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An Examination of Portrayal of Disability in Brand Ads

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

When you think of a brand model, what image comes to your mind? Is it that of an able-bodied well-built model? The present research challenges this notion and demonstrates that when brand ads feature disabled models, it leads to increased favorable brand outcomes like purchase intent, willingness to spread positive word of mouth, etc. All of these favorable brand outcomes were found to be driven by the perception of perceived inclusivity.

This research explores a previously unexplored domain of featuring disabled models in brand advertisements. Brand inclusivity has attracted some attention but specifically, the consequences of featuring disabled models have not been explored. The findings will help brands to be more open to including diverse models that do not exactly fit “the ideal” and fighting the prevailing prejudice towards disabled people in society. Representing them in their advertisements and online brand communications can be an effective way of fighting the prevailing prejudice and the stigma surrounding this issue.

Considering approximately a billion of the world's population have some sort of disability, this marketing research offers practical and theoretical insights. Our theoretical contribution is specifically in the marketing literature related to stigma and for our practical contribution, we are looking at Brand Managers recognizing this as an opportunity that has not been fully availed.

Keywords: *disability, inclusivity, brand advertisements, brand models, stigma*

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