.g., run a quick poll via an ad (some platforms allow feedback options), asking “How did this ad make you feel?” or have open comments. If the calm-first version yields responses like “Refreshing ad, not annoying” and the other yields “Ugh, spammy,” you have valuable evidence beyond raw clicks.

- User Testing with Neurodivergent Participants: If possible, conduct usability testing sessions or focus groups specifically including neurodivergent users (autistic, ADHD, etc.) interacting with your delivered content. This could mean having them navigate the new landing page, watch the ad, read the email, etc., while you observe (remotely or in person). Ask them to “think aloud” – note where they stumble, what they like, what bothers them. For example, you might find an autistic tester says, “I got distracted by that background pattern” – something you thought was subtle might still be an issue. Or an ADHD tester might say, “Halfway through the email, I lost interest” – maybe it’s too long or needs an interactive element. Incorporate their feedback. Even a small panel of 5-6 such users can reveal most major usability issues (as per Nielsen Norman's heuristic that 5 users catch most problems). Ensure at least some of your testers are those who normally use assistive tech (screen readers, etc.) or have known sensitivities.
- Gather Emotional and Control Feedback: Don’t just measure what users do, ask them how they feel. Possible questions post-interaction: “Did any part of this experience feel overwhelming or unpleasant?” “Did you feel in control of the content playback and navigation?” “Was anything confusing or unclear?” and conversely “Which parts did you particularly appreciate or find comfortable?” One could incorporate short surveys at the end of a user session or even build it into a beta launch (“Rate your experience: Too

fast-paced, Just right, Too slow?" etc.). If resources permit, biometric or psychological measures can be interesting – e.g., measuring stress levels (heart rate, skin response) in a lab setting with traditional vs calm content, though that's advanced. Even a simple self-report, like a 1-5 scale for stress, is useful. For instance, you might find the calm page yields an average stress rating of 2/5 (low), whereas a busy page yields 4/5. These qualitative metrics underscore the benefits of calm design beyond click-throughs.

- Track Inclusion Metrics: Consider metrics that reflect inclusion. For example, did the number of support tickets or user complaints about accessibility or confusion drop compared to past campaigns? Did engagement from older age groups or known disabled users increase (signaling you reached them better)? If you have a way to identify a segment (like those with accessibility preferences turned on or who browsed your accessibility info page), check whether their conversion rate improved relative to the general audience – that could indicate that your inclusive design improved their ability to convert. Another angle: social listening. Monitor responses on social media – e.g., tweets about "Wow, @YourBrand's site is so easy to use, thank you" or "Appreciate that this ad wasn't sensory overload." These are gold. Conversely, if anyone still has negative feedback ("I hate that video flashing at me"), you catch it and can address it quickly.

Delivery is also about phasing rollouts. If it's a big change from your norm, consider soft-launching to a subset (e.g., 10% of your web traffic sees the new calm homepage) and collect data, adjust, then full launch. This mitigates risk and builds confidence.

Ultimately, the testing should validate two things: (1) you haven't hurt business outcomes – ideally, maintained or improved them; and (2) you have measurably improved user experience for the targeted needs (fewer complaints, better feedback, maybe even increased dwell time

because people aren't fleeing overstimulation). Document these results – they will help make a case for continuing with calm-first strategies and getting buy-in from stakeholders who might be skeptical of moving away from the "louder is better" paradigm.

Step 4: Iterate & Govern – Institutionalize Neuro-Inclusion

Inclusive, calm design is not a one-off project; it's an evolving practice that should be embedded into the organization's way of working. In this final step, the focus is on iteration (continuous improvement based on feedback) and governance (formalizing guidelines and accountability to ensure sustained commitment to neuro-inclusive communication).

- Embed Calm-First in Brand Guidelines: Update your brand style guides to explicitly include the Calm-First principles and concrete standards. For instance, add sections like "Animation policy: No auto-play; all motion must be under X speed" or "Tone of voice: Empathetic, encouraging; avoid fear-based language." Include examples of dos and don'ts with visuals (perhaps a snippet of a before-and-after redesign to illustrate). Make sensory considerations a standard part of creative briefs (e.g., a checkbox or section for "Sensory load level: Low/Medium, plan for controlling it"). By codifying these, you make it easier for new team members, agencies, and anyone who touches campaigns to adhere to neuro-inclusive practices. Essentially, Calm-First should become part of your brand's DNA – just as you have color palettes and logo usage rules, you should have calm design rules. Microsoft's inclusive design toolkit, for example, is a public resource that could serve as inspiration for building your internal one. They emphasize designing for the extremes and provide persona spectrums – you could do similar, like a persona of a user with sensory sensitivity that designers always keep in mind.

- Train Teams and Partners: Conduct training sessions for your marketing and design teams about neurodiversity and calm-first design. Explain the why (share the research, user feedback, and any positive results from your tests). Perhaps invite a neurodivergent advocate or expert to speak about their digital experiences – nothing drives empathy like hearing a real person say, "I often feel excluded by websites because of X." Workshops can be interactive: give teams a before/after example and discuss why the after is better. Also, ensure external partners (ad agencies, contractors) are onboard. Include compliance with these principles in their briefs or contracts. If they produce something that doesn't align, treat it as seriously as misusing your logo – ask for revisions. Over time, you might find team members become champions of these ideas, coming up with innovative solutions (like an engineer implementing a new user preference setting, or a copywriter developing a simpler tone that actually boosts overall engagement).
- Establish Checkpoints and Audits: To keep campaigns on track, incorporate neuro-inclusive review into your workflow. For instance, before final approval of an email blast, have an accessibility champion or a UX person quickly simulate it from a neurodivergent perspective. Maybe even use a checklist derived from the guidelines. It could be one team member's rotating role to do a "sensory audit" of all creative assets each sprint. If something flags (e.g., "This animation is a bit fast, can we slow it or make it user-initiated?"), fix it before launch. Additionally, do periodic broader audits of your communication channels. For example, quarterly review the website or mobile app for any new features that might violate calm-first principles (sometimes things creep in because other teams aren't aware, like a dev adding a new loading spinner that flickers too fast). Maintain a dialogue with customer support and community managers – if they

report that users are complaining about any aspects of content being annoying or overwhelming, treat that as an important issue to address, not just a minor nuisance.

- Iterate Based on Data: Use test results to refine the approach. If, say, testing showed that one aspect was overdone (maybe your "calm" design was so sparse that some users found it boring or unclear), adjust and test again. Iteration might involve adding a bit more visual interest without tipping into overload, or adjusting messaging to still be lively but not stressful. The goal is to find that sweet spot that works for your brand and audience. Keep user feedback channels open continuously – even after launch. Perhaps have a subtle feedback widget ("Was this page comfortable for you to use? Y/N") and monitor it. If you launch a new campaign feature (like a chatbot for customer service), early on, check that it isn't inadvertently frustrating neurodiverse users (does it allow enough time to respond? does it avoid overly complex language?). The process is one of continuous learning and improvement.
- Promote an Inclusive Culture: Encourage team members to share ideas or concerns regarding inclusion. Maybe start meetings with a quick UX tip of the week (e.g., "This week's tip: Did you know too many ALL CAPS words can be read as shouting? Best to use them sparingly."). Celebrate successes – if the metrics show positive outcomes or you get a thank-you note from a user who appreciated the calm experience, share that widely to reinforce motivation. You could even set inclusion goals as part of KPIs – for instance, "reduce bounce rate among older users by X% after redesign" or "achieve a 90% positive feedback rate on post-chat surveys about our communication style." When inclusion becomes a performance objective, it gets the focus it deserves.

- Governance and Ownership: Decide who "owns" oversight of neuro-inclusive communication. It might be part of the UX research team, or perhaps a small committee across marketing, design, and accessibility roles. This group can meet occasionally to review progress, address new challenges, and stay updated on best practices (the field evolves – e.g., new WCAG guidelines might come that affect marketing content, or new research on ADHD and digital interfaces might emerge). Having explicit ownership ensures it doesn't fall through cracks once initial enthusiasm passes. Some companies are even creating roles like "Accessibility Compliance Officer" or adding neurodiversity to the scope of their DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) program scope – marketing should liaise with such roles if they exist.

By institutionalizing these practices, you ensure that calmer, clearer communication isn't just a one-off campaign theme but a lasting competency of your organization. Over time, this becomes a brand differentiator – audiences might come to know that interacting with your brand is refreshingly stress-free compared to others.

In conclusion, following this 4-step toolkit – Discover, Design, Deliver & Test, Iterate & Govern – provides a roadmap to systematically implement the framework proposed in this thesis. Uniquely positioned, this toolkit advances current practice by offering a structured approach to neuro-inclusive communication, filling a critical gap in both academic literature and practical applications. By bridging high-level principles with day-to-day processes, the toolkit enhances existing methodologies, making it an essential resource for marketing professionals. Armed with it, marketers can create campaigns that are not only inclusive and ethical but likely more sustainable and enjoyable for all users in the long run.

With the toolkit laid out, we can now envision how it plays out in specific future scenarios. The next section applies the Calm-First framework in a "mini playbook" form to some hypothetical marketing situations in the emerging realm of EVs and robo-taxis, illustrating concretely how one might execute neuro-inclusive strategies for different user personas.

Application Playbook: Neuro-Inclusive Campaign Scenarios for EV/Robo-Taxi Services

To illustrate the framework in action, let's apply it to a futuristic context that combines technology and daily life: autonomous electric vehicle (EV) ride services (robo-taxis). Consider a company launching self-driving taxi pods in a modern city. They need to market this service to diverse users. I will sketch mini campaign approaches for three scenario personas – an elderly shopper, a parent of a disabled child, and a neurodivergent professional – showing how the Calm-First principles adapt to each use case. Each scenario will include the campaign's message focus and specific guidelines for visuals, audio, copy, and channels as a playbook entry.

Scenario 1: Elderly Shopper – "Independence with a Gentle Ride"

Persona & Context: Margaret is 78, no longer drives, and uses a robo-taxi service for weekly grocery runs. She values safety, simplicity, and reliability. Technology sometimes intimidates her, especially if interfaces are cluttered or fast. The campaign should reassure her that this service is easy and designed for seniors' comfort.

Message Focus: Independence, safety, quiet ride, ease of use. The core message is that this robo-taxi gives back mobility without the stress – "Your calm ride to independence."

Visuals: Use gentle pacing in any video – for instance, an advertisement might show Margaret stepping into a small futuristic vehicle in front of her home, then a calm drive through her

neighborhood, and arriving at the store. Shots should last a few seconds each, not rapid-fire. Highlight clear, friendly interface screens in the vehicle or app: e.g., the app has large, readable text ("Pick-up at 10:00 AM confirmed"), and the vehicle interior might have a simple display "Next stop: Supermarket" in large font. Show these screens in the ad so viewers see the simplicity (this addresses Clarity and builds trust that she can use it). The color palette can be warm and inviting – perhaps soft blues/greens (for calm) combined with high contrast text. Include imagery of helpful features, such as a robo-taxi kneeling down or extending a ramp for easy boarding (if mobility is an issue). This visual assures safety and accessibility. Emphasize Margaret's smile and relaxed body language during the ride to convey comfort and ease.

No flashy transitions – maybe a gentle fade through scenes or a slow pan around the interior showing spacious seating and perhaps a button labeled "Help" or "Stop" (demonstrating Control availability). We might show her using a simple one-button key fob or voice command to call the car, reinforcing how easy it is (Continuity – same straightforward interaction each time). Visual continuity across campaign materials: if a brochure is given at a senior center, use the same large fonts and friendly car graphic as in the video. This consistency will help recognition.

Audio: Calm narration by a mature, empathetic voice (perhaps a female voice in her 60s) saying: "Your ride is here. Enjoy the journey at your own pace…" etc. The tone should be reassuring and clear, not too fast. The background could be soft instrumental music – maybe a gentle piano melody or light strings – something familiar and soothing that evokes positive feelings (perhaps reminiscent of 60s or 70s easy listening, connecting to her era, but kept at a low volume). Ensure the voiceover speaks slowly enough for older ears to catch every word (slightly slower than typical ads). No sudden honking sounds or tech noises; if demonstrating a vehicle sound, keep it

subtle (electric vehicles are quiet – highlight that by perhaps mentioning “Notice how quiet it is?” which doubles as a safety (hearing surroundings) and calm feature).

Copy: The headline for this persona’s campaign might be something like: “A Ride as Gentle as a Sunday Drive.” Subheader: “Automated taxis that put you in control – enjoy independence with every trip.” Note the emphasis on gentleness and control. The body copy in a flyer or web page can list three simple bullet points, e.g.: “- Simple Booking: One tap or call to schedule. Our app’s large-text mode is senior-friendly. - Safe & Caring: Our vehicles are driven carefully and even help you on and off. - Quiet Comfort: No more noisy shuttles – just a peaceful ride where you can enjoy the view.” The language avoids any jargon (no “LIDAR” or “AI-powered”; instead, focus on user benefit). It’s positive and invites trust, not focusing on fear (“safe” is mentioned but as a feature, not saying “Don’t worry about accidents,” which could instill worry). The CTA could be, “Schedule a Try-It Ride – We’ll guide you through it.” This suggests hand-holding, which this persona might appreciate. In any direct mail or brochure, include testimonials from other seniors (“I haven’t driven in years, but now I get to my store every week with ease. – John, 82”) – these can reinforce trust in a calm way. No heavy urgency; perhaps just “Available in YourCity now – take your first ride free.”

Channels: Use channels elderly users engage with and trust, such as local community newspapers or radio, with a calm voiceover. At senior centers or churches, distribute printed brochures with the same info and big text (some may not use smartphones confidently). Possibly a local TV spot in afternoon programming where many older viewers are tuned in – the TV ad should mirror the visuals and audio we described. Also, ensure the service’s support line is highlighted; older users often prefer calling, so marketing should state “Have questions? Call us 24/7 – (phone number)” with a promise that a human will guide them (this addresses Consent

and Clarity by giving them a control route to get info). Overall, the campaign makes them feel this advanced tech is approachable, tailored for them, and calm, not crazy futuristic.

Scenario 2: Parent of a Disabled Child – "Rides You Can Rely On, Care You Can Trust"

Persona & Context: John is the father of a 10-year-old son with Angelman Syndrome (as in our introduction). His child has significant developmental delays, limited speech, and sensory sensitivities. For such a parent, unpredictability is a major stressor – they need assurance that a transportation service won't throw curveballs that could upset their child. They also value features that give them oversight and customization for their child's special needs.

Message Focus: Predictability, sensory comfort, caregiver control. Essentially: "A transportation service designed for your peace of mind and your child's comfort." Emphasize routine and trust – it's always the same, safe experience, and the parent is always in the loop.

Visuals: Consistent imagery should be key. The campaign could visually tell a short story: Each day, the same robo-taxi arrives at John's house at 3pm to take his son to therapy. Show that same vehicle, same route, same routine in imagery. For example, ad 1 shows Day 1, ad 2 shows Day 5, and everything looks familiar (Continuity). The child enters the vehicle with maybe the same comforting toy or tablet each time (implying the environment is conducive to the child's coping strategies). Use routine emphasis: e.g., sequence of shots might always include the child buckling into their special car seat (the car is accessible and prepared for that), John checking an app that shows "En Route: 15 minutes to Therapy Center" (so he can track progress – an important Control visual), and then the child being greeted by a therapist at drop-off.

Visual tone: bright but soft. Perhaps natural daylight scenes (morning or afternoon calm light). Include consistency in actors/props: maybe the vehicle even has a setting where John can set the

interior lighting or music, and the ad shows the same gentle blue lighting inside each time – establishing continuity that the child won't be shocked by new environments. Also demonstrate customization: e.g., one scene could show John using the app to set "Quiet Mode" before the ride arrives – perhaps an icon of a music note off and a screen "Audio off, minimal talking" so viewers see that the parent can ensure a low-sensory ride (Sensory Load management). The visuals should be steady, possibly even somewhat repetitive from day to day – that's intentional to convey routine (unlike typical ads, which avoid repetition; here, it's a positive).

Audio: The audio in such a campaign should convey reliability and warmth. Perhaps use a calm male or female narrator – maybe a fatherly tone voiceover: "Every family's routine is different. We help keep it running smoothly…" The script should mention things like: "Choose your child's preferred settings once, and every ride feels just like the last – comfortable and calm." Include subtle ambient sounds of the car interior – maybe the gentle hum of the EV, but overall quiet. If including any dialogue, maybe John saying to his child, "Have a good ride, see you there!" and the child smiling – implying the child is at ease too, no distress sounds. Avoid any frenetic or emotionally triggering sounds; keep background music minimal, or maybe none at all – silence can underline calmness here (or very light instrumental). Possibly incorporate a soft chime to indicate notifications – like John's phone ding when the car arrives – but make it pleasant and low-volume (maybe like a doorbell or gentle bell, not a harsh alert beep).

Copy: Headline example: "A Ride You Can Trust for the One You Love." Subheading: "Customize every trip for your child's comfort – and keep track every mile of the way." The language directly addresses the emotional need (trust, love) but stays positive (not "Worried about your child's commute? We'll fix that!" which focuses on worry). Use words like "calmer, quieter way to travel". For bullet points or short blurbs: "- Predictable Routine: Schedule regular

rides at the same times and see the same friendly vehicle and AI driver each trip. - Sensory-Friendly: No unexpected noises or lights – you set the preferences (like no music, dim lighting) so your child rides comfortably every time. - You're in Control: Live GPS tracking and instant contact at your fingertips – you'll know exactly where they are and can speak up if needed." Note how each starts with the benefit and is phrased positively. Possibly include a brief testimonial: ""This service has been a game-changer for our family. My daughter feels safe, and I get some peace of mind." – Parent of a child with autism." Social proof from similar situations can reassure John that he's not alone and that it works for others.

CTA: something like "Experience a Stress-Free Ride – Sign up for a Trial." Possibly offer a first supervised test ride (e.g., "Ride together with us once at no cost" – since a caregiver might want to test it personally with the child first). That shows understanding of their caution.

Channels: Find John likely via parenting networks or special needs communities. For instance, partner with therapy centers or schools for special needs – provide flyers or demos there. Facebook groups for special needs parents would be good for targeted ads (with our calm static or video content), as these parents often share resources. Ensure the landing page for such ads includes detailed FAQs about safety, and maybe even an option to chat with a representative (some prefer to talk to build trust). Email campaigns could go out via partner mailing lists (e.g., a newsletter from a disability advocacy org recommending accessible services). Emphasize that aspect in channel wording, e.g., subject line: "A transportation solution designed for kids with special needs" – that will stand out to a parent scanning their email.

Make sure customer support is well-briefed – if John calls with questions, they should respond in that same calm, understanding manner and have info on sensory accommodations, etc. Word-of-mouth is big in such communities, so consider doing a case study or story (with a

willing family) that you can share – e.g., a blog post or YouTube short docu-story featuring a parent and child duo using the service successfully. That narrative (with real people) can be very assuring if done authentically and calmly.

Scenario 3: Neurodivergent Professional – "Your Peaceful Commute, Your Way"

Persona & Context: Alex is a 35-year-old software developer who identifies as autistic. He works in a busy city and finds driving stressful, while public transit is socially draining. A quiet, solo robo-taxi ride is appealing as it would let him either focus on work or decompress without having to interact. However, he's concerned about giving up control to a machine and whether the environment will truly be quiet enough (no chatter, no unwanted small talk from drivers or co-riders). The campaign should position the service as a personal oasis for commuting professionals who value focus or downtime.

Message Focus: Quiet focus time, reduced social friction, personal control. Essentially: "Commute without the chaos – a ride designed for your focus and comfort." It's as much about removing negatives (no small talk, no unpredictable delays) as providing positives (time to get in the zone or relax).

Visuals: Serene interior environment: Show Alex sitting in the robo-taxi, maybe with morning coffee in hand and laptop open, or eyes closed with headphones (whichever scenario emphasizes – could do two versions, one focusing on work, one on relaxing). The interior is shown as calm: perhaps soft lighting, no other passengers (an explicit contrast to, say, a crowded train image possibly shown briefly as a "before"). Clear UI panels could appear in the shot showing options the user has – e.g., Alex taps a panel to adjust lighting or temperature, or to put up a "Do not disturb" sign (the vehicle's AI knows not to initiate any conversation or announcements beyond the necessary). Actually, an interesting visual: maybe a toggle labeled "Quiet Mode" on the car's

interface that Alex switches on – indicating no auditory ads or talk will happen. Many ride-share experiences now have a "quiet preferred" option; highlight that as a central feature (Consent/Control).

Shots of cityscapes through windows quietly passing by emphasize movement without stress – unlike car commercials that zoom through cities at high speed; here, it's at a normal pace, and Alex is calm inside. Perhaps in one shot, he slightly smiles as he focuses on his screen – indicating he's comfortable enough to work. Another could show him gazing out the window at the skyline – implying mental relaxation (maybe switching from focus in the morning to decompress in the evening ride). Continuity: maintain a consistent aesthetic – maybe the car always greets him with his chosen settings and a welcome message by name (the ad might show "Good evening, Alex" on a screen to personalize and emphasize continuity day to day). Use cool, professional color tones – think blues, grays, with maybe an accent of the brand color. It should feel modern and premium (to appeal to pride in tech), but not flashy.

Include the ability to adjust the seat or environment depicted – e.g., he may recline the seat or choose ambient noise soundscapes from a tablet. These visuals communicate that he can tailor the ride to support his neurodivergent needs (some autistics use things like white noise or have particular comfort items – you can hint at that, e.g., show him put on noise-cancelling earbuds, etc.).

Audio: The voiceover or text should highlight silence as a feature. Maybe even start the ad with a moment of quiet – a rarity in ads – to grab attention by calm. Then a voice like a gentle tech narrator: "Leave the small talk and stress behind. Welcome to your quiet commute." Emphasize words like "quiet," "your rhythm," "your pace. The background might actually benefit from a subtle ambient sound rather than music – like the soft hum of the car and maybe distant city

sounds muffled (to really simulate that feeling of being cocooned). If music, perhaps a very low-fi chill track or gentle synth that is repetitive and non-lyrical (as lyrics could break concentration). Another approach: incorporate a subtle heartbeat-like sound or breathing-like rhythm in the audio to subliminally cue calm and focus. But maybe simplest: minimal music, focus on crisp narration and slight vehicle sounds (like turn signal clicking softly – which is a normally irritating sound, but if it's very soft, it emphasizes normalcy). At the end, maybe a gentle chime or positive sound cue, like when you finish a meditation, to signify arrival at the destination, feeling refreshed.

Copy: Headline: "Commute on Your Terms. No Noise, No Stress." Supporting line: "A quiet ride designed for your focus, your rhythm, your peace." Using the repetition of "your" signals the control aspect. The description can hit points: "- No Small Talk, Guaranteed: Our autonomous pods come without chatter – unless you want it. Enjoy silence or your own music. - Focus or Unwind: Catch up on emails with zero distractions, or just relax in a comfortable seat as we drive. You're free to be in your own world. - You're the Boss: Set your preferences for lighting, temperature, and even how much information the vehicle provides. It won't interrupt you – you're in control." This language underscores the pain points (small talk, interruptions) by framing their absence as benefits, but without sounding negative. I avoid explicitly bashing other modes ("Tired of chatty drivers?" could be used but might sound negative; instead, we positively assert "no small talk" as a feature, which those in the know will appreciate).

Perhaps a clever tagline at the end: "Finally, a commute that's as productive (or as relaxing) as you want it to be." CTA: "Schedule Your First Quiet Ride." Possibly add something like "First week free for new users" to entice, but not with lots of exclamation points – keep it calm.

Channels: Likely digital channels where professionals like Alex are – e.g., LinkedIn ads (there you can target by job and mention productivity angle). Also, Reddit or Hacker News-type communities, if that fits – those places might engage in a discussion, so be sure to phrase it as "introducing an option for those who prefer calm" to avoid seeming spammy. Perhaps partnerships with co-working spaces or tech conferences (imagine offering quiet ride demos to conference attendees who often suffer chaotic travel – appeals to that persona). Late-night radio/podcast slots that tech workers might listen to (with our calmer ad). Even placing an ad on a productivity or mindfulness app might work (e.g., an in-app ad in a focus timer app: "Take your focus on the road with a calm commute.").

The key is to reach Alex in moments when he's frustrated by his current commuting or receptive to improving his daily routine. Maybe a sponsored article on a site like Fast Company: "The Rise of the Quiet Commute: How autonomous taxis are catering to introverts and thinkers." It would indirectly market the service by highlighting exactly the appeals we've identified, with a mention of the brand. That content approach could validate Alex's feelings and present the solution in a non-pushy, intellectual way.

Additionally, ensure the sign-up process for such users is itself calm and straightforward (back to continuity): a few steps, clear privacy terms (they'll likely be sensitive to data sharing). And emphasize privacy in messaging too ("Your rides are private. No driver, and we never listen in." That addresses a likely concern about being monitored).

Each of these scenarios demonstrates tailoring the Calm-First framework to different needs: an elderly shopper focuses on clarity, reassurance, and simplicity; a caregiver focuses on predictability, control, and trust; a neurodivergent professional focuses on autonomy, quiet, and the removal of unwanted stimuli. In all cases, the five pillars guided the creative strategy –

Sensory Load kept low and adjustable, Clarity in messaging and interface, Control given to user or parent, Consent (no forced interactions or surprises), Continuity (routines, consistent experiences).

This mini playbook shows that designing campaigns for specific use cases yields not only more inclusive content but also very compelling value propositions that might have been overlooked if one designed for a generic "mass audience." By thinking through the lens of someone with particular sensitivities or needs, we created campaigns that are likely appealing to others as well. For example, many non-neurodivergent people also hate small talk on commutes – they'd love scenario 3 too. The caregiver scenario could also attract safety-conscious parents. The senior scenario might appeal to people with disabilities of any age who want a calm ride. This reinforces the principle that inclusive design often benefits many.

With these concrete applications, we see the framework's versatility. Next, we will reflect on how the creation of this framework and its applications connect back to the author's own experiences and the professional journey that informed this research – essentially, why this approach matters personally and how it came to be.

Reflection: From Lived Experience to Framework (Validation of Acquired Experience)

This framework did not emerge in a vacuum – it is the product of more than eight years of professional communications work combined with personal lived experience as a neurodivergent individual and sibling to someone with profound disabilities. In the spirit of a doctoral journey rooted in practice (often termed a Validation of Acquired Experience, or VAE, in professional

doctoral programs), it's important to reflect on how real-world lessons shaped the calm-first approach and, in turn, how this framework reshapes my approach to communications.

Professional Lessons Learned (and Relearned)

Throughout my career in marketing and communications – spanning higher education, Greek-life nonprofits, and small businesses – I often defined success by metrics such as click-through rates, conversions, and time spent engaging. The pressure to deliver results often led me to use attention-grabbing tactics praised in the industry: bold headlines, countdown timers, sensational wording, and high-contrast designs. And indeed, those sometimes spiked short-term metrics. But with time, I noticed patterns that troubled me:

- Campaigns optimized for raw engagement often ignore user comfort. For example, I ran an email campaign for a university event, sending daily reminder emails with flashy GIFs and urgent subject lines. While attendance increased, we also saw a rise in unsubscribes and complaints such as "This is too much spam." In retrospect, those emails likely overwhelmed recipients – especially students who already get bombarded by digital notifications. Our strategy valued immediate clicks over the audience's trust and mental ease.
- Accessibility was treated as a checkbox at the end. When building websites, we'd run through the WCAG checklist for alt text and color contrast, but we rarely considered accessibility in the initial creative phase. As a result, accessibility fixes felt like band-aids – e.g., adding alt text to an infographic that was still far too busy for many neurodivergent users to parse. I realized that by baking inclusion in from the start, the end result would be naturally more accessible, rather than accessible "enough" by

technicality. Yet earlier in my career, this just wasn't the mindset – we were retrofitting rather than designing for inclusion from the start.

- Platform reward vs. user well-being: I also saw how we often chased what the platform algorithms rewarded ("that's what the platform rewarded" as I once rationalized loud designs). For instance, in social media, we used memes, trending loud styles, etc., because they got shares. But some of those were antithetical to our brand's purported values of dignity and respect. I remember designing an Instagram story takeover for a fraternity event with rapid-fire flashy transitions – it got lots of views, but later, one member (with epilepsy) thanked me that we at least put an epilepsy warning upfront. That struck me: I had prioritized platform engagement so much that I nearly put someone at physical risk. The gap between what platforms push (constant stimulation) and what some users need (slower pace) became glaring.

Over time, these experiences sowed seeds of doubt about the "standard" approach. I started to imagine alternative ways to measure success – like user satisfaction, lower churn, positive feedback – not just click numbers. Had I revisited some of those early campaigns with a Calm-First lens, I would have done things very differently. For example:

- Simplified layouts, even if it meant maybe fewer immediate clicks, banking on better comprehension and long-term engagement.
- Avoided "shock factor" intros entirely – I recall one video I made opening with a loud alarm sound to jolt attention for a safety PSA; now I cringe at that tactic, knowing it might have caused anxiety, especially in an already anxious campus environment.

- Offered mute options by default on video content. At the fraternity HQ, we once sent a video message that auto-played with sound on when opened – some members told me later it embarrassed them at work because they weren't expecting noise. Today, I'd ensure such content is muted by default or clearly labeled.

These lessons were accentuated by my own growing self-awareness as a neurodivergent professional. I identify with ADHD and some autistic traits (though I mask well), and I found that I was often overwhelmed by the very content I was creating or overseeing. After a day of coordinating a rapid-fire social media campaign, I felt mentally fried, not accomplished. Something was off if the makers themselves are depleted by the pace and style of content.

Personal Motivations and Insights

On the personal side, having a sister with Angelman Syndrome – a condition causing severe cognitive and motor impairments – has given me a unique window into how profoundly the environment affects accessibility. I have seen firsthand how she brightens in calm, structured settings and how she can shut down or act out in chaotic, loud environments. For example, when we go to a shopping mall, the blaring music and crowds can lead her to cover her ears and cry – an experience of sensory overload that is invisible to most but very real. In contrast, at home, when things are predictable and quieter, she is attentive and happy in her way.

Translating this to digital media: I've often thought about what it would take for someone like my sister to benefit from an online message or service. While she doesn't use computers on her own, treating her as an extreme case has been instructive. She needs simplicity (only one thing at a time), clarity (visual cues she can understand, as she is nonverbal), and definitely no flashing lights (she has epilepsy, as many with Angelman do). An "Angelman-friendly" design is

basically one that is extremely gentle and straightforward. Now, I recognize most digital campaigns aren't targeting individuals with such profound needs, but designing for that extreme could inadvertently cover many others (the curb-cut effect again). This fueled my passion: it felt ethical to try to make communications accessible to the broadest range, including those at the margins like my sister, and I strongly felt (and have shown in this thesis) that doing so doesn't detract from the mainstream experience – it often enhances it.

Another personal angle is my own experience with anxiety. Even though I work in communications, I often find today's digital landscape personally stress-inducing: constant Slack pings, news alerts, and multitasking multiple channels. I've learned coping strategies (I keep my phone on silent and use extensions that blank out social media feeds to focus). These coping strategies are essentially ways to manufacture calm for myself in a world that doesn't naturally provide it. And I'm someone with presumably strong agency over my media consumption. The thought that there are vulnerable people without the tools or knowledge to mitigate digital stress – that compelled me to change how we, as communicators, deliver content in the first place. Why should the onus always be on the user to filter, mute, or block? Why not reduce the harm at the source?

This kind of lived incident underscores the point: communication happens in real lives, not in a silo. People might be with kids, at work, dealing with sensory sensitivities, etc., when they encounter our content. It reinforced my resolve that making campaigns calmer and clearer is not just nicer, it's necessary to avoid unintended harm.

The Framework's Impact on My Practice

This reflection also serves to cement how the Calm-First framework has changed my approach going forward:

- Consulting perspective: As I advise organizations now, I prioritize inclusive communication as a core strategy, not an afterthought. I can say with confidence to a client: making your campaign calmer and more accessible will not dilute your brand – it will strengthen it by aligning with the values of respect and by tapping overlooked audience segments. My experiences provide anecdotal evidence, but now with this thesis research, I have scholarly backing and case studies to persuade stakeholders who might otherwise think, "but the flashy stuff works." I can point to instances where the flashy stuff backfired (like our unsubscribes and complaints) and how inclusive design can preempt such negative outcomes.
- Training teams: Internally, I'll implement training (as mentioned in the toolkit), for instance, simulating how an autistic user experiences a typical piece of content vs. an improved version. I can draw from my sister's reactions as an example narrative. When I've informally done this in conversations, colleagues often had an aha moment – like, "I never thought that auto-play could scare someone that badly." It builds empathy. I foresee making it a regular agenda item to discuss user comfort in creative reviews, which in earlier years would focus solely on brand consistency or messaging accuracy.
- Guiding principles redefined: Personally, I now consider "Is it humane?" as a litmus test for communications, whereas earlier in my career, I mainly considered "Is it effective (by numbers) and on-brand?" Humanity and effectiveness are not opposed, but it took time to realize how to articulate that to others. This framework gives me the language – five pillars – to break down what "humane" means in design terms. It's not just a gut feeling; it's Sensory Load, Clarity, etc., which we can measure and design for.

- Long-term vision: This reflective journey solidified something deeper: I want to champion a shift in digital marketing culture toward sustainability – not just environmental (we talk of sustainable tech in terms of emissions) but cognitive sustainability. Much like the climate movement urges reducing pollution for planetary health, I see reducing "attention pollution" (as some call it) as vital for societal mental health. My contribution through this framework and future work is a small piece in that puzzle – focusing on those most impacted by overstimulation can drive innovation that helps everyone, just as curb cuts help more than wheelchair users.

In summary, this reflection ties back to the introduction: I opened with the discomfort I felt creating hyper-stimulating content and observing its effects on neurodivergent and disabled users. Now, coming full circle, the Calm-First framework is both a product of and a response to those experiences. It formalizes what I have been informally gravitating toward – a compass for designing communication that doesn't just yell the loudest, but communicates the clearest and with the most care.

Going forward, I intend to live out these principles in all my communication roles – whether designing a campaign or setting organizational policy. It feels like aligning my professional practice with my personal values and lived insights, which is a deeply satisfying convergence that this doctoral exploration has enabled.

Limitations and Future Steps

(Transitioning to the next section: acknowledging that while my experience-driven approach is valuable, it also has limits and requires future formal research to generalize, which I will discuss in the limitations.)

Limitations and Future Research Directions

No study is without its constraints, and it's important to be transparent about what this thesis did and did not encompass, as well as how future work could build upon it. Below, I outline key limitations of the current research and propose directions for future investigation to further advance neuro-inclusive digital communication.

Limitations of This Study

- Scope of Case Studies: This thesis focused on a small number of illustrative brands (Tesla, Calm, Apple, and, hypothetically, others) to identify patterns. While these provided valuable insights, the case selection is not exhaustive. The findings might not fully represent all industries or types of campaigns. For instance, we didn't thoroughly examine sectors such as healthcare, finance, or global markets, where communication norms differ. The chosen cases were primarily U.S.-based and oriented toward tech or wellness. A different set of cases (e.g., a high-fashion brand, a news media outlet, a government public service campaign) might reveal additional challenges or strategies. To address generalizability concerns and explore the transferability of the framework, it is important to consider how this framework could be adapted or tested in other sectors and cultural contexts. For example, integrating these principles into healthcare communication might require tailoring approaches to account for regulatory standards and ethical considerations central to patient privacy. Similarly, applying the framework in global markets would involve understanding diverse cultural interpretations of what constitutes 'calm' or 'clear' messaging, potentially yielding new insights or adaptations essential for universal applicability. In short, the case studies serve as examples to

illustrate the framework, but more are needed to generalize conclusions across the marketing landscape.

- Non-Experimental Nature: The recommendations and conclusions drawn here are based on qualitative analysis, design principles, and logical argumentation supported by literature. I did not conduct a controlled experiment (e.g., an A/B test on a live audience with measured psychological outcomes) within the scope of this dissertation. Thus, while I hypothesize certain outcomes (such as calmer campaigns that maintain engagement while improving user well-being), I did not collect primary empirical data to statistically verify these claims at scale. The evidence is persuasive but not "hard proof" in the scientific sense. The Calm-First framework is presented as a conceptual and practical model that appears warranted by existing knowledge, but it would benefit from experimental validation (e.g., measuring stress hormone levels or using eye-tracking to determine whether users are indeed less stressed or more focused with calm-first content).
- Primarily U.S.-centric and English-centric Analysis: The cultural context of this thesis is largely the United States (with some references to Western design norms). All the sources and cases were in English. This is a limitation because perceptions of what is "overstimulating" or "clear" can vary across cultures. For example, some cultures find more vibrant, fast-paced visuals engaging and not necessarily exclusionary (one might think of certain East Asian advertising styles that are very high-energy), whereas others prefer minimalism. The social model of disability also interacts with culture – e.g., attitudes toward neurodiversity vary globally (in some countries, open discussion of neurodivergence is less common, which could affect how inclusive design is

approached). (Kilicheva & Karomat, n.d.) Thus, the recommendations might need adaptation in non-U.S. contexts, and further research should consider international perspectives. Regulatory environments differ too (Europe's GDPR vs. U.S. standards might influence marketing consent practices, for instance).

- Focus on Digital Campaigns, Not All Communications: I targeted "digital campaigns" specifically – mainly marketing content on web, mobile, email, social. This means the framework is directly applied in those realms. However, many principles could apply to broader communication (such as UX design for products, physical advertising spaces, etc.). I briefly touched on emerging modalities (VR, AR, digital billboards) as future directions, but did not delve into them. As such, one should be cautious in extending every finding to those domains without further analysis. Also, I didn't deeply cover content types like gaming or educational content, which have their own dynamics but could benefit from calm design (this could be another future area).
- Possible Confirmation Bias: Given my personal and professional passion for the topic, there's a chance of bias in interpreting information to fit the narrative (although I tried to mitigate this with ample citations and by considering counterpoints in findings). I have not presented cases where hyper-stimulation might have been unavoidable or effective without harm (maybe emergency alerts, or certain entertainment contexts). An overly one-sided view could be a limitation; however, I have acknowledged that excitement and calmness need not be mutually exclusive and attempted a balanced tone. Future research could more rigorously challenge the assumptions (e.g., identify scenarios where some neurodivergent users might actually prefer stimulation – for instance, some ADHD individuals seek stimulating content; how to reconcile that with calm-first?).

Furthermore, certain environments or situations might inherently benefit from higher stimulation levels. For example, educational settings or high-energy fitness classes may employ stimulating visuals and audio to maintain engagement and motivation. The Calm-First Framework should be adaptable, offering flexibility to accommodate such contexts where higher stimulation is not only expected but beneficial. By addressing these diverse preferences and scenarios, the framework becomes more comprehensive and universally applicable.

Directions for Future Research

Building on this work, several avenues could deepen and expand understanding:

- Empirical Impact Studies: It would be immensely valuable to conduct experimental research on the effects of calm-first design on neurodivergent and neurotypical users. For example, a study could recruit autistic, ADHD, and neurotypical participants, present them with pairs of campaign materials – one conventional, one calm-first – and measure outcomes such as comprehension quiz scores, self-reported anxiety levels, preferences, memory recall, etc. Psychophysiological measures (heart rate, Galvanic skin response) during exposure could objectively indicate stress levels. If such a study shows a statistically significant reduction in stress or improved recall for the calm-first version without a drop in engagement, it would scientifically validate the approach, persuading more industry adoption. Conversely, it might reveal nuances (e.g., maybe ADHD participants perform better with a bit more stimulation than autistic participants do, implying personalized adjustability is key).

- In-Depth User Research with Specific Neurodivergent Groups: Future work could delve into specific segments, e.g., a study focusing solely on autistic adults' responses to various digital ad styles, or one for anxiety-prone users (e.g., those diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder). Using qualitative methods like interviews or diaries, researchers could uncover very granular pain points or suggestions that a broad study might miss. For instance, maybe autistic users will mention metaphors or idioms in copy that are confusing (thus supporting more literal clarity), or ADHD users might mention that interactive elements help them engage (thus suggesting controlled interactivity as part of calm design). Such targeted research would refine guidelines – indeed, the field of cognitive accessibility for digital content is growing, and aligning marketing with those findings is a ripe area for exploration.
- Cross-Cultural and Global Research: As noted, applying this framework in non-Western contexts is important. Future research could examine, for example, how neurodiversity inclusion is handled in Japanese or Brazilian digital campaigns. Are their norms different? Could calm-first principles improve the user experience there, too, or do they need to be modified? Collaborations with international scholars could produce comparative studies. Also, exploring regulatory impacts: e.g., how do Europe's stricter consent laws affect neuro-inclusive practices? Perhaps in Europe, pop-ups are regulated, which inadvertently helps neurodivergent users by reducing one pain point. This interplay is worth studying, possibly via policy analysis and user studies across regions.
- New Modalities: Emerging tech like VR and AR present both threats and opportunities for neurodivergent users. A future study might prototype a "calm-first VR advertisement" versus a typical VR ad and measure user comfort and recall within VR. Similarly, as

physical spaces become more digitized (digital billboards, IoT devices pushing notifications), research can extend calm-first principles to those domains. For example, what does a neuro-inclusive digital billboard look like? Perhaps it's one that adapts (goes low motion in areas known for pedestrian epilepsy incidents, etc.). This overlaps with design for physical accessibility. Studies could, for example, evaluate whether calmer digital signage in a mall leads to a better shopping experience for older adults or autistic visitors. This touches on disciplines of environmental psychology and HCI in public spaces.

- Longitudinal Brand Impact: Another valuable direction is to examine long-term brand metrics for companies that adopt inclusive, calm communication. Does it correlate with higher customer loyalty, reduced customer service calls, or better brand reputation? A researcher could conduct a longitudinal case study of a company before and after implementing these changes (e.g., Microsoft or AT&T, which has begun focusing on accessibility) and track changes in customer sentiment or market share across segments (e.g., disabled consumers). This would help build the business case at the executive strategy level, showing that calm-first design isn't just ethically sound but strategically smart. This might require isolating variables, which is tricky, but a combination of surveys (customer perception over time) and hard data could reveal trends.
- Neurodiversity and AI/Automation in Marketing: As marketing increasingly uses AI (for personalization, chatbots, content generation), research should probe how to embed calm-first, neuro-inclusive guidelines into these systems. For example, an AI that personalizes a website could detect a user's low-stimulation preference (maybe via settings or behavior) and automatically simplify the page. This ties into adaptive web

design. Studying user acceptance and outcomes of such adaptive models would be cutting-edge. It also touches on ethical use of personal data (detecting neurodivergence from browsing patterns is possible but sensitive) – a critical interdisciplinary research area bridging tech and ethics.

- Disability and Inclusion Policy Influence: On a broader scale, future research could engage with policymakers or industry standards organizations to push for neuro-inclusion in guidelines. Right now, WCAG has some related criteria (e.g., flashing), but one could envision more explicit guidelines or certifications for cognitive accessibility in marketing. Scholars could contribute by drafting evidence-based recommendations that bodies such as the ADA, FCC, or FTC (in the context of advertising standards) might adopt. Even voluntary certifications (like an "Inclusive Communications Certified" badge for brands that meet certain calm-first criteria) could be developed and tested – do consumers respond positively to such badges? This could be surveyed.

In conclusion, this thesis lays the groundwork, but much work remains to refine, validate, and expand the Calm-First Neuro-Inclusive Communication Framework. The optimistic view is that future research, in collaboration with practitioners, can sustain the momentum, so that in a decade what we call "neuro-inclusive calm design" today will simply be standard best practice for all digital communication – to the benefit of businesses and users alike.

Conclusion: The Ethical and Strategic Imperative for Calmer, Clearer Campaigns

We live in an age of information overload and relentless digital stimuli. Brands are vying harder than ever for a few seconds of attention in what's often called the "attention economy," leading many to push content that is louder, flashier, and more interruptive. This thesis has argued that

there is a better way forward, one that respects the neurological diversity of audiences and, in doing so, fosters more genuine and sustainable engagement. By designing calmer, clearer digital campaigns, brands do more than just accommodate a minority; they pioneer a communication ethos that benefits everyone in an overstimulating world. The essence of this thesis is that the future of marketing lies not in who can yell the loudest to capture attention, but in who can earn trust by communicating thoughtfully and inclusively.

Ethical Imperative

At its heart, embracing neuro-inclusive, calm-first communication is an ethical choice. It aligns marketing practices with values of accessibility, diversity, and respect for individual well-being. When digital media chronically overstimulates or triggers anxiety in neurodivergent and disabled users, it effectively excludes them from full participation in the digital sphere. This is not a trivial inconvenience; it's a matter of equity and human rights. The social model of disability reminds us that disability is often created by the environment – in this case, a hyperactive digital environment can disable someone who would be fine in a calmer context. Brands that truly believe in inclusion must recognize this and act on it. Many companies today publish commitments to DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion); making their digital communications neuro-inclusive is a tangible way to honor those commitments beyond tokenism. Furthermore, it's simply the right thing to do. Just as physical architecture moved toward universal design (ramps, elevators, clear signage) out of a duty to include, digital architecture (including marketing content) should move toward universal cognitive accessibility. The testimonies and scenarios presented – from the autistic professional finding relief in a quiet commute to the caregiver trusting a predictable service for their child – highlight the profound positive impact that thoughtful communication design can have on quality of life. We, as communicators, hold

the power to reduce harm and stress through our choices and thus have an ethical responsibility to wield that power with care.

Strategic Imperative

Ethically sound practices often dovetail with strategic advantage, and neuro-inclusive calm campaigns are no exception. First, consider the market opportunity: at least 15-20% of the population is neurodivergent, the global population is aging (with increasing numbers facing cognitive changes), and virtually everyone experiences digital fatigue at times. Designing campaigns that these groups can engage with comfortably opens brands to more customers and deeper loyalty. When campaigns feel better to users, those users are more likely to trust the brand and become repeat customers. Trust and emotional safety, once damaged by an annoying or distressing campaign, are hard to rebuild; avoiding that damage in the first place is a wise strategy. I saw in the case of Calm and Tesla that calm-first approaches did not hinder those brands – indeed, Calm built an entire $2B business by being the calm alternative. It stands to reason that brands in other sectors can differentiate themselves by providing a refuge from the noise. In a saturated ad landscape, a moment of genuine calm can actually be more memorable than yet another flashy montage (as paradoxical as that may seem from an old-school marketing view).

Second, there are efficiency gains. Inclusive design often identifies issues early (as our toolkit recommends embedding these principles in the design phase), potentially saving costs on retrofitting or damage control. For instance, a campaign that avoids a PR mishap (e.g., an outcry from disability advocates because an ad triggered seizures or was deemed insensitive) not only saves face but saves the literal cost of pulling ads or issuing apologies. Rather, a campaign built on inclusive principles can yield positive PR – showing a brand is thoughtful. Many consumers

(especially younger ones) value brands that demonstrate social consciousness; neuro-inclusion could be part of that brand story, much as eco-friendliness and diversity are.

Third, the long-term sustainability of marketing is at stake. As I reflect on the future digital world – possibly filled with even more immersive ads, AI-driven personalization, and ubiquitous screens – the risk of a continued "arms race" for attention is burnout: users increasingly using ad-blockers, regulation stepping in (already, we see moves to ban certain disruptive practices), and a general erosion of consumer-brand relationships. A calm-first approach is more sustainable because it works with the grain of human attention and cognition rather than against it. It opts for quality of engagement over sheer quantity. Such quality engagement drives word-of-mouth referrals, brand love, and customer lifetime value. Overstimulating campaigns might get a click today, but can deaden responsiveness tomorrow (people become conditioned to ignore or avoid the onslaught). Calmer campaigns, by contrast, have the potential to create voluntary engagement – users come back because they feel respected and comfortable. That's a far more stable foundation for marketing effectiveness.

In conclusion, designing neuro-inclusive digital campaigns is both a moral mandate and a smart business move. It asks marketers to shift perspective from "How can we force attention?" to "How can we facilitate attention and respect comfort?" Admittedly, this is a paradigm shift in an industry long fueled by the mantra of 'more, faster, louder'. But as with any paradigm shift, it starts with early adopters and evidence, which this thesis has endeavored to provide through a framework, examples, and a toolkit. The hope is that increasingly, brands will see that in a world overwhelmed by noise, those who communicate with calm and clarity will rise above the fray and be heard – not because they shouted the loudest, but because they were worth listening to.

Ultimately, embracing calmer, clearer campaigns is about putting people first. It recognizes that every click or impression is a person with a mind that can be either strained or respected by what we put in front of them. Choosing the path of respect is choosing a marketing practice that is sustainable, inclusive, and truly aligned with delivering value. In an overstimulating world, the most radical and effective thing a brand might do is whisper – and by doing so, forge a deeper connection with those who are longing to be gently spoken to.

This thesis argues that the future of marketing lies not in who can yell to get attention, but in who can earn attention by being considerate of the diverse minds on the receiving end. Designing for calm is both an ethical stance and, in a marketplace flooded with noise, a strategic advantage that builds trust and loyalty in the long run. The brands that understand this will not only include more people in their message, but they will also likely be the ones whose message endures.

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