

Advertising Disability Index: A Content Analysis of Disability in Television Commercial Advertising from 2018

Authors : Joshua Loebner

Abstract : Tectonic shifts within the advertising industry regularly and repeatedly present a deluge of data to be intuited across a spectrum of key performance indicators with innumerable interpretations where live campaigns are vivisected to pivot towards coalescence amongst a digital diaspora. But within this amalgam of analytics, validation, and creative campaign manipulation, where do diversity and disability inclusion fit in? In 2018 several major brands were able to answer this question definitely and directly by incorporating people with disabilities into advertisements. Disability inclusion, representation, and portrayals are documented annually across a number of different media, from film to primetime television, but ongoing studies centering on advertising have not been conducted. Symbols and semiotics in advertising often focus on a brand's features and benefits, but this analysis on advertising and disability shows, how in 2018, creative campaigns and the disability community came together with the goal to continue the momentum and spark conversations. More brands are welcoming inclusion and sharing positive portrayals of intersectional diversity and disability. Within the analysis and surrounding scholarship, a multipoint analysis of each advertisement and meta-interpretation of the research has been conducted to provide data, clarity, and contextualization of insights. This research presents an advertising disability index that can be monitored for trends and shifts in future studies and to provide further comparisons and contrasts of advertisements. An overview of the increasing buying power within the disability community and population changes among this group anchors the significance and size of the minority in the US. When possible, viewpoints from creative teams and advertisers that developed the ads are brought into the research to further establish understanding, meaning, and individuals' purposeful approaches towards disability inclusion. Finally, the conclusion and discussion present key takeaways to learn from the research, build advocacy and action both within advertising scholarship and the profession. This study, developed into an advertising disability index, will answer questions of how people with disabilities are represented in each ad. In advertising that includes disability, there is a creative pendulum. At one extreme, among many other negative interpretations, people with disabilities are portrayed in a way that conveys pity, fosters ableism and discrimination, and shows that people with disabilities are less than normal from a societal and cultural perspective. At the other extreme, people with disabilities are portrayed with a type of undue inspiration, considered inspiration porn, or superhuman, otherwise known as supercrip, and in ways that most people with disabilities could never achieve, or don't want to be seen for. While some ads reflect both extremes, others stood out for non-polarizing inclusion of people with disabilities. This content analysis explores television commercial advertisements to determine the presence of people with disabilities and any other associated disability themes and/or concepts. Content analysis will allow for measuring the presence and interpretation of disability portrayals in each ad.

Keywords : advertising, brand, disability, marketing

Conference Title : ICDM 2020 : International Conference on Disability and Media

Conference Location : Miami, United States

Conference Dates : March 12-13, 2020