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The power of advertising in creating a more inclusive visual culture towards disability:
how brands can benefit from it

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*"Non bisogna mai avere paura dell'altro
perché tu, rispetto all'altro,
sei l'altro."*

*"You should never be scared of the other
because you, compared to the other,
are the other."*

Andrea Camilleri

Introduction

Diversity is something that has always frightened human beings. Anything that does not conform to our concept of the norm, that deviates from our subjective canons, triggers distancing reactions which eventually lead to discriminatory behaviour. Whether it concerns skin colour, origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious belief or psychophysical condition, the different instils fear. This is because diversity is something that escapes our knowledge and that we are unable to understand, being imprisoned in our status quo that apparently conveys serenity. This is why, when faced with diversity, human beings put in place defence mechanisms; to protect themselves from that diversity whose form is unknown and which they are unaware of whether it is dangerous or not. Nevertheless, questioning one's own status quo is something that allows the human being to rediscover herself, finding herself in that otherness, and to elevate herself, opening up to new possibilities.

Thanks to my short but intense experience abroad, I realised how important it is to come across diversity and to know how to welcome it within ourselves. On many occasions I felt honoured to be able to live in a multi-ethnic city like London, full of different shapes, colours, personalities, opinions. It made me look at the world from a different perspective, which I was not used to, challenging old thoughts and logics and at the same time moving strong emotions within me. It made me go beyond the superficiality of certain dynamics and contexts, coming to the simple and pure conclusion that we human beings are all differently unique and what unites us more than anything else is the beauty of life. However, it also made me realise how over the years, society has constantly tried to categorise us into groups, by rank, age, gender, origin, ability, to name but a few. And in doing so, it has done nothing but distance us from one another, erecting ever more solid barriers. These social and historical dynamics have also resulted in the preference of certain groups over others, and this has been reflected in the communication strategies used by brands. In advertisements, we have for decades been accustomed to seeing a preference for models with specific characteristics, which are often hard to find in the common population. We have been bombarded on a daily basis by advertising messages channelled by perfect models of whom we do not feel represented, but rather are seen as something unattainable. Such representations, moreover, have done nothing but feed the stereotypes to which we all fall victim. It is only in recent times that some brands, driven

by increasing public pressure to see more real and truthful representations in advertisements, have taken a stand and taken action to change this trend, starting to include more diverse and genuine people, in the hope of helping to make the world a place more inclusive and equitable. Nonetheless, disability, specifically, still remains an under-recognised issue for advertisers, and therefore still poorly covered in advertisements. This is the reason why this research will focus precisely on understanding how the representation of disability in advertisements has developed over time and will demonstrate how brands, now more than ever, have a duty to create a more inclusive and representative visual culture of the population, while at the same time reaping success from it.

Chapter 1 will outline the historical, social and political evolution of disability. It will be observed how the progress achieved was the product of different perspectives and models that emerged in the second half of the last century through the efforts of sociologists, anthropologists, scholars and activists. Through their contributions, they have sought to draw attention to the inadequacies of the social environment, which for years have prevented, to a certain extent, people with disabilities from taking an integral part in everyday activities. Knowing how the concept of disability has evolved at a societal level is crucial to gaining an understanding of how the attitude towards disability has also been reflected in the communication strategies of brands, which for several decades have reduced disability to stereotypical and inaccurate representations.

Chapter 2 will show how the representation of disability in advertisements is still minimal and, where it is present, risks representing disability in a pietistic and objectified manner, thus ending up being offensive in the eyes of those who experience disability on a daily basis, albeit this was certainly not the initial intention. However, we will see how in recent years there has been a general increase in brand awareness of the importance of including diversity and inclusion issues in advertising. This has also been made possible by the growing public interest in going beyond conventional marketing logics and seeking newer and more diverse content that better reflects the diversity of populations, with the aim of spreading the message that people should not be ashamed of being different, but should be proud of their uniqueness. This is why many brands are moving towards more inclusive marketing strategies to create a visual culture that is more representative of all the unique traits that characterise consumers, without excluding anyone. The

opportunities and benefits for brands to use more inclusive communication strategies towards people with disabilities will therefore be investigated in terms of brand attitude, brand image and brand equity through a quantitative analysis that will be carried out in Chapter 3. The study is based on a questionnaire in which 190 subjects participated and it aims to assess how the use of such communication methods can, on the one hand, foster a more welcoming and disability-friendly social culture and, on the other hand, how the brands themselves can benefit from it.

CHAPTER I. A journey through the historical and sociological view of disability

1.1. The significance of the context

The consideration and treatment of disability, as well as the meaning of the term itself, have evolved considerably throughout history. Many scholars concur that historical, social, and political contexts have always had a significant impact on how the concept of disability has been interpreted[1]. It follows that the very experience of disability may vary from person to person, culture to culture, and in different historical periods.

In light of this, it is clear that context plays a decisive role in the definition of disability. Such a perspective was highlighted by Nora Groce's study in 1985 with the publication of '*Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language*' in which she illustrated the case of Martha's Vineyard Island, also referred to as '*The Island of the Deaf*', due to a recessive allele responsible for deafness that was genetically transmitted during the nineteenth century. During those years, the percentage of the population who were deaf increased steadily until it reached 12 per cent. As a result of these events, almost all the island's inhabitants were familiar with sign language. They used it frequently even among hearing people, thus enabling deaf people to participate fully in society[2]. It follows that, in this specific context, deafness was not regarded as a handicap but rather as a completely ordinary circumstance that had no impact on the individual's participation in society. Groce's study is intended to demonstrate that the concept of *'normal'* or '*outside the norm*' is generally associated with a precise context which, if varied, can lead to a total change in perspective.

C. F. Goodey[3] in his 2011 book '*A History of Intelligence and Intellectual Disability*' shared a similar viewpoint by acknowledging that:

"*Disability is always historically constructed, however, because the problems change from one era to the next.*"

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[1] (Goodey, C.F. 2013; Groce N. E., 1985; Marks, D. 1997; Oliver, M. 1990; 1996).

[2] Groce N. E., 1985, Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language: Hereditary Deafness on Martha's Vineyard, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[3] C.F. Goodey has been researching the history of 'intellectual disability', including the ethical and social implications of the concept, for over 20 years. He has previously held teaching and research positions at Ruskin College, Oxford, the Open University and the University of London Institute of Education; he is currently an independent consultant working for national and local government services on learning disability in the UK.

He argues that at every age there are people who seem incapable of understanding some daily activities that have a certain complexity. What changes, however, is the content of these activities and their centrality in life and in that specific social context[4]. For this reason, people with seemingly similar biological characteristics may become more or less disabled depending on social circumstances.

The theory of the influence of the social context in determining the condition of disability is also supported by the Egyptian-born sociologist Saad Nagi, who defined disability in the 1960s as "*the expression of a physical or mental limitation in a social context*"[5]. Accordingly, disability becomes socially recognised when a gap arises between an individual's capabilities and the requirements set by the physical and social environment. In this sense, an individual's physical and mental limitations do not inevitably lead to a disabling condition, but it is the interactions between the individual and the surrounding environment, with its specific demands, that can confine individuals to a disabling condition.

This view is also later supported by Deborah Marks, in 1997, who assumes that all need is socially constructed and, as such, depend on social organisation and how resources are distributed within society. A person with a disability thus becomes 'needy' when society distributes resources in such a way as to discriminate against certain categories of people, who are then identified as particularly reliant on socioeconomic interventions[6].

Consequently, the creation of an environmental context capable of "de-emphasising" disability becomes critical for all societies, because it is largely the context that can make the difference between allowing or not allowing the person with disabilities to actively participate in the various activities of daily life. To do this, however, it is necessary, as Marks argues, to rethink our culture, our institutions and our relationships[7] to create a more inclusive society that can embrace and value the differences that characterise each of us, much as the residents of Martha's Vineyard were able to do in the 19th century.

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[4] Goodey, C.F. (2011). A History of Intelligence and 'Intellectual Disability'. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.
[5] Nagi, S.Z. (1965). Some conceptual issues in disability and rehabilitation.
[6] Marks, D. (1997). Models of Disability. Disability and Rehabilitation, [online] 19(3), pp.85–91. doi:10.3109/09638289709166831.
[7] *Ibidem*

1.2.   Historical evolution of disability

In the previous section, it was noted that several authors do agree that the context, culture, and historical era can significantly affect how people perceive disabilities. This thesis is supported by the fact that there have been very different perspectives on how disability should be regarded throughout history, from the earliest times to the most recent decades. It has gone from being a defect and a hindrance to society to even becoming a cause for eugenics, to being a challenge to create a more inclusive world. In each historical period, a particular style is recognisable concerning the interpretation and representation of disability, which dictates its social behaviour and practices[8].

In the following paragraphs, we will see how the conception of disability has changed over time, but also how, periodically, the intolerant and negative perspective that seemed to have been overcome has returned. This is what Alessandro Manzoni, one of Italy's greatest writers, said more than 200 years ago: "*History teaches that history teaches nothing*" is realised. We will see, however, that since the defeat of the Nazi ideology, considerable progress has been made in the condition and care of people with disabilities. Most notably, thanks to the invaluable contributions made in the latter half of the 20th century by British sociologists and activists like Ervin Goffman and Michael Oliver, as well as Italian psychiatrists like Franco Basaglia.

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[8] Henri-Jacques Stiker (2019). A history of disability. Ann Arbor: The University Of Michigan Press.

1.2.1. Disability in Ancient History

In ancient times, disability was strongly socially frowned upon. In Ancient Greece, goodness, beauty and health were considered 'natural properties' in contrast to wickedness, ugliness and disease, which were conceived as properties 'against nature'. The cult for the perfection of bodies, readily apparent in the many sculptures depicting anatomically perfect bodies, greatly influenced the central role of the body in defining an individual's identity[9]. Consequently, a person whose physical or mental characteristics did not reflect the established standards was considered inferior and therefore not entitled to participate in society[10]. Such people were not only socially marginalised, but they were also used as scapegoats on whom to shift the blame for destructive natural events or community faults. This feeling of contempt was also greatly nurtured by the major Greek philosophers, who believed that the body was a reflection of the soul. According to Plato, to realise an ideal city, inhabited only by perfect individuals, it was necessary to increase reproductive matings between healthy individuals, to prevent physical diversity from having a generative sequel. Aristotle was also of the opinion that the state should prevent the breeding and care of deformed children because in his view they represented an unnecessary waste of resources and energy[11].

The Roman civilisation inherited the cult of the beautiful and the perfect body from the Greek civilisation, and the Roman philosopher Seneca, following in the footsteps of the great Greek philosophers, stigmatised the diversity resulting from a deformed body, comparing disability to a useless life. According to him, it was necessary to separate the 'healthy' from the 'deformed'. However, it is interesting to note that, during Roman times, disability, depending on wealth and class, was considered and treated differently. For example, if impairments affected the elites of the time, it was considered a minor problem, as they could avail themselves of the assistance of their servants. This was not the case for

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[9] rivistedigitali.erickson.it. (n.d.). La Disabilità in parossistica ciclicità di esclusione e inclusione – Pedagogia più Didattica. [online] Available at: https://rivistedigitali.erickson.it/pedagogia-piu-didattica/archivio/vol-1-n-2/la-disabilita-in-parossistica-ciclicita-di-esclusione-e-inclusione/ [Accessed 30 Dec. 2022].
[10] Bernett, R. (2020). Disability in Greece: The Real Picture in Antiquity. [online] Wondrium Daily. Available at: https://www.wondriumdaily.com/disability-in-greece-the-real-picture-in-antiquity/ [Accessed 30 Dec. 2022].
[11] Ability Channel. (2012). La storia della disabilità: dall'antica Grecia alle Paralimpiadi. [online] Available at: https://www.abilitychannel.tv/storia-della-disabilita/ [Accessed 30 Dec. 2022].

the lower and middle classes, as disability could significantly hinder their employment prospects[12].

Subsequently, with the spread of Christian doctrine, disability took on an ambivalent role: on the one hand, as a result of the beliefs developed during the medieval period, it was identified with sin and was seen as the result of diabolic forces. On the other hand, the Church championed the cause of people with disabilities by declaring that all of God's creatures were equal in His eyes. Therefore, there was a re-evaluation of the suffering as individuals in need of care and assistance; greater importance was placed on the dignity of the person and a pietistic and tolerant approach[13] towards people with physical disabilities began to develop[14]. Thus, charitable institutions were established to care for disabled people and help them to integrate into society. Interestingly, many such institutions also offered cures for afflictions such as leprosy, blindness and other deformities[15].

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[12] Wikipedia. (2022). Disability in ancient Rome. [online] Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disability_in_ancient_Rome.

[13] This attitude has persisted over the centuries and is still present today in various circumstances.

[14] D'Amanzo, S. (2017). La disabilità nei testi biblici Giudaico-Cristiani. Periodico Daily. [online] Periodico Daily. Available at: https://www.periodicodaily.com/la-disabilita-nei-testi-biblici-giudaico-cristiani/ [Accessed 30 Dec. 2022].

[15] Historic England (2019). Disability in the medieval period 1050-1485 | Historic England. [online] Historicengland.org.uk. Available at: https://historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/disability-history/1050-1485/.

1.2.2. A first major turning point with the Enlightenment

The conception of disability, however, experienced a profound transformation following the establishment of medicine during the Age of Enlightenment. In this period, in-depth research into the functioning of the body began to be conducted; knowledge of illnesses increased accordingly, and diseases were identified as states of suffering to be alleviated and healed. Disability began to be medicalised in hospitals, which sprang up increasingly during this period[16].

The development of psychiatry during this period also marked an important step forward in terms of understanding the nature of disability and how it could be treated. From this point onwards, the concept of disability came to be seen purely in medical terms rather than a moral one. Nonetheless, the stigmatisation process persisted, with people with disabilities being split into two categories—the curable and the incurable—based on their ability to be treated. The latter group includes those who are mentally ill, whose fate was to be confined for life.

Philippe Pinel, however, considered the founder of modern psychiatry, was one of the few who advocated its curability. In his 1800 treatise '*Medical-Philosophical Treatise on Alienation*', he proposed a treatment of mental illness that involved two therapeutic strategies. The first was the removal of the sick person from the outside world, a practice already widely used at the time, while the second implied a psychological treatment that involved assisting the patient in diverting his or her attention from his or her theories that were deemed "bizarre", by engaging him or her in other activities. Despite Pinel's efforts to create a culture more open to diversity, the second approach was very rarely implemented, and the mentally disabled continued to be simply removed from society, through forced confinement in asylums, where they received little attention and care[17]. The compulsory institutionalisation of people with mental illness soon became common practice throughout Europe.

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[16] rivistedigitali.erickson.it. (n.d.). La Disabilità in parossistica ciclicità di esclusione e inclusione – Pedagogia più Didattica. [online] Available at: https://rivistedigitali.erickson.it/pedagogia-piu-didattica/archivio/vol-1-n-2/la-disabilita-in-parossistica-ciclicita-di-esclusione-e-inclusione/ [Accessed 30 Dec. 2022].

[17] State of Mind. (2014). L'identità sociale del disabile nel corso del tempo - Psicologia. [online] Available at: https://www.stateofmind.it/2014/11/identita-sociale-disabile/ [Accessed 30 Dec. 2022].

In the meantime, in Europe, from the middle of the 18th century, the restructuring of production processes began, leading to the emergence of the first industries. The introduction of machines into the production chain, which took place on a massive scale in the 19th century, led to a significant increase in the number of physically disabled people, whose disability was caused precisely by the use of the new industrial machines. The ever-increasing number of individuals with such physical problems contributes to changing the social perception of disability, albeit in a negative way. During the Industrial Revolution, we witnessed a conception of the human being totally from a productive perspective. The meaning of human life was strongly linked to the concept of efficiency and productive capacity: his or her only purpose in life was to produce as many goods as possible[18]. Following this conception, disability was considered a condition that had to be cured, to allow these individuals to become active again and thus, to be employed in industries again. Where this was not possible, however, they were condemned to a condition of social marginalisation. The thinking in those years adhered to the logic that only those who participate in the productivity of society are considered 'normal' and worthy of being part of it[19].

However, what happens after the industrial revolution is crucial: disability becomes a social issue as it begins to affect more and more people. The end of the First World War produces a very high number of disabled people; consequently, disability begins to take on a different social connotation: it is seen as a condition to be respected and to be remedied, also through substantial economic aid and sociopolitical interventions[20]. Gradually, a consensus formed around the idea of the dignity of the disabled person and the need to ensure that they were protected and included in all aspects of society.

During the Hitler period, however, there was an ideological regression. The pursuit of 'perfection', which was greatly coveted during ancient times, was restored and found its greatest manifestation during Nazism, which viewed disability as a life not worth living.

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[18] Ability Channel. (2012). La storia della disabilità: dall'antica Grecia alle Paralimpiadi. [online] Available at: https://www.abilitychannel.tv/storia-della-disabilita/.

[19] Turner, D.M. and Blackie, D. (2018). Disability in the industrial revolution: physical impairment in British coalmining, 1780-1880. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

[20] Engl, H. (2018). Home From the War: What Happened to Disabled First World War Veterans. [online] The Historic England Blog. Available at: https://heritagecalling.com/2018/12/14/home-from-the-war-what-happened-to-disabled-first-world-war-veterans/#:~:text=Around%202%20million%20soldiers%2C%20sailors.

During this period, the Nazis, advocates of the 'purification' of the 'Aryan race' from any 'genetic defect', implemented a series of manoeuvres to eliminate those people who, according to them, were unable to contribute profitably to society[21]. According to Nazi ideology, care for the mentally and physically disabled was a waste of resources because they could be used for other national interests.[22] This period marked a series of cruel interventions such as the sterilisation of adults, the euthanasia of children, and the confinement in concentration camps.

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[21] Friedlander, H. (1997). Registering the handicapped in Nazi Germany: A case study. Jewish History, 11(2), pp.89–98. doi:10.1007/bf02335679.

[22] Bengtsson, S. (2018). The nation's body: disability and deviance in the writings of Adolf Hitler. Disability & Society, 33(3), pp.416–432. doi:10.1080/09687599.2018.1423955.

1.2.3. Modern times

While the Nazi regime took brutal measures against persons with disabilities, thus marking a period in history that will forever be remembered in a negative light, the story does not end here. After World War II, disability once again became a social issue that called for attention from the various state institutions responsible for social welfare. These initiatives led to the creation of many institutions dedicated to the care of persons with disabilities and the reform of legislation to ensure that their rights were safeguarded. But the milestones achieved for the rights of persons with disabilities in recent times have also been made possible by the valuable contribution of various sociologists, anthropologists and activists who have shed light on the conditions of marginalisation and discrimination to which people with disabilities were forced in those years, and who have called for positive action to remedy this situation.

A crucial turning point in the history of disability occurred in 1951 when an American sociologist by the name of Talcott Parsons published his book entitled "The Social System", in which he examined the interaction of the individual's health/disease condition with society. This work became the foundation for the field of sociology and was the starting point that led the study of health and illness to take a new direction.
The social system is defined by Parson as an interrelated collection of parts capable of self-regulation, each of which performs a specific activity that is required for the survival of the entire system[23]. In this context, health is seen as the ability to fulfil social roles[24], while illness is a disruptive condition in that it makes individuals unproductive and dependent[25]. According to Parson, therefore, illness is not only a biological condition of the individual but also affects his or her personal and social adaptations. As such, illness can be regarded as a form of 'deviance', since it prevents the proper performance of the functions expected of each social actor, which undermines the social balance[26]. Parsons thus links health with the role of each individual in society, and, he analyses the disease

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[23] Parsons, T. (1951). The Social System. Free Press.
[24] The 'social role' is understood as the set of expected patterns of behaviour, obligations and expectations that converge on an individual holding a certain social position.
[25] Barnes, C. and G Mercer (2010). Exploring disability: a sociological introduction. 2nd ed. Cambridge, Uk; Malden, Ma: Polity Press.
[26] Parsons, T. (1964). Levels of Organization and the Mediation of Social Interaction. Sociological Inquiry, 34(2), pp.207–220. doi:10.1111/j.1475-682x.1964.tb00584.x.

condition based on the doctor-patient relationship. He describes this relationship as a 'contract' in which the doctor undertakes to provide care in exchange for the patient's cooperation. Drawing on the work of other philosophers such as Karl Marx, John Locke and David Hume, Parsons developed the notion of a 'social contract' as a basis for explaining all forms of social interaction. In this contract, each actor must perform certain functions for the common good of the community, in return for which he or she is granted the protection of the state.

In the years that followed, Parsons' structural-functionalist approach[27] was severely criticised, especially by the interactionists[28], who, while investigating the relational character that manifests between the individual and society, advanced a very different point of view. According to them, illness cannot be considered a form of deviance in itself, since it is the society that labels an individual as 'deviant' because his or her behaviour diverges from shared social norms[29].

This theory was elaborated in depth by the Canadian sociologist Ervin Goffman, who in 1961 published a collection of essays on the institutional reality of asylums, entitled *'Asylums'*. According to Goffman, society was responsible for assigning discriminatory labels to mental patients, who were forced to always bear what Goffman calls 'stigma'. This stigma was the result of society's negative perception of them as 'different' or 'strange'. In this sense, the attention of the community was focused only on the different characteristics that were considered negative, thereby setting in motion an action of marginalisation towards them, justified by a judgement of social dangerousness attributed to them[30].

The concept of stigma was further explored by Goffman two years later, in 1963 with the publication of "*Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*" in which states that

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[27] Structural-functionalism is a current of thought in sociology, which originated in the United States in the 1930s and developed until almost the 1970s, which conceives of society as a complex system, within which we can recognise particular structures that perform specific functions to promote the stability and maintenance of the system itself.

[28] Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical approach developed in the United States of America, which constitutes a continuation in the sociology and psychology of William James' pragmatist thought. According to interactionist theory, personality is the result of influences exerted by the environment on the individual and vice versa. Interactionists believe it is necessary to consider the complex physical, social and cultural system of the individual, who interacts with it and is influenced by it.

[29] Lemert, E.M. (1962). Paranoia and the Dynamics of Exclusion. Sociometry, 25(1), p.2. doi:10.2307/2786032.

[30] Goffman, E. (1961). Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Immates. London: Penguin Books.

there are two different identities: the one associated with the role we assume in public and therefore established by society, referred to by Goffman as the '*virtual identity*', and the one that represents our essential self, which we only manifest in private, termed by Goffman as the '*actual identity*'. According to Goffman, when the discrepancy between these two identities is sharp, and one is at odds with the other, a process of stigmatisation is triggered, which leads the individual to be marginalised; his or her current identity is then rejected by society and the phenomenon of '*denied identity*', thus defined by Goffman, occurs, according to which personal identity coincides with stigma[31].

There are three different categories of stigma identified by Goffman; the first is stigma for bodily deformities, such as physical disability, skin colour, baldness, etc.; the second category of stigma concerns character flaws, such as mental disorders, incarceration or drug addiction. The third type of stigma is defined as 'tribal', for which social marginalisation is based on ethnicity, religion, ideological beliefs or nationality. Although there are various types of stigma, they all have the same effect; they are detrimental to the health of individuals and weaken their self-confidence to the point that they are no longer able to pursue their desired goals in life.

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[31] Goffman, E. (1963). Stigma; notes on the management of spoiled identity. Prentice-Hall.

1.2.4. Disability as the result of social exclusion

At this point, it is important to note how the factors leading to the construction of the stigma are strongly conditioned by context. It is the social context that defines a behaviour as deviant or compliant, based on its perception; and this perception can alter and change over time, as a behaviour deemed "deviant" in one particular context may not be so in another. Reverting to the reflection from the first paragraph, it is obvious how the factors that determine stigma can vary in different historical, political and social contexts and consequently, the concept of stigma is not static but dynamic, constantly evolving as our contexts change.

The British academic and disability rights activist Michael Oliver also argued that attitudes towards people with disabilities are culturally, historically and socially determined. One of his most successful works is certainly '*Politics of Disablement*' from 1990, in which he presented a sociological study of the phenomenon of disability. In this work, Oliver proposes an analysis of the distinction between *'impairment'* (the biological condition) and *'disability'* (the social condition), thus delineating a precise boundary between the two terms. Based on this assumption, disability is a social phenomenon and not a personal tragedy[32]. It follows that the focus is not so much on the individual as on the influence of the context on him or her.

According to this view, people become disabled because of the way society is conceived and structured and the way it excludes them. The medicalisation of disability, an approach advocated by Parsons, is, therefore, wrong because it places the 'problem' in a conceptually wrong space: in the individual rather than the social sphere[33]. Therefore, disability has nothing to do with the person or his or her 'deficit' but refers to the political, cultural, social and behavioural barriers that a person with an impairment has to continually face. Oliver conceives disability as a condition of social oppression experienced by some people who differ from the norm. His perspective, together with the contribution of other British academics, laid the foundation for the development of the so-called 'social model' of disability, which will be addressed in the following

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[32] Oliver, M. (1990). The politics of disablement. London: Macmillan Education.
[33] Barnes, C. (2000). A working social model? Disability, work and disability politics in the 21st century. Critical Social Policy, 20(4), pp.441–457. doi:10.1177/026101830002000402.

paragraphs[34]. It will therefore be observed how disability has moved from being seen purely as an individual deficit, where the problem is therefore personal to the individual, to a more critical view where society's responsibility takes the place of the individual's one.

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[34] Shakespeare, T. (2006). The social model of disability. The disability studies reader, 2, 197-204

1.2.5. The "Destitutionalisation of Mental Illness" in Post-War Italy

During the same years that Oliver and other proponents of the social model were fighting for the rights of persons with disabilities in England, the Italian psychiatrist and neurologist Franco Basaglia also took a stand against the institutions of the time in Italy, arguing that the boundary between normality and abnormality was politically constructed and that the implicit rule on which this separation was based was efficiency. Basaglia fervently denounced that in recent years there had been no progress in the treatment of people with disabilities and that official science had so far focused on dividing the sick from the healthy, categorising those who were mentally ill as unpredictable, dangerous, and incomprehensible, leaving social marginalisation as their only option.

In this sense, Basaglia became the bearer of a new conception of psychiatry: it was no longer sufficient to examine the patient's pathology alone strictly from a medical point of view, but it was necessary to try to understand the diversities that characterised these people, their subjectivity and how institutions and the social context influenced on their state of isolation[35]. Such a change required a fundamental transformation in the way the professionals approached these patients from a medical standpoint, going from a purely biomedical to a more holistic view that sought to understand the difficulties encountered by the patients due to their illness and the impact these disorders may have had on their lives as a whole.

Basaglia's revolutionary work began in Gorizia in 1961, where he took over as director of the psychiatric hospital, highly determined to propose alternative ways to the reality of asylums. According to Basaglia:

"The asylum does not serve to cure mental illness but only to destroy the patient".

He tenaciously rejected such facilities because, in his opinion, they were built for the sole purpose of separating the sane from the insane, and thus represented a closed world without any kind of relationship with the outside world. Asylums were indeed built on the outskirts of cities so that their presence would not upset the balance of the healthy

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[35] Marinelli, A. FRANCO BASAGLIA.

population. This isolation ultimately led to the breakdown of many patients who were suffering from mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorders, who were denied any chance to integrate themselves into society and lead a normal life.

Against this background, it was important for Basaglia to change how these facilities were run, moving away from a medical approach that had dominated mental healthcare for centuries to a therapeutic approach that acknowledge the subjective experience of the patient. Basaglia set out to break down the barriers between what was happening inside the asylum and the world outside. However, his reformist spirit did not end within these structures but extended to society as a whole. According to Basaglia, only when the problem of 'diversity' is addressed by society as a whole will it be able to set up therapeutic structures that are suitable for safeguarding the needs of these subjects[36].

Basaglia's hard work was finally rewarded in 1978, when Law 180, also known as the 'Legge Basaglia' on '*Accertamenti e trattamenti sanitari volontari e obbligatori*' (Voluntary and Compulsory Health Care Assessments and Treatment) was passed in Italy, which finally closed asylums and regulated the institution of compulsory admission to psychiatry[37]. The passing of this law marks a fundamental turning point on the road to the integration of people with disabilities.

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[36] State of Mind. (2019). Franco Basaglia: l'uomo che ha rivoluzionato il mondo della Psichiatria. [online] Available at: https://www.stateofmind.it/2019/01/franco-basaglia/ [Accessed 30 Dec. 2022].
[37] neomesia.com. (n.d.). Il significato della legge Basaglia - Neomesia. [online] Available at: https://neomesia.com/il-significato-della-legge-basaglia.

1.3.   Patterns of disability models

In the previous section, we saw how the 20th century, especially since the second half of the century, has witnessed important theoretical reflections on health, diseases and their consequences. These considerations have generated various conceptual models, whose findings have, in turn, inspired the development of new models. But if in the earliest formulations the condition of disability was seen as a characteristic of the individual, later conceptions attributed a progressively increasing role to the environment with which that individual relates. As it will be possible to observe in greater detail later on, the view of disability has changed from an individual 'attribute' to a 'process', understood as a dynamic interaction of multiple factors that can accentuate or reduce this condition. In this new perspective, then, it is no longer the individual who is the target of interventions and preventive measures; rather it is the whole environment that needs to be transformed to create conditions more conducive to healthy development.

It is possible to outline three main approaches that characterised the second half of the 20th century.

The first approach, which has certainly received a great deal of attention, is the medical model, also referred to as the '*individualistic approach*', according to which disability is closely linked to physiological and psychological problems that require special interventions to restore and maintain physical well-being. In this sense, disability is seen as the consequence of an impairment caused by disease, disturbance or injury and therefore as damage to a person's health and his or her condition is regarded as a disease to be treated[38]. This approach is defined as 'medical' because it is based on the concept that the problem that characterises the person requires treatment, rehabilitation and assistance that is guaranteed by doctors and health workers. According to this logic, society must intervene through the creation of hospitals and specialised centres, where people with disabilities establish a relationship of absolute dependence on health personnel, who are considered the only ones who can solve their condition[39].

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[38] Retief, M., & Letšosa, R. (2018). Models of disability: A brief overview. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, *74*(1)

[39] Marks, D. (1997). Models of disability. *Disability and rehabilitation*, *19*(3), 85-91

The second approach corresponds to the social model, which goes beyond this individualistic conception of disability and takes a new perspective: disability is seen as a disadvantage determined by the physical and social environment, which restricts the person's activities[40]. In this sense, it is the society itself that must intervene to remove all possible obstacles that prevent citizens with disabilities from fully enjoying their rights.[41] This model does not dismiss the importance or value of appropriate interventions in the lives of persons with disabilities, such as the use of medicine or rehabilitation, or the use of social policies aimed at facilitating access to education and employment, but rather directs attention to the limitations of these interventions, which are designed to foster inclusion in a society built by 'non-disabled subjects' for 'non-disabled subjects'[42]. The social model, therefore, aims to create an environment in which people with disabilities have the same right as others to be members of society and to be included in decision-making processes that affect their lives, without others ruling for them.

The inputs from the two previous models have helped to shape a new, more holistic approach, called the bio-psycho-social model. According to this approach, the person with disabilities is not only a subject with particular impairments that prevent him or her from carrying out activities, but is also a subject living in a cultural context that allows him or her a certain degree of social inclusion[43]. In this sense, it becomes essential to study and analyse disability in its social, cultural and historical context, just as personal conditions of impairment and functioning must be studied in their medical and educational contexts. It follows that biological, psychological, and social factors, including their intricate interactions, must be jointly understood to comprehend psychophysical health and choose the therapeutic intervention that best suits the individual case.[44]

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[40] Marra A., *Diritto e Disability studies, Materiali per una nuova ricerca multidisciplinare,* pag.43-44
[41] Shakespeare, T. (2006). The social model of disability. *The disability studies reader*, *2*, 197-204.
[42] Barnes C. (2006), Capire il Modello Sociale della Disabilità, traduzione a cura di Marra A., Intersticios: Revista Sociologica de Pensamiento Critico, vol. 2, n. 1, pp. 87-96
[43] Engel, G.L. (1977). The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine. Holistic Medicine, 4(1), pp.37–53.
[44] Braibanti P. (2002), Pensare la salute: orizzonti e nodi critici della Psicologia della Salute, FrancoAngeli, Milano;

1.3.1. The individualistic-medical model

From the 1950s onwards, a significant theoretical debate on health and illness began to take place worldwide, which started to place more emphasis on the consequences of illness on people's lives. Up to that point, different societal policies had operated according to the logic that people with disabilities needed care and assistance, which was considered a problem for society that had to be solved. The solution was therefore hospitals or specialised centres, and the key players in these processes were the medical professionals who had the "power" to remedy this condition[45].

The connotation that disability takes on according to the medical model and its fundamental characteristics can be found in the definition illustrated by Olkin[46] (1999), according to whom:

"Disability is seen as a medical problem that resides in the individual. It is a defect in or failure of a bodily system and as such is inherently abnormal and pathological. The goals of intervention are cure, amelioration of the physical condition to the greatest extent possible, and rehabilitation (i.e., the adjustment of the person with the disability to the condition and to the environment). Persons with disabilities are expected to avail themselves of the variety of services offered to them and to spend time in the role of patient or learner being helped by trained professionals."

It may be noted that this conception is the same as that endorsed by Parsons in his analysis of illness: the sick person, because of his physical and/or mental condition, is unable to fulfil his role at a social level. Consequently, to solve this condition, he or she has to rely on the treatment advised by health professionals, who assume in this sense a role of absolute power. Similarly, the medical model views illness, and thus disability, as an interruption of the 'normal state'. The human body is compared to a machine, the components of which can be disassembled, examined and adjusted by medical professionals with the necessary training to intervene and resolve malfunctions.

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[45] Sedran, D. (2004). Il disabile. Persona e risorsa. Morlacchi Editore.
[46] Olkin, R. (1999). What psychotherapists should know about disability. New York ; London: Guilford.

1.3.2. The ICIDH

The medical-individualistic approach is commonly associated with the '*International Classification of Impairment, Disability and Handicap*', hereafter referred to as ICIDH. The model was initially developed around the 1970s by a group of sociologists coordinated by Philip Wood and was then officially published in 1980 by the World Health Organisation (WHO)[47], which was keen to clarify certain concepts and terminologies used in reference to disability, to facilitate research and policy choices in the field. This classification thus represents a key tool for classifying the consequences of diseases and their implications for the lives of individuals.

Under this classification, a tripartite distinction is proposed between the three different conditions as follows.

Impairment is defined as loss, or abnormality, of psychological, physiological or anatomical structures or functions; it represents the externalization of a pathological state and in principle, it reflects organ-level disorders.

Disability, on the other hand, is referred to any limitation or loss (resulting from an impairment) of the ability to perform an activity in the manner or to the extent considered normal for a human being. Disability in this sense represents the objectification of impairment.

Handicap is the condition of disadvantage experienced by a particular person as a result of an impairment or disability that limits or prevents the possibility of fulfilling the role proper to that person (in relation to age, sex, and socio-cultural factors). It represents the disadvantage resulting from the diminished or lost ability to conform to cultural, social, economic, and environmental expectations or norms[48].

From the above definitions, it follows that the three different categories are unidirectionally linked in the following way:

Impairment → Disability → Handicap

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[47] The World Health Organization, established in 1948, is a specialized agency of the United Nations with primary responsibility for international health matters and public health.

[48] Masala, C. and Petretto, D.R. (2008). From disablement to enablement: Conceptual models of disability in the 20th century. Disability and Rehabilitation, 30(17), pp.1233–1244. doi:10.1080/09638280701602418.

According to this one-way perspective, following a morbid event, be it a disease (congenital or otherwise) or an accident, a person may suffer an impairment, i.e. a structural or functional, physical or psychic loss or abnormality. The impairment may then lead to disability, that is, the limitation of the person in performing one or more activities considered 'normal' for a human being of the same age. Finally, disability can lead to handicap, i.e. the social disadvantage manifested as a result of interaction with the environment.

The causal nexus described above, derived in part from the reductionist thinking of the time, seeks to present a situation that necessarily evolves in a completely determined manner. Moreover, it assumes that the disability arises from an individual's deficit, imputing the entire responsibility to him or her and thus minimising the relational component that characterises the individual[49].

It is clear that this cause-and-effect sequence lends itself to criticism: handicap can be the consequence of an impairment, without the mediation of a state of disability. Moreover, an impairment can, for example, give rise to obstacles in normal attempts to establish social relationships; it determines the handicap but not the disability.

Another deficiency presented by ICIDH concerns the lack of emphasis on the role of the environment. Although it is possible to trace in the categorisation an attempt to distinguish between the individual dimension of the deficits and the social aspects – by introducing the condition of "handicap" –, in the individualistic approach people's conditions of disadvantage are analysed from an exclusively medical perspective and in a rather negative key, feeding the idea that these problems only concern the individual, who cannot but depend on medical professionals for any kind of therapeutic and social support[50].

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[49] Brisenden, S. (1986). Independent Living and the Medical Model of Disability. Disability, Handicap & Society, 1(2), pp.173–178. doi:10.1080/02674648666780171.

[50] Marks, D. (1997). Models of Disability. Disability and Rehabilitation, [online] 19(3), pp.85–91. doi:10.3109/09638289709166831.

1.3.3. Disability Studies

Disability Studies is a discipline of study that emerged in Great Britain around the 1970s as a result of the work of British academics and activists like Michael Oliver and Vic Finkelstein, who portrayed and described in their writings their living conditions and criticised the way society makes disabled individuals who deviate from the norm. Since in their view it is the social organisation that causes the condition of disability, they prefer to refer to themselves as 'disabled people' in their writings rather than 'people with disabilities'[51].

The impact of these studies was so significant and revolutionary mainly because people who experienced disability first-hand were involved in the studies and research activities: they were no longer 'objects' of study but rather active participants in the studies conducted. By writing about their own experiences, they were able to dispel myths about the nature of disability. Moreover, these publications are particularly important because they provided the theoretical and conceptual background for the transition from the medical to the social model of disability[52].

Disability studies harshly criticised the previously described medical model because, in their view, it placed too much emphasis on the condition of 'normality' as a criterion for defining and considering disability[53]. They, therefore, undertook to investigate the complexity–often condemned to mere reductionism–that characterises the concept of disability, declining and studying it not only as a biological condition or as a synonym for 'deficit', but as a form of social oppression and discrimination against those who differ from the norm[54].

Going beyond the individualistic and simplistic view of the medical approach, disability studies have sought to analyse disability not only as a purely individual phenomenon but rather as a social, political, historical and cultural phenomenon.

[51] Barnes, C., Oliver, M. and Barton, L. (2002). Disability studies today. Cambridge: Polity Press.

[52] Ferguson, P. M., & Nusbaum, E. (2012). Disability studies: What is it and what difference does it make? *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, *37*(2), 70-80.

[53] Shakespeare, T. (2005). Disability studies today and tomorrow. *Sociology of health & illness*, *27*(1), 138-148.

[54] Abberley, P. (1987). The Concept of Oppression and the Development of a Social Theory of Disability. Disability, Handicap & Society, 2(1), pp.5–19. doi:10.1080/02674648766780021.

In this sense, rather than focusing on individual 'deficiencies', Disability Studies aim at identifying discriminatory conditions–such as poverty, unemployment, and disabling educational and social policies, architectural-communicative and cultural barriers, and social attitudes–that produce exclusion from active citizenship and cause the dependency of specific groups, as they do not correspond to the expectations of the 'able-bodied'[55].

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[55] Oliver, M. (1990). The politics of disablement. London: Macmillan Education.

1.3.4. UPIAS's harsh criticism of society

Some of the scholars who contributed to the development of Disability Studies, including Paul Hunt, Vic Finkelstein and Colin Barnes founded the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation, henceforth abbreviated to UPIAS, in 1972 in the UK. It was one of the first disability rights organisations in the UK and acted through confidential correspondence and circulars circulated among its members[56].

Their views and experiences concerning disability were collected in the '*Fundamental Principles of Disability*', published in 1976, which contained a socio-political reinterpretation of disability that outlines a crucial distinction between the biological and the social[57]. Just as in the individualist approach a definition of impairment and disability was provided, they also expressed their view on the matter, defining *'impairment'* as "*lacking part of or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, organ or mechanism of the body*"; whereas "*disability*" as "*the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities*"[58]. In this sense, functional deficits and limitations no longer constitute explanatory factors but a description of the physical body, and disability is exclusively a condition of disadvantage caused by the same forms of social organisation. According to UPIAS activists, it is the society:

"... which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments, by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society". [59]

In contrast to previous definitions, UPIAS, thus, redefined the concept of disability as a condition resulting from a society intolerant of all forms of biological imperfection. Hence, the concept of 'disablement', i.e. the creation of disability by society, was introduced. The

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[56] Shakespeare, T. and Watson, N. (2001). The social model of disability: An outdated ideology? Research in Social Science and Disability, 2, pp.9–28. doi:10.1016/s1479-3547(01)80018-x.

[57] Retief, M., & Letšosa, R. (2018). Models of disability: A brief overview. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, *74*(1)

[58] UPIAS, 1976, Fundamental principles of disability, Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation, London.

[59] UPIAS, 1976, Fundamental principles of disability, Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation, London.

significant contribution made by their polemical analysis of social dynamics highlighted how outdated the medical model of disability that had been in use up until that point was.

1.3.5. From the medical model to the social model of disability

The '*social model of disability*' was first conceptualised by Paul Hunt in 1960 and was then further developed by Vic Finkelstein and Michael Oliver together with other disability activists who were part of the UPIAS movement.

As was described in the previous section, they advocated a new concept of disability in which the problem lies in society's inability to provide adequate services to meet the needs and requirements of disabled people, rather than in individual limitations. According to Oliver, the conception of disability as a 'personal tragedy', which had characterised the medical approach, had encouraged the exclusion of disabled people from social and economic life and influenced policies that placed disabled people in segregated places. Additionally, it had led to policies that targeted disabled people instead of empowering them to cope on their own[60].

On this account, disability is thus the product of a hostile and unfavourable environment that prevents people with impairments from freely carrying out their actions and expressing their choices. The hostility of the environment manifests itself primarily through the significant number of barriers that hinder the full participation of people with disabilities in social life in any domain of existence: from negative social attitudes, prejudices, and limitations in access to communications and resources, to architectural barriers[61].

The social model, therefore, intends to shift the accountability for disability-related disadvantage from the individual to the organisations and institutions of modern society. It is society, as the guarantor of the rights of all citizens, that must intervene to eliminate any barriers that prevent citizens with disabilities from enjoying these rights. In this way, this approach seeks to emphasise all those 'disabling' tendencies of modern society, to urge institutions to generate policies and practices capable of guaranteeing all citizens active participation in society, effectively removing the 'disabling' environments that confine people to a condition of marginality.

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[60] Oliver, M. (1990). The politics of disablement. London: Macmillan Education.
[61] Shakespeare, T., Kath Gillespie-Sells and Davies, D. (1996). The Sexual Politics of Disability. Burns & Oates.

1.3.6. The emergence of the biopsychosocial model of disability

In the previous section, it was emphasised that one of the greatest merits of the social model has been to change the perception of disability, as the problem is no longer placed on the individual, but rather on society and its barriers. In doing so, it has increased disabled people's awareness of their rights. Nevertheless, like the previous medical model, the social model has also presented some flaws. The model has occasionally come under fire for overemphasising the social sphere, which has resulted in a sort of "homogenization" of the various conditions related to disability. Moreover, while the medical model has been able to operationalise its concepts, making it possible to observe and classify the phenomenon of disability in a way that is functional and productive for scientific research as well, and not only for medical intervention in the strict sense; the social model, on the other hand, has not proposed any classification of disability that is socially based and alternative to the one expressed by the medical model. As a result, the social model has never been able to suggest the interventions that should be taken to cease the discrimination and oppression of people with disabilities[62].

The flaws and limitations of the social model prompted the creation of a fresh viewpoint that could transcend both the social and medical paradigms' shortcomings.
As a consequence, beginning in the late 1970s, a new viewpoint on health—known as the '*Biopsychosocial Model*'—emerged as a result of the work of American psychiatrist George Engel, who created a new and more contemporary viewpoint on health[63].
This model had a great influence on how health and illness issues were understood and addressed, as it holistically integrated the dichotomies of the two previous models, and thus considers the condition of the individual as influenced by biological, psychological and social factors[64], including their complex interactions. This broadened not only the perspective on the type of treatment but also the very consideration of the subject, seen as an individual who was experiencing health and illness issues in a way that was unique

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[62] Bickenbach, J.E., Chatterji, S., Badley, E.M. and Üstün, T.B. (1999). Models of disablement, universalism and the international classification of impairments, disabilities and handicaps. Social Science & Medicine, 48(9), pp.1173–1187. doi:10.1016/s0277-9536(98)00441-9.
[63] Engel, G.L. (1977). The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine. Holistic Medicine, 4(1), pp.37–53.
[64] Cigoli V., Mariotti M. (2002), Il medico, la famiglia e la comunità. L'approccio biopsicosociale alla salute e alla malattia. FrancoAngeli, Milano;

to them. In this sense, the biopsychosocial model views disabilities as one of the variations in human functioning that result from the interaction between intrinsically human characteristics and intrinsically societal and physical environment characteristics[65].

The rigidity in the distinction between the condition of 'disease' and 'health' that had characterised the medical model, whereby one excluded the other, is superseded and paves the way to a more 'elastic' vision. Health is thus regarded as a variable condition, which can be influenced by the negative or positive events that occur in everyday life[66]. In addition, it is no longer seen as a direct consequence of the absence of disease, but is conceived in its evolutionary nature and, as such, individuals are recognised as having the ability to modify their lifestyle to improve their health. These suggestions have undoubtedly had a major impact on how disabilities have been understood and treated in recent decades.

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[65] Üstün, T. B., Chatterji, S., Kostansjek, N., & Bickenbach, J. (2003). WHO's ICF and functional status information in health records. *Health care financing review*, *24*(3), 77

[66] Deep P. (1999). Biological and biopsychosocial models of health and disease in dentistry. Journal (Canadian Dental Association), 65(9), 496–497.

1.3.7. The ICF

An application tool of the biopsychosocial model is the *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health*, hereafter referred to as ICF, drawn up in 2001 by the World Health Organisation. It was published to develop an all-encompassing, multidisciplinary classification that describes a person's level of health in relation to their existential spheres (social, familial, and occupational), to comprehend the difficulties that can result in disability depending on the sociocultural context of reference.

Unlike previous classifications, this model starts with a person's health condition rather than a 'deficit', using more positive language, which gives the model an innovative and pioneering quality. The ICF thus proposes to move beyond the ICIDH's linear and deterministic model, which is based on a unidirectional flow of cause-and-effect, by coming to consider the person with a disability in terms of his or her health and the quality of life to which he or she can aspire, rather than in terms of physical characteristics, cognitive challenges, or structural or functional physical limitations[67].

This classification is based precisely on the integration of the social model and the medical model and uses the biopsychosocial approach to search for and grasp, in a broader conception, the integration of the various perspectives of human functioning. The combination of the two models can be found in the two distinct but interconnected components that characterise the classification.

The first component, reflecting biomedical thinking, is that of disability and functioning resulting from processes at the individual level, with a focus on the impairment of bodily structures and functions and the person's ability to perform activities and participate in society.

The second component of the ICF, on the other hand, reflects the psychosocial view of health and consists of contextual factors, which include both personal and environmental factors[68]. Due to the combination of the two elements, it is now possible to correlate the environment's impact on health and define disability as a health condition occurring in an

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[67] World Health Organization. (2001). International classification of functioning, disability and health : ICF. World Health Organization. https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/42407
[68] Masala, C. and Petretto, D.R. (2008). From disablement to enablement: Conceptual models of disability in the 20th century. Disability and Rehabilitation, 30(17), pp.1233–1244. doi:10.1080/09638280701602418.

unfavourable setting[69]. As a result, the ICF is a framework that "universalises" the condition of disability in that it affects everyone since anyone can have a particular health condition that, in a particular setting, results in disability.

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[69] World Health Organization. (2001). International classification of functioning, disability and health : ICF. World Health Organization. https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/42407

1.4. Steps forward in recent decades

The social-historical events analysed so far are undoubtedly interesting and noteworthy for comprehending the difficult journey that disability has had to take.

However, it would be reductive to focus only on the medical dimension and the academic debate that has taken place around the understanding of disability. As different models, types of treatment and scientific research have evolved, so have states organised themselves and intervened to include and protect all individuals equally. The different approaches to disability, coupled with the classifications drawn up by the WHO and outlined in the previous paragraphs, highlight the progressive worldwide commitment to promote, protect and uphold the human rights of all persons with disabilities and to guarantee their equality before the law.

This commitment to accessibility is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, also known as the UNCRPD, which came into force in 2008 and has been signed by all UN member states[70].

The treaty marked a fundamental turning point for the rights of people with disabilities, as it represents an instrument shared by the international community that establishes values and goals to expand the degree of social inclusion of persons with disabilities. Although other conventions on the protection of human rights already existed, the rights of persons with disabilities were very often not guaranteed; precisely because of this, it was necessary to adopt a new legally binding document that would establish additional obligations for states to protect people with disabilities. It is therefore not concerned with affirming new human rights, but rather with establishing obligations on the parties to promote, protect and ensure the rights of persons with disabilities[71].

Among the many interventions, one of the main instruments used by the European Union to implement the CRPD was the *Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2010-2020*, which issued several directives in order to create a barrier-free Europe. Some of the

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[70] ai (2010). Convenzione delle Nazioni Unite sui diritti delle persone con disabilità. [online] Wikipedia.org. Available   at: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convenzione_delle_Nazioni_Unite_sui_diritti_delle_persone_con_disabilit%C3%A0#:~:text=La%20Convenzione%20ONU%20per%20i [Accessed 30 Dec. 2022].
[71] United Nations (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). [online] United Nations. Available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html.

directives address issues like accessibility of key products and services, access to air, sea and rail transport, and equal treatment in employment and working conditions.

Despite the efforts made and improvements achieved in several spheres during the decade, the European Commission recognised that people with disabilities still face many barriers to accessing health care, education, employment and leisure activities, as well as participating in political life. The European Commission identified a number of areas that call for coordinated state action and provided some data to highlight those areas.

Among the different areas, it is worth mentioning the following:

- The greater risk of poverty and social exclusion experienced by people with disabilities: 28.4 per cent of people with disabilities are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, compared to 18.4 per cent of people without disabilities.

- The restricted access of people with disabilities to employment: 50.8 per cent of people with disabilities have a job, compared to 75 per cent of the rest of the population.

- The persistence of discrimination, despite efforts to create a more inclusive environment: 52 per cent of people with disabilities have felt personally discriminated against. They also experience more violence (17 per cent compared to 8 per cent of people without disabilities) and harassment (50 per cent compared to 37 per cent of people without disabilities).

- Poor inclusion in education systems with respect to the needs of children with disabilities: 20.3 per cent of young people with disabilities drop out of school early, compared to 9.8 per cent of other students[72].

These data served as the foundation for the European Commission's adoption of the *Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030* in March 2021. The new Strategy's stated goal is to advance efforts to guarantee that all people with disabilities in Europe, regardless of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age, or sexual orientation, can, first and foremost, exercise their human rights and have equal access to society and the economy. To achieve this goal, the Strategy calls for concerted action on

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[72] ec.europa.eu. (n.d.). Un'Unione dell'uguaglianza: Strategia sui diritti delle persone con disabilità 2021-2030 - Occupazione, affari sociali e inclusione - Commissione europea. [online] Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1484&langId=it#:~:text=Nel%20marzo%202021%20la%20 Commissione [Accessed 30 Dec. 2022].

four key pillars: ensuring legal empowerment and political participation; improving access to employment and independent living; reducing poverty and social exclusion; and promoting inclusive education and lifelong learning[73].

Another international blueprint for achieving a more equitable future for all, which recognises the importance of diversity and inclusion, is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 and officially commenced on 1 January 2016. These 17 goals have replaced the Millennium Development Goals and are more disability-inclusive than the previous goals. Their aim is "*to end poverty in all its forms everywhere*" by 2030, making every effort to "*leave no one behind.*"[74]

Many of the new goals have been formulated in ways that address the needs of people with disabilities directly, including Goal 3 (*good health and well-being*), which calls for an end to all forms of discrimination against people with disabilities. Goal 4 (*quality education*) asks for the elimination of barriers in schools and educational institutions. Goal 5 (*gender equality*) urges for promoting gender equality and empowerment of women and ending discrimination against women and girls with disabilities. Goal 8 (*decent work and economic growth*) seeks to achieve sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; and Goal 10 (*reduced inequalities*) recommends efforts to reduce inequality within and among countries. Furthermore, Goal 16 (*peace, justice and strong institutions*) invites countries to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."[75]

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[73] *Ibidem*

[74] United Nations (2022). Sustainable Development Goals. [online] United Nations Sustainable Development. Available at: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/.

[75] United Nations (2015). The 17 Sustainable Development Goals. [online] United Nations. Available at: https://sdgs.un.org/goals.

CHAPTER II. The portrayal of disability in communication strategies: how to achieve a win-win scenario

The end of Chapter 1 provided an overview of some of the initiatives carried out at the European and international levels to overcome the physical, social and political barriers that many people with disabilities still encounter today. In recent years, more and more efforts have been made to guarantee that people with disabilities enjoy the same opportunities as the rest of the population (especially in developed countries); however, the data presented above show us that inclusion is still far from being fully realised. But achieving a higher level of inclusion does not only depend on actions taken by governments and public institutions; it can be also a result of changes in the social attitudes prompted by initiatives in the field of marketing and the mass media. It is widely known that advertising can play a crucial role in promoting a more inclusive society in which everyone feels accepted and respected for who they are.

In the following chapter, I will discuss and analyse how the representation of disability has been developed in recent decades; I will start by illustrating the concept of social inclusion, not only by clarifying the concept in objective terms but also and above all from a subjective point of view. Indeed, to feel socially included, people need to feel respected, valued and empowered. These feelings are the same as those sought in advertising representations since when people feel positively represented in brands' communication strategies, they tend to generate more favourable responses towards the brand itself. Nevertheless, we will observe how, although persons with disabilities represent approximately 16% of the population, they are still poorly represented in the communication strategies of brands. Furthermore, we will observe in detail, with specific examples, how some representations of disability in the media are still subject to a distorted and stereotyped view, thus ending up conveying a misleading or even offensive message about disability. However, in recent decades, the themes of inclusion and diversity within advertising have become increasingly popular with consumers themselves and, by virtue of this, brands too are consequently moving towards new horizons to embrace new, more diverse, inclusive and representative marketing strategies, increasingly aware that the use of such communication strategies can benefit both society and the brands themselves in the long run.

2.1. Social inclusion: a combination of subjective and objective factors

The concept of *social inclusion* has been analysed and defined several times by scholars, who have proposed definitions of varying degrees of breadth. In general, several academics have defined social inclusion as consisting of several factors such as: not being at risk of poverty and thus having an adequate standard of living, access to education, job opportunities, housing, health services, involvement in society and relationships with others[76]. In this sense, social inclusion refers to the process of enabling all members of society to participate fully in society on an equal basis with others[77].

The term 'inclusion' is often confused with the term 'integration', but these are two quite different concepts in terms of the purposes and processes through which they are implemented. While integration physically brings people together, it does not always grant them the same possibilities to be, does and want. Inclusion, on the other hand, allows everyone, without distinction, in any place, at any time and in any situation to be a full citizen of a society. It, therefore, involves reducing the inequalities faced by members of minority groups and promoting equal opportunities for them to benefit from and contribute to society.

To better comprehend the difference between the two, see Figure 2.1. below.

[76] Simplican, S.C., Leader, G., Kosciulek, J. and Leahy, M. (2015). Defining social inclusion of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities: An ecological model of social networks and community participation. Research in Developmental Disabilities, [online] 38(38), pp.18–29. doi:10.1016/j.ridd.2014.10.008.

[77] Eurofound. (n.d.). Social inclusion of young people. [online] Available at:
https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2015/social-inclusion-of-young-people
[Accessed 8 Jan. 2023].

Figure 2.1.
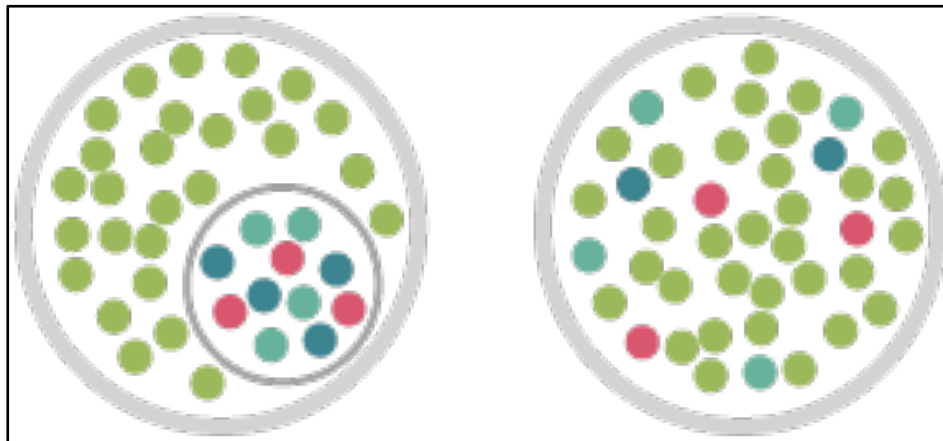
The representation on the left corresponds to integration, while the one on the right to the concept of inclusion.

<u>Source</u>: Inclusion ASBL, n.d.

However, being socially included is not only reduced to the manoeuvres implemented to enable the implementation of quality educational, social or health interventions but also concerns more intimate and personal factors. The definition of inclusion according to a purely tangible dimension must be placed side by side and thought of in conjunction with the more subjective sphere.

In this regard, Licsandru and Cui (2018) proposed a distinction between objective social inclusion and subjective social inclusion. Objective social inclusion represents the vision set out above, whereas subjective social inclusion is referred to as consisting of five different attributes such as *acceptance*, *belongingness*, *empowerment*, *equality* and *respect*. They represent those feelings that enable people to feel included within a social group[78]. To promote social inclusion and break down barriers between different groups, it is important to acknowledge differences and foster an environment based on empathy and understanding among various groups and individuals.

This is particularly important in the case of people with disabilities who are often excluded from society due to various reasons related to stigmatisation or prejudice against them[79]. For this reason, individuals must not only be effectively included in an

[78] Licsandru, T.C. and Cui, C.C. (2018). Subjective social inclusion: A conceptual critique for socially inclusive marketing. Journal of Business Research, 82, pp.330–339. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.08.036.
[79] Oliver, M. and Barnes, C. (2010). Disability studies, disabled people and the struggle for inclusion. British Journal of Sociology of Education, [online] 31(5), pp.547–560. Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/25758480 [Accessed 8 Jan. 2023].

environment (*objective inclusion*), but they must also feel accepted, 'fit in' and involved at the same level as others in such environments (*subjective inclusion*). Indeed, if people are marginalised by society due to a lack of respect or negative attitudes towards them, this is likely to damage their well-being and thus also hinder their participation in society, i.e. the objective dimension of social inclusion[80].

It is therefore clear that to fully address the problem of social inclusion, it is necessary to enhance both the objective and subjective dimensions; this implies a change in perspective not only at the institutional level but also at the individual level. After all, it is the responsibility of every individual to make sure no one is excluded and treated unfairly based on his or her personal characteristics or circumstances. This requires open dialogue, the ability to accept differences and to embrace diversity as a positive thing.

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[80] Cobigo, V, Ouellette-Kuntz, H, Lysaght, R & Martin, L. (2012). 'Shifting our conceptualization of social inclusion', Stigma Research and Action, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 75-84. <http://stigmaj.org/article/view/45>

2.2. Diversity and inclusion: a paradigm sought by many

From the above considerations, one can understand why, especially in recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis and attention given to issues of diversity and inclusion. Diversity and inclusion (D&I) refer to the fundamental human right not to be disadvantaged, but to be recognised, understood and appreciated based on any attribute of diversity[81]. This is to say that everyone is equal and deserves equal rights regardless of differences related to gender, religion, disability, physical appearance, etc.

Diversity refers to the representation of all visible and invisible forms of difference, while *inclusion* refers to the involvement and appreciation of the presence and perspective of different groups of people in an environment. This enables individuals to develop their full potential and contribute to the common good of society through a sense of belonging and social integration. Consequently, the two concepts are closely related to each other because, without the recognition and respect of each person's unique differences, inclusion cannot take place[82].

In many ways, the increasing focus on D&I issues has been caused by both societal and individual-level drives. On the social level, it can be seen as a reflection of changing societal values, which have recognised a still rather high level of inequality, accompanied by a demand for less discrimination[83]. On the individual plane, on the other hand, the expectations of consumers have changed, who increasingly find it difficult to relate to advertisements that do not 'speak' about them and do not represent them[84]. This is the reason why many brands have started to focus their marketing strategies on improving the diversity and inclusiveness of their brands' images and messages[85]. By combining powerful images with inspiring stories, brands have sought to appeal to a broader

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[81] Eisend, M., Muldrow, A.F. and Rosengren, S. (2022). Diversity and inclusion in advertising research. International Journal of Advertising, pp.1–8. doi:10.1080/02650487.2022.2122252.

[82] Bernstein, R.S., Bulger, M., Salipante, P. and Weisinger, J.Y. (2019). From Diversity to Inclusion to Equity: A Theory of Generative Interactions. Journal of Business Ethics, 167(3). doi:10.1007/s10551-019-04180-1.

[83] Chandy, R.K., Johar, G.V., Moorman, C. and Roberts, J.H. (2021). Better Marketing for a Better World. Journal of Marketing, 85(3), pp.1–9. doi:10.1177/00222429211003690.

[84] Henderson, G.R. and Williams, J.D. (2013). From Exclusion to Inclusion: An Introduction to the Special Issue on Marketplace Diversity and Inclusion. Journal of Public Policy & Marketing, 32(1_suppl), pp.1–5. doi:10.1509/jppm.32.s.1.

[85] Cunningham, G. B., & Melton, E. N. (2014). Signals and cues: LGBT inclusive advertising and consumer attraction. Sport Marketing Quarterly, 23(1), 37.

audience and to create an inclusive environment that celebrates differences and encourages respect for one another. Such initiatives can make an important contribution to the recognition and acceptance of disability among the general population and help to break down some of the barriers that individuals with disabilities face daily. As mentioned above, however, it seems that this change of perspective in communication strategies is also requested by consumers themselves[86], who appear to be consistently intolerant of the superficial ways in which some marketing campaigns target them and discriminate against people who do not conform to the traditional perception of beauty.

In Italy, according to research carried out by Rai Pubblicità's Diversity & Inclusion (D&I), it emerged that more than one out of two Italians (58.5 per cent), declared themselves to be more inclined to buy a product communicated through an inclusive commercial, in which awareness of diversity & inclusion issues is evident. Moreover, after seeing a commercial with these characteristics, 57 per cent declared themselves motivated to recommend the product communicated through this same commercial to others (friends, family, acquaintances)[87].

The awareness of a company's commitment to D&I issues through advertising – according to the research – influences consumers' purchasing choices in 40.7 per cent of cases. Public awareness is also demonstrated by the 61 per cent of respondents who believe that companies and brands have an important social responsibility towards society and should create a culture on these issues through diversity-conscious advertising communication[88].

Not only this, but if we switch to the company's perspective, it turns out that commercials sensitive to inclusive themes have a greater ability to generate memorability and recall in the consumer exposed to a message[89]. It, therefore, follows that, when placed in a coherent narrative context, D&I content advertising helps to reinforce a positive brand

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[86] www.mckinsey.com. (2022). The rise of the inclusive consumer | McKinsey. [online] Available at: https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/the-rise-of-the-inclusive-consumer.
[87] The qualitative-quantitative research was carried out on a sample of 1,000 individuals representative of the Italian population aged 18-64
[88] Bosio, E. (2021). Pubblicità e diversity: più di un italiano su due si dichiara maggiormente disposto ad acquistare un prodotto se inserito in uno spot inclusivo. [online] Rai Pubblicità. Available at: https://www.raipubblicita.it/pubblicita-e-diversity-piu-di-un-italiano-su-due-si-dichiara-maggiormente-disposto-ad-acquistare-un-prodotto-se-inserito-in-uno-spot-inclusivo/ [Accessed 4 Jan. 2023].
[89] *Ibidem*

vision in the consumer's mind, generate engagement and ultimately value for the company[90].

The implications that can be drawn from these findings are clear: while many companies are still lagging behind in terms of adopting more inclusive communication and marketing strategies[91], consumers are increasingly demanding more ethical and transparent representations in advertising, using such messages as a benchmark to judge companies' commitment to social responsibility and diversity and inclusion. Thus, companies who want to establish favourable, deep and long-term relationships with their customers should place a greater emphasis on the inclusion of diverse groups in their communications strategy.

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[90] Deloitte (n.d.). Win Customers With Authentically Inclusive Marketing Initiatives. [online] WSJ. Available at: https://deloitte.wsj.com/articles/win-customers-with-authentically-inclusive-marketing-initiatives-01650302320.

[91] Thompson, S. (n.d.). Data Shows Consumers Want Diversity In Marketing—Why Many Brands Struggle To Get It Right And How To Fix. [online] Forbes. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/soniathompson/2020/02/05/data-shows-consumers-want-diversity-in-marketing-why-many-brands-struggle-to-get-it-right-and-how-to-fix/?sh=412d4dda32f5 [Accessed 8 Jan. 2023].

2.3. But are people with disabilities sufficiently and appropriately represented in the media?

Although globally, people with disabilities make up around 16 per cent of the population[92], they remain severely under-represented in companies' communication strategies[93]. Advertisements rarely show disabled people in everyday life, e.g. while working, parenting, doing household chores or having fun. Instead, they are mostly portrayed as "others" who have problems and need help, such as in advertisements for hearing aids or assistive devices, for example.

To go into more detail, it is relevant to report the results of a survey carried out by Nielsen in February 2021 concerning the US market, to find out how many of the broadcast advertisements showed persons with disabilities. The results that emerged are rather dramatic: out of a sample of 450,000 advertisements broadcast in prime time, only 6,000 included persons with disabilities and more than half of these promoted products or services from the medical sector. Furthermore, what was found is that disability is generally present in advertisements presenting products for disability care. It was found that out of 57 million dollars in advertising expenditure, only 3 per cent went to advertisements featuring people with disabilities or including disability-related themes in the creative. On the other hand, pharmaceuticals, health treatments, devices and the like accounted for almost 50 per cent of the total dollars spent on disability-related advertisements[94].

This trend is mirrored by the findings of a similar survey conducted by Channel 4 in the UK in 2021: only 4 per cent of television advertisements in the UK feature disabled people,

[92] Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2022. According to estimates compiled by the WHO, in 2021 some 1.3 billion people, representing 16% of the world's population, suffer from a significant disability. Of these people, approximately 142 million have severe levels of disability.

[93] www.campaignlive.co.uk. (n.d.). No 'diversity' without disability: why marketing needs to wake up to the world's most underrepresented minority group. [online] Available at: https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/no-diversity-without-disability-why-marketing-needs-wake-worlds-underrepresented-minority-group/1724144 [Accessed 8 Jan. 2023].

[94] Nielsen. (n.d.). Visibilità della disabilità: Ritratti della disabilità nella pubblicità. [online] Available at: https://www.nielsen.com/it/insights/2021/visibility-of-disability-portrayals-of-disability-in-advertising/.

down to 1 per cent of disabled people in leading roles, despite 22 per cent of the UK population have some form of disability[95].

Such a paucity of representations of disability leads one to wonder what factors lie behind such choices and why many marketers are still reluctant to include people with disabilities in their campaigns.

One possible explanation might be that they believe that consumers with disabilities are a small part of the population and that the returns from targeting them would be negligible. However, the overexposed data is accessible to everyone, which would imply an estimation error on the part of companies.

Another more plausible answer is that advertisers are afraid of the reaction they might receive from the general public. The fact that our society still suffers from prejudice against differently-abled people may dissuade advertisers from showing people with a disability in their ads. As Alex Brooker, presenter and comedian of The Last Leg, a Channel 4 television programme, commented: "*My life is not all about my disability. [...] the more you see disabled people on screen, the less it becomes [...] something different*". In fact, according to Brooker, many times advertisers are concerned about including people with disabilities in advertisements because they think it is not in their scope or that it is 'out-of-scope'. However, the advertisement does not have to be about disability, but such actors can take part in it on an equal footing with others who are selected for the commercial[96].

Consequently, the insufficient number of representations of people with disabilities in advertising may be more of a reflection of a desire on the part of advertisers and media producers, in addition to a small number of individuals with disabilities involved in the advertising and media industry[97].

However, living with a disability is a reality for millions of people and is part of the different identities that people want to see authentically represented in the content they consume and reflected in the brands they buy. The lack of representation negatively

[95] www.channel4.com. (n.d.). Channel 4 challenges UK advertisers to improve disabled representation in advertising campaigns | Channel 4. [online] Available at:
https://www.channel4.com/press/news/channel-4-challenges-uk-advertisers-improve-disabled-representation-advertising-1 [Accessed 4 Jan. 2023].
[96] 4Sales. (n.d.). BLOG: How should disabled people be represented in ads? [online] Available at:
https://www.4sales.com/how-should-disabled-people-be-represented-in-ads [Accessed 9 Feb. 2023].
[97] Panol, Z. and McBride, M. (2001). Disability Images in Print Advertising: Exploring Attitudinal Impact Issues. Disability Studies Quarterly, 21(2). doi:10.18061/dsq.v21i2.279.

affects both the social imaginary, defining what is beautiful, attractive, and desirable and what is not; in doing it feeds into the broader idea that persons with disabilities are less important, less worthy and less deserving of time and attention from society at large[98]. Not only this, but insufficient or misrepresentation in marketing communications can damage the reputation of the groups represented, convey prejudicial and non-inclusive messages[99] and affect self-perception and self-esteem[100] by causing a sense of inadequacy[101].

[98] Barnes, C. (1992). DISABLING IMAGERY AND THE MEDIA An Exploration of the Principles for Media Representations of Disabled People the First in a Series of Reports COLIN BARNES THE BRITISH COUNCIL OF ORGANISATIONS OF DISABLED PEOPLE Ryburn Publishing. [online] Available at: https://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/library/Barnes-disabling-imagery.pdf.
[99] Bennett, A.M., Hill, R.P. and Oleksiuk, D. (2013). The Impact of Disparate Levels of Marketplace Inclusion on Consumer–Brand Relationships. Journal of Public Policy & Marketing, 32(1_suppl), pp.16–31. doi:10.1509/jppm.12.023.
[100] Bennett, A.M., Hill, R.P.. and Daddario, K. (2014). Shopping While Nonwhite: Racial Discrimination among Minority Consumers. Journal of Consumer Affairs, 49(2), pp.328–355. doi:10.1111/joca.12060.
[101] Bocci, F., De Castro, M., & Zona, U. (2020). Non solo marketing. L'ecosistema YouTube come opportunità per l'autonarrazione della disabilità e dell'inclusione. *MeTis-Mondi educativi. Temi indagini suggestioni*, *10*(1), 121-138.

2.4.   Advertisements as a representation of the self and the ideal self

In the light of the above considerations, it is evident how advertising is a powerful tool capable of conveying different symbolic representations and where what is represented and the way it is advertised contribute to conditioning the perception of the self[102]. It is widely believed that advertising exerts a great influence on people's identity formation and on their perception of themselves, their body image and the world around them. As such, advertising has the power to shape the so-called "*self-concept*", which can be defined as the set of characteristics that a person attributes to himself or herself. The construct of self-concept has been extensively analysed in consumer behaviour studies to understand how consumers relate, connect and engage with brands and also in terms of marketing communication effectiveness. As a multidimensional construct, it is theorized as composed of different self-conceptions, such as the actual self, the ideal self and the ought self. The actual self is perceived as the set of attributes that a person possesses, while the ideal self is based on the imagination of goals, desires and ideals that a person aspires to achieve[103]. The sociologist Morris Rosenberg defined the actual self as the "*totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object*"[104].

In this context, '*self-congruence*' is thus defined as the degree of coincidence between the expressions of an advertisement and the self-concept of the viewer[105]. A congruent advertising message, as opposed to an incongruent message, may induce consumers to subsequent behaviour favourable to the advertised product, such as brand preference, greater emotional attachment to the brand and increased purchase intentions[106]. This

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[102] Richins, M.L. (1991). Social Comparison and the Idealized Images of Advertising. Journal of Consumer Research, 18(1), pp.71–83. doi:10.1086/209242.

[103] Higgins, E.T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: a Theory Relating Self and affect. Psychological Review, 94(3), pp.319–340. doi:https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.94.3.319.

[104] Rosenberg, M. (1979). Conceiving the self. New York: Basic Books.

[105] Hong, J.W. and Zinkhan, G.M. (1995). Self-concept and advertising effectiveness: The influence of congruency, conspicuousness, and response mode. Psychology and Marketing, 12(1), pp.53–77. doi:10.1002/mar.4220120105.

[106] Graeff, T.R. (1996). Using promotional messages to manage the effects of brand and self-image on brand evaluations. Journal of Consumer Marketing, 13(3), pp.4–18. doi:https://doi.org/10.1108/07363769610118921.

happens because if consumers can identify with a brand's messaging, they are more likely to resonate with it and thus create positive associations with the brand[107].

Indeed, according to self-concept theory, individuals direct their actions to match, maintain and enhance their self-concept and because of this, they select brands whose image is compatible with the perception they have of themselves[108]. Therefore, it is evident that promotional efforts can be more effective if they are directed at establishing a product image that is congruent with the consumer's self-concept[109]. When the congruence level is low, people may find it difficult to relate to the advertised goods or services, which can lead to unfavourable reactions like reduced consumer attraction or brand rejection[110].

However, as was mentioned earlier, individuals are aware not only of who they are but also of who they would like to be, i.e. the 'ideal self-concept'. "*Ideal self-concept*" refers to the ideal condition of the self, which represents an individual's desired image of his or her self. The difference between ideal and actual self-concept is that the former is founded on the perceptual reality of oneself, whilst the latter refers to the imagination of the self, based on goals and ideals that a person aspires to achieve[111].

The ideal self-concept thus serves as a reference point against which the real self is measured; if there is a discrepancy, the individual tries to reach the ideal condition. For this reason, the ideal self appears as a motivating factor influencing human behaviour[112]. In terms of consumer behaviour, as suggested by a study by Hong and Zinkhan (1995), consumers often strive to fulfil their aspirations by choosing a brand that has an appeal congruent with their ideal self.

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[107] Ferraro, C., Hemsley, A. and Sands, S. (2022). Embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI): Considerations and opportunities for brand managers. Business Horizons. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2022.09.005.

[108] Graeff, T.R. (1996). Using promotional messages to manage the effects of brand and self-image on brand evaluations. Journal of Consumer Marketing, 13(3), pp.4–18.

[109] Whittler, T. E and Dimeo, J. (1991). 'Viewers' reactions to racial cues in advertising stimuli', Journal of Advertising Research, Vol. 31, No. 6, pp. 37–46.

[110] Hong, J.W. and Zinkhan, G.M. (1995). Self-concept and advertising effectiveness: The influence of congruency, conspicuousness, and response mode. Psychology and Marketing, [online] 12(1), pp.53–77.

[111] Kim, D.H., Yoo, J.J. and Lee, W.-N. (2016). The influence of self-concept on ad effectiveness: Interaction between self-concept and construal levels on effectiveness of advertising. Journal of Marketing Communications, 24(7), pp.734–745. doi:10.1080/13527266.2016.1235601.

[112] Zinkhan, G.M., Haytko, D.L. and Ward, A. (1996). Self-concept theory: applications in advertising. Journal of Marketing Communications, 2(1), pp.1–19. doi:10.1080/13527269600000001.

With this theoretical framework in mind, it is certainly evident that the communication strategies of brands have enormous potential to influence people's self-identity and as such, to strengthen or compromise their identity. Nevertheless, the following paragraphs will observe how to date, several communication strategies that include people with disabilities have been created inappropriately and stereotypically.

These misleading and reductive representations tend to reinforce certain attitudes or behaviours that limit the choices and aspirations of people with disabilities. By portraying disability as something out of the norm and undesirable that needs to be catered for, brands risk conveying the message that the so-called "ideal self" to which people with disabilities should aspire is represented by a more "normal" condition. This is very problematic, especially since it discourages people with disabilities from realising their full potential in society. Besides damaging their self-concept, it also contributes to the establishment of negative attitudes towards the brand. In light of these considerations, it can be clearly understood that one of the major responsibilities of brands is to develop effective communication strategies aimed at informing and raising awareness among consumers about the existence of diversity and promoting positive attitudes towards the unique characteristics that characterise each individual.

2.4.1. Reeve's ad: An ideal self for disabled people or non-disabled people?

A prime example of what has just been analysed occurred in 2000 during the Super Bowl, when Nuveen Investments, a company involved in spinal cord regeneration research, launched a commercial with actor Christopher Reeve, who had been paralysed five years earlier when he injured his spinal cord during a horseback ride. The commercial shows Reeve in an imaginary future as he gets up from a chair and walks towards the stage with research beneficiaries. Figure 2.1. shows a frame of the commercial depicting the actor walking.

The commercial aimed to come up with an inspiring story featuring a person with a disability who manages to 'solve and cure' his condition thanks to investments in medical research[113].

What was intended to be a message of hope for people suffering from spinal injuries ended up being perceived as a misrepresentation of their condition. Many viewers thought the commercial showed Christopher Reeve recovered from his illness, thus raising false hopes about the possibility of a quick recovery[114].

Beyond the veracity of the results that medical research could achieve, the commercial implicitly conveyed the message of a society aiming to re-establish a situation of 'normality' and, consequently, society's preference for the able-bodied to a certain extent. This message, therefore, presented a vision of the 'cured' individual that is not based on a genuine attempt to empathise with the disabled person, but on the prejudice generated by society's perception of them as different. Furthermore, it also highlights the narrow perspective of a society that does not value or recognise the uniqueness of each individual but instead expects everyone to be the same and to behave according to societal norms.

Returning to the psychological considerations brought up in the previous paragraph, it can be noted that the 'ideal self' in this spot, to which paralysed persons should aspire, corresponds to a restoration to a state of absolute health, achievable through medical treatment. This implies that people with this condition can only have one goal in life: to regain the ability to walk. This representation then becomes problematic, as it implies that

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[113] Timke, E. (2019). Disability and Advertising. Advertising & Society Quarterly, 20(3). doi:10.1353/asr.2019.0024.

[114] www.cbsnews.com. (n.d.). Reeve Ad - Inspiring Or Misleading? [online] Available at: https://www.cbsnews.com/news/reeve-ad-inspiring-or-misleading/.

the only way a disabled person can truly experience freedom or happiness is to overcome their disability.

Figure 2.2.

Source: (Editor, 2000)

2.4.2. The Campaign for Brazilian Vogue for the Paralympic Games in Rio

Another striking example of how the portrayal of people with disabilities can be dishonourable, and above all unrealistic, is the campaign for the 2016 Rio Paralympic Games, presented in the Brazilian edition of Vogue. The images in the campaign portrayed two non-disabled actors – Cleo Pires and Paulo Vilhena – whose limbs had been amputated using image modification programmes to make them look like Paralympic athletes. Although the idea may seem creative and interesting at first glance, the resulting images, which portrayed them next to each other with the caption "*We are all Paralympians*", turned out to be very disrespectful to the disabled community[115]. Again, the portrayal of disability is very reductive and offensive, and the condition of disability is depicted in a simplistic way, as something that can be worn and taken off for entertainment or publicity, somewhat downplaying the challenges that people with disabilities face every day.

The choice of who to use for the campaign is even more controversial considering that two real Paralympic athletes, Renato Leite and Bruna Alexandre, were present on the set but did not participate in the shooting[116]. In Figure 2.2, at the end of the paragraph, you can see on the left the two actors together with the two Paralympic athletes, and on the right the image that was used for the campaign.

Although the campaign was created for a worthy cause, it should have been created with people who are disabled, to ensure that the message they intended to spread was accurate and honourable. By using able-bodied people to represent a cause that belongs to the disabled community, the Brazilian Paralympic Committee has objectified and belittled people with disabilities. This goes against the whole purpose of the Paralympics: to celebrate the achievements and abilities of all disabled people, regardless of their physical abilities.

The choice of two famous actors was presumably intended to create greater public involvement, as they were two well-known faces. In reality, however, it had the opposite

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[115] Nylon. (n.d.). Vogue Brazil Photoshopped Able-Bodied Models To Make Them Look Like Paralympians. [online] Available at: https://www.nylon.com/articles/vogue-brazil-paralympians.
[116] Desmond-Harris, J. (2016). Vogue Brazil digitally removed limbs from actors to promote the Paralympics and completely missed the point. [online] Vox. Available at: https://www.vox.com/2016/8/27/12660082/rio-2016-vogue-brazil-photoshop-paralympics-disabled.

effect, as the campaign lacked authenticity and saw a lower level of involvement by people with disabilities in the Paralympic Games. Such a choice also reveals a great lack of consideration when it comes to the potential impact a marketing campaign can have in terms of reinforcing existing stereotypes of how people with disabilities can be represented in the media.

This campaign, therefore, appears to be a prime example of how advertisers most often show an inherent lack of understanding of the need for a specific and diverse representation of people with disabilities. In this regard, advertisers must reflect in earnest on who they portray and how they portray them to ensure that representations are accurate and appropriate and to avoid reinforcing stereotypes.

Figure 2.3.

Source: (Zhang, 2016)

2.5. The so-called "Inspiration Porn"

Another major trope that occurs when people with disabilities are inappropriately represented in advertisements is the so-called '*inspiration porn*'. This refers to images or videos in which people with disabilities are shown as inspiration for others, often without disclosing their disabilities or what life is actually like for them on a day-to-day basis[117]. Inspiration porn is an informal term, coined by the late Australian disability activist Stella Young, to denote a kind of media portrayal of people with disabilities which is based on the assumption that expectations of personal fulfilment for a person with a disability are very low; thus, a reaction of surprise at the achievement of very normal goals by people with disabilities, such as working, having a social life, being in a relationship, becomes entirely permissible. In this sense, inspiration porn distorts the achievements of people with disabilities by making them into exceptional cases rather than representative of the general population.

Stella Young argued that several times during her life, she had witnessed situations in which people with disabilities were seen as 'inspirational objects' and that simply getting out of bed in the morning and living their lives made these people exceptional, as if, normally, these people were not able to lead 'normal' lives. Inspirational porn, therefore, consists in objectifying one group of people to benefit another group; the objectified group of people are people with disabilities, who are seen as a source of inspiration for non-disabled people. They feel inspired and motivated by their condition because, as Stella Young said, they make reflections such as: '*Well, however bad my life is, it could be worse. I could be that person.*" They are thus encouraged to look at their worries or problems from a different perspective, incentivising them to complain less and try to be grateful for what they already have[118]. This prompts the general public to experience feelings of condescension and pity towards people with disability. And this happens because disability is assumed to be tragic in itself since they cannot lead fully autonomous and

[117] Shelton, S.S. and Waddell, T.F. (2020). Does 'Inspiration Porn' Inspire? How Disability and Challenge Impact Attitudinal Evaluations of Advertising. Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising, pp.1–19. doi:10.1080/10641734.2020.1808125.
[118] Inspiration porn and the objectification of disability: Stella Young at TEDxSydney 2014. [online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SxrS7-I_sMQ.

independent lives: portrayals of courageous, cheerful and accomplished disabled people, therefore, become particularly uplifting.

Kristin Gilger, director of the National Centre on Disability and Journalism (NCDJ), also gives her view on Inspiration Porn:

"*It's well-intentioned, but those stories also can be very exploitative and they are very limited in really getting to the heart of how people live and what they think and how they're affected by what's going on in our civic life*".

Although there may be good intentions behind them, such representations are rarely identified by people with disabilities as 'positive' and admirable narratives and depictions of their lives[119].

As a result, people with disabilities tend to feel a certain discomfort at seeing such representations because they find them embarrassing and demoralising. Here again, we find the same problem that characterised the two previous examples of advertisements, namely that in most cases, stories about people with disabilities are told from the point of view of non-disabled observers, completely setting aside the perspective of the disabled person. This brings up a very important reflection, namely that if stories about disability are to be represented and told authentically and truthfully, they should always include the thoughts, feelings and points of view of people who experience disability[120].

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[119] Pulrang, A. (n.d.). How To Avoid 'Inspiration Porn'. [online] Forbes. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewpulrang/2019/11/29/how-to-avoid-inspiration-porn/?sh=10df115f5b3d.
[120] *Ibidem*

2.5.1. Toyota's Commercial for Super Bowl 2021

One commercial that has been blamed as a case of inspiration porn is the one presented by Toyota during the 2021 edition of the Super Bowl.

The video stars Jessica Long, a Paralympic swimming champion, together with her mother, and it deals with a very important and sensitive topic, namely the adoption of children with a disability[121].

Although the designers of this advertisement had the best of intentions when they were devising it because they believed it would increase public awareness of the challenges faced by people with disabilities, the disabled community ultimately found it to be offensive because they saw it from a completely different perspective.

The fact that Jessica Long's mother decides to go ahead with the adoption 'despite' the child's disability has the negative effect of reinforcing disability-related stereotypes. One of these is the fact that people with disabilities are often considered 'undesirable' by society, which makes the prospect of adoption rather daunting for potential parents. The adoption of a child with a disability is certainly something extraordinary and meritorious that not all people are ready to do; however, the commercial, as it is structured, greatly emphasises the extraordinariness of the fact, ending up favouring those mechanisms of stereotyping towards disability that society is subject to.

To understand the fallacious logic behind inspiration porn, one would have to replace the person with a disability in the commercial with a person of colour, a woman, or a member of the LGBTQ community. If the mother in the commercial had been told that the child to be adopted is of African descent and that, as a result, she will not have an easy life because of the discrimination that still exists, the commercial would probably not have been aired, because it would have been considered very offensive indeed[122]. Again, it would have been appropriate for the commercial to have been reviewed by an organisation or foundation that is primarily concerned with supporting the rights of people with disabilities, to ensure that the advertisement did not offend anyone.

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[121] Graham, M. (2021). Toyota's Super Bowl ad features moving story of Paralympian Jessica Long. [online] CNBC. Available at: https://www.cnbc.com/2021/02/03/toyotas-super-bowl-ad-features-moving-story-of-paralympian-jessica-long.html.

[122] GoldenFebruary 10, D. and 2021 (n.d.). Toyota's Super Bowl Ad Was Inspiration Porn. [online] Available at: https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/toyotas-super-bowl-ad-was-inspiration-porn/ [Accessed 8 Jan. 2023].

Below, from Figure 2.4 to Figure 2.7., are some snapshots of the commercial on YouTube, which I thought might be the most representative of what has been discussed so far.

Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.5.

Figure 2.6.

Source: Youtube

Figure 2.7.

Source: Youtube

2.6.   We all need more "Inclusive Marketing"

In recent decades, there has been a growing awareness of the pivotal role that brands, and more specifically their communication strategies, can play in shaping society's perceptions and attitudes[123] and, as such, it has the greatest potential and opportunity to help break down the social stigmas traditionally associated with people with disabilities. However, as seen in the previous sections, many of the representations portraying people with disabilities have been criticised because, instead of breaking down many of the misconceptions that people have about disability, they actually reinforced them. In light of these criticisms, it is clear that a profound rethinking of marketing strategies and ways of representing people with disabilities is needed to promote a more tolerant and inclusive society in which everyone is valued and respected regardless of their background, identity, race, gender or ability.

Triggering such behavioural change in society for the collective good is one of the fundamental concepts behind inclusive marketing. "*Inclusive marketing*" is a marketing technique that has gained increasing prominence in recent years. It refers to the practice of using images, messages, symbols and themes that accurately reflect the diversity of all consumers, by highlighting the different peculiarities of the human multitude, to increase acceptance of all individuals and foster greater social inclusion.

In this sense, it dissociates itself from the standardising logic of traditional marketing and takes into account the fact that people are first and foremost individuals and that everyone is different. This inclusive approach is therefore able to understand and accommodate the various identities, differences and histories of each person[124], focusing on the values we have in common, rather than emphasising differentiating factors. Specifically, with regard to the disability-related stereotypes observed in the previous paragraphs, which have been nurtured through misrepresentations in advertising, brands have the ability, through inclusive marketing, to encourage consumers to free themselves

[123] Schau, H.J., Muñiz, A.M. and Arnould, E.J. (2009). How Brand Community Practices Create Value. Journal of Marketing, 73(5), pp.30–51. doi:10.1509/jmkg.73.5.30.

[124] Ferraro, C., Hemsley, A. and Sands, S. (2022). Embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI): Considerations and opportunities for brand managers. Business Horizons. doi:10.1016/j.bushor.2022.09.005.

from such stereotypes and to actively promote diversity so that all consumers can feel equally and accurately represented.

To this end, it is necessary for companies to use positive, thoughtful and authentic images to portray disability in advertising, to simply portray it as another dimension of existence[125]. When structured in this way, such advertisements can make people ponder and encourage them to look beyond the surface to discover the person behind the disability. Not only that, but it also becomes a valuable tool for organisations themselves[126]: it was seen earlier that certain social attitudes are changing, and people are increasingly seeking diverse, inclusive and truthful representations. This is why, in recent times, advertising with disabled people has become increasingly associated with profitability, both because of the newfound power of consumers with disabilities and because of the public's desire to see 'real life' in images. consumers tend to create a positive sentiment towards those brands that focus on values such as inclusivity, rather than exclusivity. It follows that when advertisements are more inclusive, they have an impact on all audiences, not just those living with a disability.

On the corporate side, this is a huge opportunity. Indeed, including a wider audience within one's advertising campaigns can lead to reaching more potential customers. This implies that companies can benefit both from increased sales as well as a better brand reputation as the brand is seen in a positive light[127]. Customers, in turn, feel represented and valued. They feel more connected to the brand and are more likely to recommend or purchase it in the future. When consumers feel part of a brand's target market, they show more favourable attitudes towards that brand's marketing communications[128] and interpret them as an acknowledgement of their presence in the wider society[129].

On the other hand, if advertisements portray only an 'exclusive' segment or portray people with disabilities in a stereotypical way, they risk making consumers feel frustrated

[125] Brogan & Partners. (n.d.). How to make advertising more inclusive to people with disabilities. [online] Available at: https://brogan.com/blog/how-to-make-advertising-more-inclusive-to-people-with-disabilities/ [Accessed 12 Jan. 2023].

[126] Licsandru, T.C. and Cui, C.C. (2018). Subjective social inclusion: A conceptual critique for socially inclusive marketing. Journal of Business Research, 82, pp.330–339. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.08.036.

[127] Facebook IQ. (2021). Diversity Inclusion and Representation in Online Advertising. [online] Available at: https://www.facebook.com/business/news/insights/the-difference-diversity-makes-in-online-advertising

[128] Puntoni, S., Vanhamme, J. and Visscher, R. (2011). Two Birds and One Stone. Journal of Advertising, 40(1), pp.25–42. doi:10.2753/joa0091-3367400102.

[129] Lamont, M. and Molnár, V. (2001). How Blacks Use Consumption to Shape their Collective Identity. Journal of Consumer Culture, 1(1), pp.31–45. doi:10.1177/146954050100100103.

with the brand and forming a negative representation of it in their minds; this poses a strong threat to the brand, as it can cause a loss of purchasing power and market share[130]. In addition, it may encourage some consumers to turn away from the brand altogether in favour of an alternative that is perceived to be more inclusive. Another commercial behaviour that can cause serious damage to the brand is called "*brand tokenism*" which occurs when companies underestimate the depth of change required at the brand level and end up making 'inclusive' statements just to attract customers' attention and make profits. However, an exaggerated and above all superficial display of their support for the social challenges of the moment, can end up conveying a meaningless message of the values behind these movements and thus achieve the opposite of the desired result.

On the other hand, if advertisements portray only an 'exclusive' segment or portray people with disabilities in a stereotypical way, they risk making consumers feel frustrated with the brand and forming a negative representation of it in their minds; this poses a strong threat to the brand, as it may encourage some consumers to abandon the brand altogether in favour of an alternative perceived as more inclusive, thus losing market share in the long run.

We have previously observed how several commercials, although designed with the best of intentions, had the opposite effect, ending up being severely criticised by the public. This is because until recently, few brands took steps to include people with disabilities in their marketing teams, who could make an effective and valuable contribution to the design of advertising campaigns, as this is something they experience first-hand daily. More recently, however, this trend has started to change: several companies have committed to collaborating with external advertising agencies that work with a diverse team of creators, who value inclusiveness and diversity in their advertising campaigns. One of these is Wunderman Thompson, an advertising agency that for several years has been advising companies on how to create inclusive content, especially when it comes to disability. Christina Mallon, head of inclusive design at Wunderman Thompson, advises brands such as Microsoft and Tommy Hilfiger on implementing inclusive design practices

[130] Bennett, A.M., Hill, R.P. and Oleksiuk, D. (2013). The Impact of Disparate Levels of Marketplace Inclusion on Consumer–Brand Relationships. Journal of Public Policy & Marketing, 32(1_suppl), pp.16–31. doi:10.1509/jppm.12.023.

into their business strategies. Christina's contribution to Wunderman Thompson is very special and unique, as she was one of the advocates for a shift towards using more inclusive marketing strategies. This advocacy was prompted by the fact that when Christina began her career as a digital marketing professional, her arms slowly became paralysed due to a degenerative disease. As a consumer with a disability, she felt underrepresented in advertisements and this led her to work to raise awareness of the issue and spur brands to use more inclusive methods in their communication strategies. As a result, Christina became a vocal advocate of people with disabilities in advertising and encouraged her clients to incorporate an increasingly inclusive perspective into their campaigns. For example, Tommy Hilfiger's "Adaptive" campaign was created in collaboration with Christina Mallon. This campaign was launched in 2018 for the autumn-winter collection and aimed to highlight how the company ensured that its garments could be used by people with different abilities, through the use of adaptive clothing and accessories, such as magnetic fastenings, adjustable hems, one-hand zips and Velcro closures. What makes the difference in this advertising campaign is that it was directed and conceived by people with disabilities; in fact, the campaign director is James Rath, who was born with ocular albinism and nystagmus[131].

It is therefore clear that a campaign designed by people with disabilities can be much more effective and successful because it is likely to be perceived as more genuine; this is because consumers feel that their needs and point of view are taken into account and that the company listens to them.

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[131] Pradella, E. (2018). Tommy Hilfiger's new campaign celebrates strength in disability. [online] Dazed. Available at: https://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/41868/1/tommy-hilfiger-independence-campaign-disability-fashion-adaptive-collection.

CHAPTER III. The representation of disability in advertising as an opportunity for brands: A quantitative analysis through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

In the previous chapter, we observed how the concepts of diversity and inclusion are increasingly relevant in the world of marketing and media, given their enormous power to influence society's thinking and attitudes, as well as to shape public perceptions of disability. It has also been observed that, although disabled people represent a relatively large part of society, many times they end up being misinterpreted in advertisements, which ultimately convey a misleading or even offensive message about disability. However, brands are increasingly aware of the importance of moving away from outdated stereotypes and negative representations of disability and are focusing their efforts on creating inclusive marketing campaigns that represent the real and diverse experiences of disabled people in today's society. The use of more inclusive marketing is beneficial for both society and the brand itself, as on the one hand, it allows people with disabilities to feel part of the wider community and therefore valued and understood. On the other hand, this generates positive word of mouth that helps to build a positive brand image over time, strengthening its reputation and increasing its market value.

These practical implications will be analysed and discussed in the next chapter, where the quantitative analysis using Structure Equation Modelling (SEM) will be presented. The research model was designed to gain an understanding of the effects on the brand that the use of more inclusive marketing strategies may imply. Specifically, the reaction of consumers after exposure to an Adidas commercial featuring a model with a disability will be investigated through the submission of an ad-hoc questionnaire to participants, to understand how the inclusion of people with disabilities on an equal footing in a commercial can lead to positive effects in terms of brand attitude, brand image and brand equity.

3.1. Overview of the model and constructs

The concepts of Diversity and Inclusion applied to the marketing sector, theoretically analysed in Chapter 2, have not received the same attention at a practical level from scholars. At the academic level, Diversity & Inclusion is mainly explored in the context of workforce diversity, where the effects investigated concern a higher degree of corporate competitiveness (Krithi & Pai, 2021), the ability to attract talent (Jonsen et al., 2019) and the likelihood of corporate success and growth (Kaur and Arora, 2020). Regarding the application of Diversity & Inclusion at the marketing level and its potential effects on the brand, very few academic studies have been found. Even fewer concerning disability-focused inclusive marketing, where academic contributions combined with quantitative research are practically non-existent. With the aim of filling these gaps, a quantitative study will be conducted in the following paragraphs to observe the effect of advertisements featuring people with disabilities on brand perception. This study is intended to follow up on another study conducted last year by my colleague Riccardo Panizzo, who analysed these effects in the context of corporate socio-political activism. This study is therefore based on the statistical model devised by my colleague Panizzo, with the necessary adjustments to adapt it to the topic at hand.

The general model we will use consists of the following marketing constructs, which will be reviewed in detail on an academic level shortly: (1) *Value Congruence*, (2) *Attitude Towards Advertisement*, (3) *Attitude Towards the Brand*, (4) *Brand Image* and (5) *Brand Equity*. The hypothesis that will be developed are based on the existing literature, which has already dealt with examining the relationships between the different constructs.

3.1.1. Value Congruence

The concept of value congruence can be applied and examined in a multitude of contexts; at the managerial level, in most cases, the term often appears in organizational behaviour studies, according to which value congruence refers to the greater or lesser correspondence between the values of employees and those of the company (Edwards and Cable, 2009; Meglino, Ravlin and Adkins, 1992; Liedtka, J. M. 1989; Ostroff, Shin and Kinicki, 2005). Other studies have conceptualised it at the level of inter-firm relationships, in examining the congruence of values, beliefs, and perceptions between the company and partners, such as distributors and suppliers (MacMillan et al. 2005).

In the field of marketing, on the other hand, the concept of value congruence is much less theorised and analysed. For this reason, it is advisable to start with the notion of values. According to Locke (1976), values are "*what a person consciously or subconsciously desires, wants, or seeks to attain*". Schwartz and Bilsky (1987) go a step further and state that "*values are concepts or beliefs, about desirable end states or behaviours, that transcend specific situations, guide selection or evaluation of behaviour and events, and are ordered by relative importance*".

In the context of consumer behaviour, value congruence has been defined by Johar and Sirgy (1991) as a mental comparison consumers make regarding the similarity or dissimilarity of an entity's values and their own set of values. Cazier, Shao and St. Louis (2006) view value congruence as the alignment of a company's values with those projected by its customers, allowing it to stand out from competing companies. In addition, Cazier, Shao and Louis (2017), drawing on Schwartz and Bilsky's (1987) definition set out above, where it is assumed that such value congruence implies a behavioural effect in the consumer, they argue that when such congruence is rather high, it can enhance consumers' purchase intentions, who are therefore willing to pay a higher price. Application of congruence theory in the field of marketing shows that brands develop certain communication strategies, communicating certain values, to make consumers realise the congruence between their values and those conveyed by the brand. Chang (2005) reported that when there is congruence between what is portrayed in the advertisement and consumers' self-perception – including their values – consumers' attitudes towards the advertisement are more likely to be positive. In a similar vein, van Baaren and Ruivenkamp (2007) discovered that brand preference for advertised

products is higher when the values emphasised in the advertisements are consistent with the self-construal than when they emphasise values that are inconsistent with it. This is because consumers tend to choose products or services of those brands that bring them closer to realising their values and ideal selves (Belk, 1988) and therefore, a high level of value congruence implies higher customer satisfaction, trust and affect to the brand (Jing Zhang and Bloemer, 2008).

3.1.2. Attitude Towards Advertisement

The second construct that composes our model is Attitude Towards Advertisement. To understand the construct of attitude towards advertisement, scholars have first addressed the issue of defining what attitude is. Attitude is a concept that has been explored in marketing research since the 1960s. Udell (1965) defined attitude as mental sets that guide a person's reaction to a stimulus. According to Lessig and Copley (1974), an attitude is the manifestation of a certain value towards a particular object or idea. Fishbein and Aizen (1975), define attitude as "*a learned predisposition to behave in a consistently favourable or unfavourable way with respect to a given object*".

Batra and Ahtola (1991) took a step further and defined consumer attitude as consisting of two dimensions: the *'hedonic'* and the *'utilitarian'*. The first dimension refers to the feeling of pleasure for a stimulus (in our case advertising) while the second dimension refers to the perceived level of utility of the stimulus. Similarly, Madden, Allen and Twimble (1988) conceive attitude as composed of cognitive and affective components, where the cognitive component is composed of previous knowledge, beliefs, thoughts and opinions about the advantages and disadvantages associated with the attitude object, while the affective component is about emotional reaction or feeling of the person towards the object of the attitude.

Over the following years, the notion of attitude was defined in two different ways; the first and best known is the tricomponent attitude structure, which considers attitude as composed of three components, the aforementioned affective and cognitive components, and the conative component. The latter component concerns the tendency to act in a certain way (Boone and Kurtz, 2002). The second formulation of attitude, on the other hand, is simpler and has been adopted more recently, and brings down attitudes to a single dimension that may represent positive or negative affect (Tan, Khan and Lau, 2022).

For the purposes of our study, we will focus on the first notion of attitude, comprising the three components, especially the affective component, as we will be looking at attitudes towards advertising in emotional terms.

Applying the notion of attitude in the context of advertising, we can consider a key definition the one proposed by Lutz (1985), who defines the construct of attitude towards advertisement as "*a predisposition to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner to a*

particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion". Emphasising the affective part, Lee, Lee and Yang, (2017) further adds that it is "the emotional change after viewing the advertisement". The direct effect that emotions have on attitude towards the advertisement was also confirmed by Batra and Ray's (1986) studies, in which they found that 'affective responses', representing the moods and feelings evoked by the ad, are factors that precede attitude towards the advertisement. This prospect, when connected with the notion of value congruence identified in the previous paragraph, suggests that, as argued by Polegato and Bjerke (2006), when the consumer's values are aligned with those expressed by the advertisement, the attitude towards the advertisement is more favourable. Likewise, Mehta (2000), found that the way people see themselves and their perception of themselves is reflected in the reaction they have towards an advertisement. Finally, also Hong and Zinkhan (1995), studying the level of advertisement effectiveness, found that advertising appeals that are consistent with consumers' self-perception would be more effective than those that are inconsistent.

Given these findings we can construct the first hypothesis of the model, as follows,

H1: *In the context of D&I communication strategies, specifically advertising, value congruence has a positive influence on Attitude towards the advertisement.*

3.1.3. Brand Attitude

The third construct that will be part of our model is the attitude towards the brand. Also in this case, scholars prefer to start from the definition of attitude to determine what attitude towards the brand is. What differs is the object towards which the consumer has an attitude, in this case, the brand.

Again, for the purposes of our research, it is convenient to focus on the tripartite view of attitude, since both the affective and cognitive components are jointly transferred to the brand, resulting in a behavioural effect (conative part).

In the literature, some scholars have focused more on the affective part. Lutz, MacKenzie, & Belch (1983), while not denying the role of the cognitive and conative component, describe brand attitude as the audience's affective response to the advertised brand. Fishbein and Azjen (1975), on the other hand, placed more emphasis on the cognitive component, stating that brand attitude is mediated by cognitive perceptions of the advertised brand, e.g. the perceived attributes and benefits of the brand. Sneath et al. (2005), in analysing the outcomes of event sponsorship for brands, focused more on brand attitude consequences, and thus on the conative component, stating that favourable brand attitudes lead to a higher purchase intention.

Other scholars, however, in analysing the connection between attitude towards advertising and attitude towards the brand, have emphasised all components. Suh and Youjae (2006) define the attitude towards the brand as "*favourable or unfavourable feelings and beliefs about the brand. Brand beliefs and feelings are formed through advertising. These beliefs affect attitudes towards ads and consequently attitudes towards the brands being advertised*". Of the same mind are Hoyer et al. (1997), who state that a consumer's liking and affection for an advertisement – which may be motivated by any number of factors – will eventually be reflected in the brand. Phelps and Hoy (1996) also noted in their research a strong dependence between the two constructs and defined attitude towards the brand as "*a predisposition to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner to a particular brand after the advertising stimulus has been shown to the individual*". However, in Phelps and Hoy's (1996) study it was also found that the close connection between attitude towards the advertisement and brand attitude is less strong if consumers exposed to the advertisement are already familiar with the brand. Similarly, Smith (1993) asserted that customers who are already familiar with a brand are more

likely to rely on that knowledge, which lessens the influence of a customer's perception of a specific advertisement on their purchasing decisions. Further, Campbell and Keller (2003) confirmed that the impact on brand perceptions should be greater when an advertisement is for a lesser-known brand as opposed to a well-known one. This effect is of extreme importance in our case since the advertisement we are going to propose is one of Adidas, a well-known brand worldwide.

Bearing these considerations in mind, it is clear that the quantitative research that will be tackled in the next paragraphs possesses some limits. However, we expect this influence to be somewhat counterbalanced by the strong effect of the attitude towards advertising. Assuming therefore, in any case, a close causal relationship between attitude towards advertising and attitude towards the brand, we can formulate the second hypothesis of our model as follows,

H2: *Attitude towards the advertisement exerts a positive influence on Brand Attitude*

3.1.4. Brand Image

The fourth construct that forms part of our model is brand image. The concept of brand image is sometimes mistaken for the concept of attitude towards the brand. However, they are two distinct concepts and several scholars agree with this view. Biel (1992) is one of the first scholars to emphasise the distinction between the two constructs, arguing that there is a causal relationship between the two: he states that brand image is generally regarded as the final effect determined by the combination of several associations towards the brand.

Similarly, Keller (1993) defines brand image as the set of attributes, perceptions, beliefs, and attitude associations that consumers have towards a brand. Brand image is thus seen as the final perception resulting from brand associations in the consumer's mind (Taylor et al., 2007).

According to Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (1993), it is also possible to divide the various consumer associations into tangible and intangible towards the brand. This classification can be traced back to the attitude-forming components of the previous two paragraphs, i.e. the affective and cognitive components. Tangible associations concern knowledge and belief in brand attributes; intangible associations, on the other hand, concern affective aspects such as the evaluation of feelings and emotions associated with the brand (Peter & Olson, 1996). According to Kapferer (1992), these associations that consumers pick up through the signals emitted by the brand are then united and synthesised to form a brand image. These signals uttered by the brand are referred to by Park, Jaworski and MacInnis (1986) as corporate communications strategies, which have the ability to persuade consumers to create such associations in their minds and which contribute to shaping the brand image. These considerations, therefore, assume a strong causal relationship between brand attitude and brand image, as supported by the studies of Faircloth, Capella and Alford (2001). They propose a clear distinction between brand image and brand attitude, conceptualising brand image as the set of all associations consumers have with that brand, while attitude towards the brand represents only one of many associations. In a similar vein, according to the research carried out by Kirmani and Zeithaml (1993), brand attitude represents one of the inputs that go into forming the brand image. On the basis of this work, Chang and Liu (2009) also investigated the relationship between brand

attitude and brand image in the service industries, confirming what colleagues had found in previous studies.

In the present work, we also expect brand attitude to have an important influence on brand image. The third hypothesis can therefore be developed as follows,

H3: *A positive Brand Attitude has a positive direct effect on Brand Image*

3.1.5. Brand Equity

The last construct that forms part of the model is brand equity. This construct has been widely debated in the literature and scholars have proposed different conceptions. According to a general perspective that accommodates the different conceptions, it can be defined as the added value that a specific brand confers on a product or service (Jones, 1986). This added value can be delineated from a company or individual consumer perspective. At the corporate level, the construct of brand equity is analysed in economic terms, conceiving it as the asset value of the brand, which can lead to higher profits for the company. According to Biel (1992), brand equity can be thought of as "*the additional cash flow achieved by associating a brand with the underlying product or service*". Consequently, this implies that consumers are willing to pay a higher price for a branded product/service than for an identical non-branded version. Similarly, Netemeyer et al. (2004), assert that brand equity is linked to a higher willingness to pay a price premium and brand purchase intention.

However, other scholars move away from considering brand equity only in strictly financial terms and outline a broader perspective. According to Srivastava and Shocker (1991), brand equity consists of two elements, brand strength and brand value. Brand strength is defined by the authors as the set of associations that consumers form towards a brand. According to this interpretation, given the discussion in the previous paragraph, we can consider brand strength similar to brand image. The second component, on the other hand, takes on a financial value, as it represents the benefits of using brand strength to increase current and future profits.

When applying these reflections at the marketing level, Kamakura and Russell (1993) conceive brand equity as the differential effect of consumers' brand awareness in response to brand marketing strategies. Concerning the connection between brand image and brand equity, Keller (1993) defines brand equity as the set of associations formed by consumers towards a brand that result from brand awareness, brand knowledge and brand image. In this sense, brand image is one of the factors influencing brand equity. Faircloth, Capella and Alford, (2001) also found in their study that brand image has an important influence on brand equity. Similarly, Biel (1992) recognises that brand image drives brand equity. According to Lu and Xie (2000), businesses can increase the value of

a brand by cultivating its brand image and building brand equity. Their research suggests that brand equity is strongly positively influenced by brand image.

Based on these studies, we can therefore expect the brand image to have some influence on brand equity. Below, therefore, is the first part of the last hypothesis,

H4a: *Brand Image is positively related to Brand Equity*

Finally, several scholars assumed that brand equity was influenced not only by brand image, as noted above, but also by brand attitude. As outlined in section 3.1.3 regarding Brand Attitude, Sneath et al. (2005) found that attitudes towards the brand determine a higher or lower propensity to purchase, which is one of the representative measures of brand equity. Papadimitriou et al. (2016), in studying the impact of sport event sponsorship on future purchase intentions, found that brand attitude validly contributes to a higher propensity to purchase, and thus to brand equity. Chang et al. (2008) similarly found in the context of service markets that there is a strong relationship between brand attitude and brand equity. Chang and Liu (2009), again in another study related to the service industry, confirmed the dependency relationship that exists between brand attitude and brand equity.

This connection, however, was refuted in the study by Faircloth et al. (2001), where in addition to investigating the connection between brand image and brand equity as outlined above, they assumed in their research that there was also a positive relationship between brand attitude and brand equity. Albeit, their research unexpectedly found no evidence of a direct relationship.

Notwithstanding, we expect that brand attitude also implies a positive influence on brand equity, which is reflected in the following hypothesis,

H4b: *Brand Attitude is directly positively related to Brand Equity*

3.2. Conceptual framework

Based on the five different constructs analysed in the previous paragraphs, our hypothesised model will be based precisely on the relations between them, which have already been previously validated by several empirical studies. The graphical representation is observable in figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1.
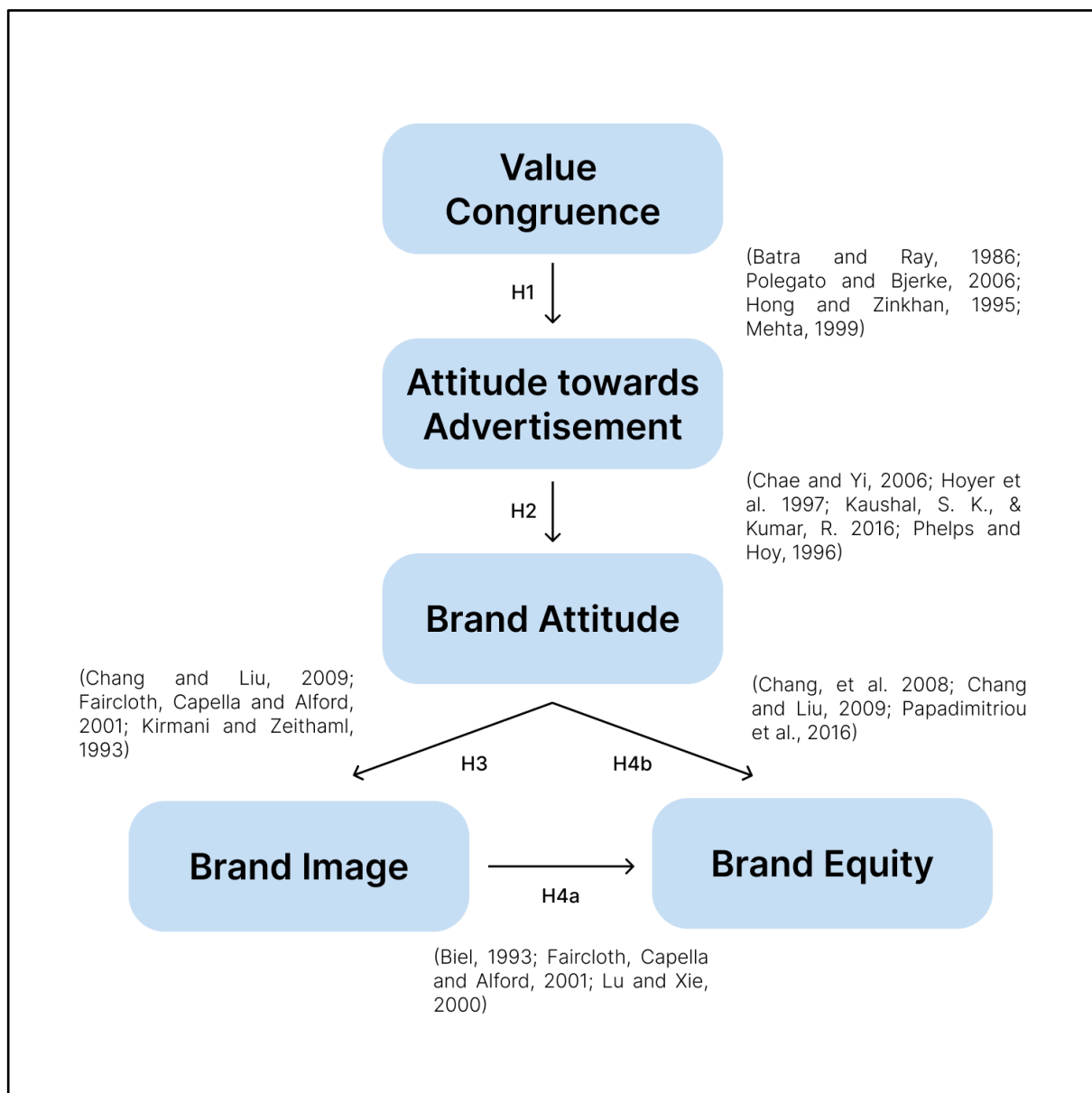
Source: Personal elaboration on Figma based on existing literature

Starting with the first construct, i.e. value congruence, several scholars agree that when there is a high level of similarity and thus congruence between consumers' values and those reported in the advertisement, the attitude towards the advertisement is more favourable (Batra and Ray, 1986; Polegato and Bjerke, 2006; Hong and Zinkhan, 1995; Mehta, 2000). With that in mind, we expect from our study that when consumer values such as the importance of diversity inclusion, especially when it comes to disability, are manifested within an advertisement, consumers develop favourable attitudes towards that advertisement (**H1**).

The notion of attitude, in our specific case, was placed in the affective component concerning emotions and feelings. This is because I expect the participants in the study to form certain emotions after seeing the advertisement proposed in the questionnaire. Hence, keeping valid and relevant to our case the definition of attitude towards the advertisement proposed by Lee, Lee and Yang, (2017) who define it as "*the emotional change after viewing the advertisement*", we expect that the emotions triggered after seeing the advertisement will reflect positively on the brand and thus on the attitude towards the brand, as reported by several scholars (Suh and Youjae, 2006; Hoyer et al. 1997; Phelps and Hoy, 1996). However, it is important to recall that, in the literature, it has been found by scholars that brand familiarity can affect consumers' attitudes towards advertising (Campbell and Keller, 2003; Smith, 1993). I therefore anticipate that this influence may take place to some extent; nevertheless, I expect that consumers' attitudes after seeing the advertisement will still have some influence on their attitude towards the brand (**H2**).

The attitude towards the brand will then be analysed in relation to the brand image, to understand the extent to which consumers' affective responses can have an impact on the brand image. According to various scholars, brand attitude concerns the various associations formed in consumers' minds, both affective and cognitive, which are then synthesised to form an overall brand image (Kapferer, 1992; Park, Jaworski and MacInnis 1986; Taylor et al. 2007). We therefore expect from our study that the associations created by consumers towards the brand after watching the commercial, bearing in mind their existing brand perceptions of Adidas will eventually shape the brand image in their

minds (**H3**), as corroborated by the research of several scholars (Chang and Liu, 2009; Faircloth, Capella and Alford, 2001; Kirmani and Zeithaml, 1993).

Finally, we assume that both brand image and brand attitude will have an impact on brand equity. A number of studies have shown a positive relationship between brand image and brand equity (**H4a**) (Biel, 1993; Faircloth, Capella, and Alford, 2001; Lu and Xie, 2000), as well as a positive relationship between brand attitude and brand equity (**H4b**) (Chang, et al. 2008; Chang and Liu, 2009; Papadimitriou et al., 2016).

3.3.   Research methodology

In the preceding sections, the model was presented, consisting of 5 constructs: value congruence, attitude towards advertisement, attitude towards the brand, brand image and brand equity. These constructs were then causally related to each other through the 5 hypothesis of the model that we are going to verify.

The hypothesis to be statistically tested are as follows:

H1: *In the context of D&I communication strategies, specifically advertising, value congruence has a positive influence on Attitude towards the advertisement.*

H2: *Attitude towards the advertisement exerts a positive influence on Brand Attitude*

H3: *A positive Brand Attitude has a positive direct effect on Brand Image*

H4a: *Brand Image is positively related to Brand Equity*

H4b: *Brand Attitude is directly positively related to Brand Equity*

As mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 3, the research model is the one devised by my colleague Riccardo Panizzo, with adjustments where required, to adapt it to my research object. The different items used to measure the constructs will be presented below, which are modelled on the operationalisation of the different constructs made by scholars in the literature. Some changes were also implemented in the terms used, as well as in the language used (Italian instead of English).

3.3.1. Value Congruence

As suggested in the above literature, value congruence can be seen as the alignment of a company's values with those projected by its customers (Cazier et al. 2006). The value congruence operationalisation of this model is based on consensus to make the questionnaire easier and quicker and to encourage participation. Participants are shown four items, selected from the studies of You & Hon (2021) and Lee & Jeong (2014), and are required to answer on a 5-point Likert answering grid ranging from "*Per Niente*" (Not at all) to "*Moltissimo*" (Definitely Yes).

The following table shows the items and their authors.

Question: "*Dopo aver visto lo spot, in che misura ti trovi d'accordo con le seguenti affermazioni?*"

Table 3.1.

ITEM	AUTHOR
I valori trasmessi da questo spot sono simili ai miei valori	You & Hon (2021)
Questo spot rappresenta i principi di cui sono orgoglioso/a	You & Hon (2021)
Gli ideali promossi dallo spot riflettono la mia visione del mondo	You & Hon (2021)
Supporto pienamente l'intenzione e gli obiettivi legati a questo spot	Lee & Jeong (2014)

3.3.2. Attitude towards Advertisement

Attitude towards advertisement was defined by Lutz (1985), as "*a predisposition to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion*". My colleague Riccardo Panizzo operationalised the construct in terms of sensations, such as *pleasure*, *appreciation*, *interest*, *amusement*, *gratitude*, *anger*, *irritation* and *suspicion*.

However, in my study, it is more consistent to analyse the emotions that arise after watching the commercial. This is because the spot deals with important issues of diversity and inclusion, and I expect that there may be a more or less strong emotional reaction from the participants, depending on how involved and interested they are in the topics discussed. Therefore, based on the definition proposed by Lee, Lee and Yang, (2017), mentioned in the previous paragraphs, where the attitude towards the advertisement is considered as "*the emotional change after viewing the advertisement*", attitude towards the advertisement will be operationalised from the contribution of other authors, who proposed items based on emotional reactions. The research carried out by Edell and Burke (1987), where the power of emotions on the effect of advertisement was analysed, included 69 items; from these, eight were selected, which were considered the most relevant for the purposes of the study and the proposed advertisement. As in Edell and Burke's (1987) study and consistent with the previous construct, participants were required to answer on a 5-point Likert answering grid ranging from "*Per Niente*" (Not at all) to "*Moltissimo*" (Definitely Yes).

The question, together with the selected items, can be seen in table 3.2. below.

Question: "*Come ti senti dopo aver visto lo spot?*"

Table 3.2.

ITEM	AUTHOR
Commosso/a	Edell & Burke (1987)
Ispirato/a	Edell & Burke (1987)
Energico/a	Edell & Burke (1987)
Emozionato/a	Edell & Burke (1987)
Entusiasta	Edell & Burke (1987)
Disinteressato/a	Edell & Burke (1987)
Dubbioso/a	Edell & Burke (1987)
Scettico/a	Edell & Burke (1987)

3.3.3. Attitude towards Brand

The third construct investigated in the questionnaire is the attitude towards the brand. In section 3.1.3., where brand attitude was analysed at an academic level, it was seen as a concept consisting of an affective, cognitive and conative part. Lutz, MacKenzie, & Belch (1983) in their definition of brand attitude, placed more emphasis on the affective component, describing brand attitude as the audience's affective response to the advertised brand. In contrast, Fishbein and Azjen (1975) placed more emphasis on the cognitive component, stating that brand attitude is mediated by cognitive perceptions of the advertised brand, e.g. the perceived attributes and benefits of the brand. It is important to emphasise this differentiation in the definitions since the operationalisation of the construct in our study, again in line with the work of my colleague Riccardo Panizzo, is mainly based on the affective component, which concerns the consumers' perception of Adidas after having seen the spot. It is worth emphasising again that these perceptions can be influenced by the opinion consumers already have of Adidas, given that it is a well-known brand.

The items selected to analyse attitudes towards the brand are based on the work of Spears and Singh (2004), who proposed 31 items in their study. From these, seven were selected, which can be observed in table 3.3. below, together with the corresponding question. Again, participants were required to answer on a 5-point Likert answering grid ranging from "*Per Niente*" (Not at all) to "*Moltissimo*" (Definitely Yes).

Question: *"Dopo aver visto lo spot, ritengo che ADIDAS sia un brand ancor più:"*

Table 3.3.

ITEM	AUTHOR
Piacevole	Spears & Singh (2004)
Apprezzabile	Spears & Singh (2004)
Interessante	Spears & Singh (2004)
Accattivante	Spears & Singh (2004)
Desiderabile	Spears & Singh (2004)
Valido	Spears & Singh (2004)
Affidabile	Spears & Singh (2004)

3.3.4. Brand Image

Keller (1993) defined brand image as the set of attributes, perceptions, beliefs, and attitude associations that consumers have towards a brand. From this definition, it is clear how the brand image construct can be operationalised in different ways since it can be investigated in terms of perceptions, beliefs and attitudes, and much more. However, several scholars agree that brand image is the final perception resulting from brand associations in the consumer's mind (Biel, 1992; Taylor et al., 2007). Again, to keep the questionnaire structure simple for the participants, brand image will be measured using an existing list of brand associations. Such brand associations have been investigated in the literature as the *'human'* characteristics that are attributed to a brand (Aaker, 1997). According to Aaker's brand personality theory, each brand presents a personality; he outlined five different dimensions of personality: *sincerity*, *excitement*, *competence*, *sophistication* and *ruggedness*. Each dimension is connected to several attributes, which were selected for the questionnaire. Building on the brand personality scale, several scholars have investigated other attributes relevant to this theory, which were also selected for the present study (Davies et al., 2004; Freling et al., 2011). Table 3.4. below contains the selected items, together with their authors.

In this case, the degree of fit between the adjective and the brand has been measured using a brand image scale that has been operationalized on a 7-point Likert linear scale. The responses ranged from "*Per niente d'accordo*" (Fully disagree) to "*Pienamente d'accordo*" (Fully agree).

Question: "*Nel complesso, ritengo che ADIDAS sia un brand:*"

Table 3.4.

ITEM	AUTHOR
Autentico	Aaker (1997)
Progressista	Aaker (1997)
Aperto	Davies et al. (2004)
Coraggioso	Aaker (1997)
Sorprendente	Freling et al. (2011)
Al passo con i tempi	Aaker (1997)
Responsabile	Davies et al. (2004)
Distinto	Freling et al. (2011)

3.3.5. Brand Equity

Kamakura and Russell (1993) conceive brand equity as the differential effect of consumers' brand awareness in response to brand marketing strategies. This definition is similar to the one proposed by Yoo & Donthu (2001) according to which brand equity is the variance in consumer responses between a focal brand and an unbranded product when both have the same level of attributes. To operationalise the construct, they created the Overall Brand Equity (OBE) scale, consisting of four items,
(i) "*It makes sense to buy Brand X instead of any other brand, even if they are the same*'';
(ii) "*Even if another brand has the same features as Brand X, I would prefer to buy Brand X*'';
(iii) "*If there is another brand as good as X, I prefer to buy X*'';
(iv) "*If another brand is not different from X in any way, it seems smarter to purchase X*''.

The level of brand equity is measured by the differential effect of consumer reaction between the focal brand and a comparable non-branded counterpart. Of the four proposed items, three were selected.

Furthermore, several scholars agree that brand equity equates to an increased propensity to purchase a brand (Chaudhuri, 1995; Lassar et al., 1995; Papadimitriou et al., 2016), and an increased intention to recommend that brand to friends and family (You & Hon, 2021). These two consumer effects were also included in the list of items, based on the operationalisation performed by Perrini et al. (2010) and You & Hon (2021), respectively. Participants were required to answer on a 5-point Likert answering grid ranging from "*Per Niente*" (Not at all) to "*Moltissimo*" (Definitely Yes). Table 3.5. contains the selected items, together with their authors.

Question: "*In che misura ti trovi d'accordo con le seguenti affermazioni?*"

Table 3.5.

ITEM	AUTHOR
Trovo ragionevole affidarmi a ADIDAS rispetto a un altro brand, sebbene offrano lo stesso prodotto/servizio	Yoo & Donthu (2001)
Se un altro brand presenta le stesse funzionalità di ADIDAS, preferisco affidarmi a ADIDAS	Yoo & Donthu (2001)
Se un altro brand non differisce da *ADIDAS*, trovo più saggio affidarmi a *ADIDAS*	Yoo & Donthu (2001)
Rispetto a un altro brand, sarei disposto a pagare di più per affidarmi a *ADIDAS*	Perrini et al. (2010)
Consiglierei *ADIDAS* a un amico/famigliare	You and Hon (2021)

3.4.   Stimuli selection

As discussed in Chapter 2, communication strategies that include people with disabilities are rather scarce. The relevance given to issues of diversity and inclusion has certainly grown in recent years and more and more models who do not conform to conventional beauty standards are being fully included in advertisements. The LGBTQ community, individuals from different cultures and racial groups and those with less statuesque sizes and physiques have been included in advertising campaigns by several companies. Nevertheless, there are still few cases in which people with disabilities are represented in the media or, if they are, as seen in chapter 2, they are typically stereotyped and in doing so, such advertisements emphasise the condition of disability rather than the overall message of the campaign.

As a result, it was difficult to find a commercial that included people with disabilities on an equal footing with everyone else and that did not advertise a product or service that was specifically aimed at people with disabilities.

Additionally, as previously stated in this chapter, although several authors agree that the impact of the advertisement is most powerful when dealing with brands that are less well-known and thus less familiar to consumers (Campbell and Keller, 2003; Phelps and Hoy's, 1996; Smith, 1993), it was also difficult to find advertisements that exhibited the aforementioned characteristics produced by less well-known brands. This finding further demonstrates that the representation of disability in advertisements is still very low and that the majority of the brands taking proactive steps to address this issue are mainly well-known ones.

Following a careful choice from a number of commercials, the Adidas commercial "*I'm possible*" was selected. The single spot launched on the 14th of February 2021, is part of a broader campaign, called "*Impossible is nothing*", which was first launched by Adidas in 2004 and is considered the brand's biggest advertising campaign[132]. The overall campaign aims to propose a message of growth, inclusion and enhancement of creativity through sport, by spreading values of inclusiveness and respect for oneself and others.

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[132] www.marketing-interactive.com. (n.d.). 'Impossible is Nothing' for adidas as it doubles down on commitment to women. [online] Available at: https://www.marketing-interactive.com/adidas-impossible-nothing-commitment-women.

Although this specific spot only features women, I selected it because I considered it particularly powerful and effective in terms of evoking an emotional response for the following reasons: Firstly, this commercial showcases a diverse group of accomplished women in the fields of sport, fitness, and lifestyle, both with and without disabilities, while expressing themselves freely; secondly, none of these people are considered more important than others, even though many of them play very different roles or have very different physiques from one another; thirdly, a message of hope is conveyed for all those who wish to change their lives, and who manage to do so by overcoming the obstacles we all encounter in life; finally, the message remains universal in nature as it is directed at all individuals in an empowering and inclusive way, regardless of their differences.

Among the women featured in the video are actress HoYeon Jung, who became famous thanks to the Netflix TV series "Squid Game", basketball player Asma Elbadawi, transgender volleyball player Tifanny Abreu, runner Fatima Ibrahimi, yoga teacher Jessamyn Stanley, skateboarder Momiji Nishiya and model Ellie Goldstein[133]. The diversity of the models in the commercial demonstrates that there are no right or wrong people, people more suited to do an activity than others, but that we can all be the version of ourselves we want to be, without relying on the judgement of others. They all are chasing their hopes and dreams and not letting anything stop them from achieving them, even if they differ from what society typically expects of them.

It is thus clear that the commercial spot manages to touch on very sensitive topics nowadays, which certainly need attention, but which can also presuppose unfavourable or sceptical reactions on the part of viewers. For example, some might think that the portrayal of people with disabilities in the commercial is not sufficient to encourage the public to overcome prejudices against them, and that therefore the choice to feature model Ellie Goldstein may simply be a means of promoting Adidas products and reinforcing the company's public image, rather than actually trying to bring about a change in society.

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[133] tuttosport.com. (n.d.). Impossible is nothing: adidas annuncia il suo più grande impegno di sempre a favore delle donne. [online] Available at: https://www.tuttosport.com/news/sport-e-style/moda-e-tendenze/2022/02/02-89447716/impossible_is_nothing_adidas_annuncia_il_suo_piu_grande_impegno_di_sempre_a_favore_delle_donne [Accessed 13 Feb. 2023].

The resulting reactions of the public, positive or negative, will be measured through the questionnaire and then related to the various constructs described above, in order to understand the impact that an inclusive communication strategy can have on the brand components.

Figure 3.2

The cover model Ellie Goldstein, who has Down Syndrome.

<u>Source</u>: Youtube

3.5. Survey design and data collection

The spot presented above constitutes the first part of the questionnaire that was proposed to the participants. After watching the commercial, the participants are confronted with the first quantitative part, where the different answers are aggregated to measure: value congruence, attitude towards advertisement, brand attitude, brand image and brand equity. This is followed by a qualitative part, to collect opinions about the representation of disability in advertising, and to what extent brands play an active role in promoting a more disability-friendly culture. An open question was also included, allowing participants to express themselves freely concerning what was covered in the questionnaire. This allows for a more personal view of the individual participants and may suggest future directions for other studies to be developed on the subject. Finally, the last part concerns the demographic analysis of the participants.

The questionnaire was administered through Google Form, and was active for 15 days, from 16 January 2023 until 31 January 2023.

A total of 190 responses were collected, and none were excluded. In terms of demographic traits, the following data were collected:

(i) the majority of respondents identified themselves as being of the female gender (75.3 per cent), compared to 23.7 per cent of the male gender and 1.1 per cent preferred not to say;

(ii) the age groups were all similarly represented, except for the over-65 age group, which accounted for only 3.7 per cent;

(iii) the main level of education was high school diploma, followed by Master's degree and bachelor's degree (35.3 per cent, 25.3 per cent and 17.9 per cent respectively);

(iv) finally, the prevailing region was Veneto, with 75.8 per cent of respondents, followed by Friuli Venezia Giulia with 7.9 per cent.

To see these data in more detail, please refer to Appendix I.

3.6. Data Analysis

In this section, I will introduce the statistical model (**SEM**), which will be used for the study. After a brief overview of the model and its functioning, the results of the study will be outlined in two different phases:

(i) *measurement model*, in which the relationships between the latent variables and their indicators will be examined, along with their validity and reliability;

(ii) *structural model*, in which the fitness of the model will be tested and where the various hypothesis theorised previously will be verified; this will therefore indicate whether the dependency relationships between the different constructs (or latent variables) in the model are supported or not.

The software used to perform this study is STATA/MP 17.0.

3.6.1. Structural Equation Modeling: a brief overview

The statistical method known as Structural Equation Modeling, abbreviated hereafter as SEM, will be the foundation of the analysis we will conduct for this study. SEM is particularly suitable for theory testing as it enables testing a specified set of relationships between one or more independent variables and one or more dependent variables. Variables that are directly observed are referred to as "*measured variables*" or "*observed variables*", while "*latent variables*" or "*unobserved variables*" correspond to those variables that are not directly observed (Ullman and Bentler, 2012).

SEM is considered a hybrid statistical technique between factor analysis and path analysis (Weston and Gore, 2006); in particular, is deemed as the combination of CFA and path analysis (Musil, Jones and Warner, 1998).

Factor analysis is a statistical technique that is used to condense a large number of variables (referred to as measured variables or items) into one or more variables (referred to as latent variables or constructs) that are suitable to represent the phenomenon of interest. Factor analysis comes in two flavours: exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The former is used to look for latent variables within the observed data: there are no pre-existing hypothesis about which factors influence the observed. When hypothesis already exist about which variables are influenced by which factors, the second approach is used (Musil, Jones and Warner, 1998). In our case, since we already have hypothesis based on the literature, CFA will be adopted.

Path analysis is a statistical technique that makes it possible to estimate the intensity of the effects exerted by certain variables within a causal system. To represent the causal system graphically, a path diagram is used, which is fundamental to make clearer the relationships between the different variables being investigated. In the path diagram, measured variables are represented by rectangles or squares, while latent variables are represented by circles or ovals. The hypothesised relationship between the variables is then represented by arrows. Conversely, if no relationship has been hypothesised, there will be no arrow (Ullman and Bentler, 2012).

In our model, the different items administered to the participants, listed in Tables 3.1 to 3.5, correspond to the measured variables. Items are claims that are assigned a numerical value, typically on scales. The Likert Scale –the one we used in our model–, is the one used in most cases. The constructs discussed in chapter 3 —value congruence, attitude toward advertising, brand attitude, brand image, and brand equity— are, on the other hand, the latent variables. Below in figure 3.3. is represented graphically the model structure.

Despite the fact that having an appropriate sample size is a crucial aspect of SEM, there is no agreement in the literature as to what that sample size should be. Some researchers proved that SEM models can be meaningfully tested even with a small sample size (Hoyle, 1999; Marsh and Hau, 1999), while others consider N = 100–150 as the minimum sample size for SEM (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Ding, Velicer, and Harlow, 1995). Some researchers believe that a larger sample size, such as N = 200, is necessary for SEM (Hoogland and Boomsma 1998; Kline, 2005). As a rule of thumb, Schreiber (2008) instead considers 5 to 10 observations per item to be sufficient, subject to each latent variable being represented by several indicators. This means that the sample size should be between 160 and 320 observations. Having collected 190, the sample size requirements proved to be fulfilled.

Figure 3.3
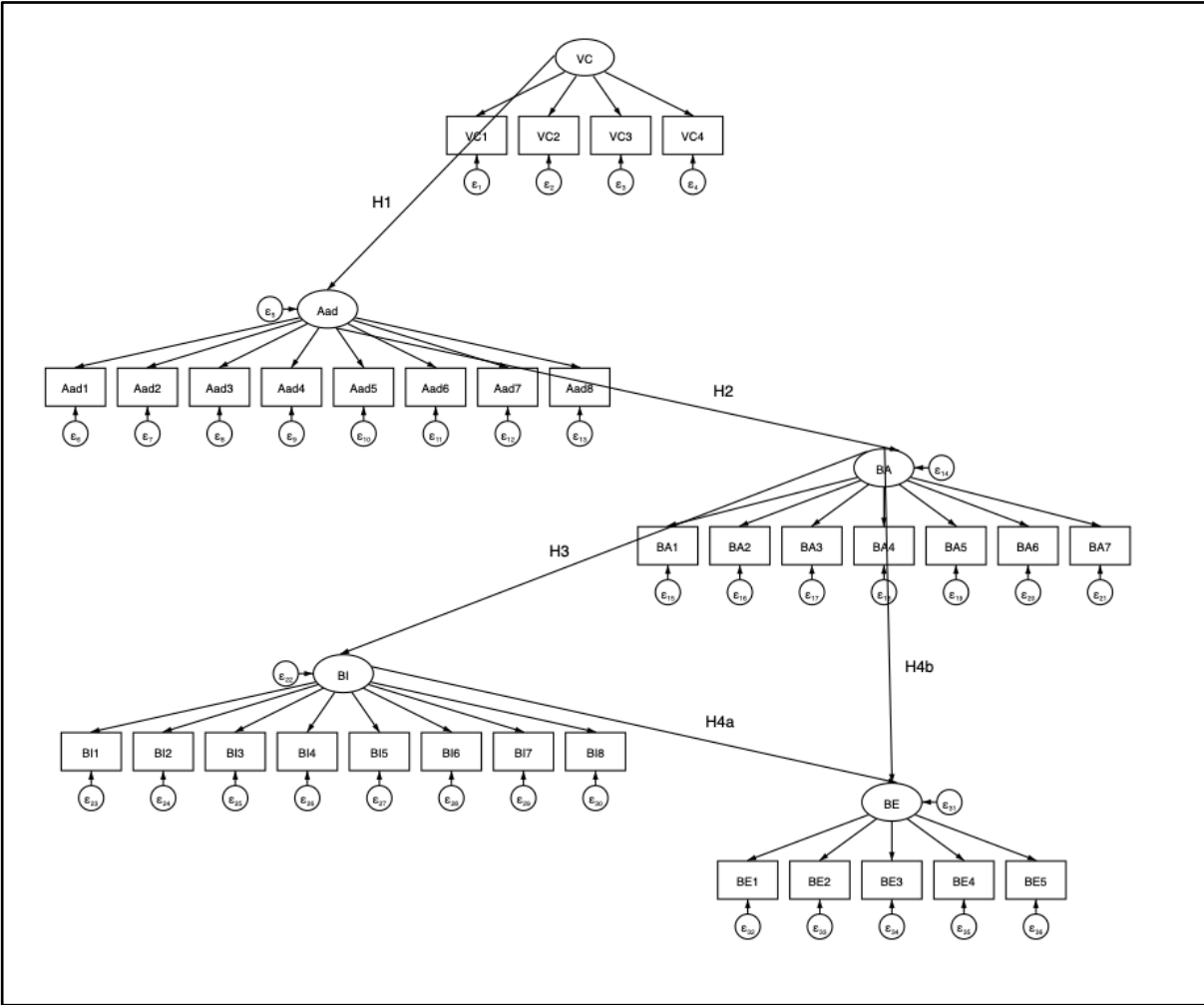
Source: STATA

3.6.2. Measurement model

As mentioned in the previous section, all scales used in the model were taken directly from the existing literature; therefore, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed to determine whether each multi-item scale was effective at capturing the intended construct.

In this section, we will assess the construct validity, which determines if a test designed to measure some constructs is actually measuring those constructs. Construct validity can be divided into the subcategories of convergent validity and discriminant validity. *Convergent validity* shows whether an item that is designed to assess a particular construct correlates with other items that assess the same construct. In contrast, *discriminant validity* tests whether items that should not be correlated are actually not correlated.

Table 3.6 shows the results of the reliability and validity assessment for the measurement model, which contained 32 indicators and 5 latent variables.

Table 3.6.

	ITEM	MEAN	SD	γ	CR	AVE	α
Value Congruence (VC)	VC1	3.595	0.981	0.887	0.869	0.703	0.907
	VC2	3.442	1.041	0.848			
	VC3	3.479	1.078	0.850			
	VC4	3.7	1.168	0.764			
Attitude towards Advertisement (Aad)	Aad1	2.316	1.042	0.742	0.832	0.536	0.892
	Aad2	3.042	1.121	0.823			
	Aad3	2.926	1.139	0.800			
	Aad4	2.7	1.122	0.818			
	Aad5	2.895	1.145	0.854			

	Aad6	1.616	0.957	-0.643			
	Aad7	1.9	1.082	-0.527			
	Aad8	1.816	1.015	-0.573			
Attitude towards Brand (BA)	**BA1**	2.879	1.024	0.86	0.943	0.759	0.955
	BA2	3.184	1.08	0.874			
	BA3	3.095	1.05	0.899			
	BA4	2.953	1.128	0.821			
	BA5	2.847	1.066	0.889			
	BA6	3.137	1.099	0.871			
	BA7	3.026	1.056	0.881			
Brand Image (BI)	**BI1**	4.237	1.706	0.847	0.958	0.784	0.966
	BI2	4.853	1.758	0.917			
	BI3	5.053	1.83	0.902			
	BI4	4.763	1.936	0.912			
	BI5	4.142	1.807	0.900			
	BI6	5.226	1.763	0.871			
	BI7	4.437	1.895	0.878			
	BI8	4.479	1.879	0.855			
Brand Equity (BE)	**BE1**	2.695	1.019	0.895	0.915	0.743	0.9376
	BE2	2.632	1.06	0.874			
	BE3	2.705	1.092	0.858			

	BE4	2.29	1.041	0.823			
	BE5	2.911	1.111	0.86			

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (**α**) was used to assess the constructs' reliability; this measure is one of the most commonly used in literature to estimate the internal consistency of scales or tests. The coefficients ranged from .892 to .966, which demonstrated to be substantially higher than the threshold value of .70 suggested by Hair et al. (2010) and Nunnally & Bernstein (1994), thus confirming the reliability of the scales employed. Another measure to estimate internal consistency is the Composite Reliability Index (**CR**). Thresholds for composite reliability are being debated, with various authors proposing different thresholds. According to Richard Netemeyer et al. (2003), is reasonable to meet a minimum threshold of .80 for a narrowly defined construct with five to eight items. Similarly, using CR, the internal consistency of the model was verified, with values ranging from .832 to .958.

To determine convergent validity is necessary to calculate the Average Variance Extracted (**AVE**) and the factor loadings (**γ**). Convergent validity is used to measure the level of correlation of multiple indicators of the same construct (Shrestha, 2021). According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), to confirm the convergent validity, AVE has to be more than or equal to .5. In our model, all the AVE exceed the threshold value.

As far as factor loadings are concerned, scholars propose different thresholds for factor loadings cut-offs. Some propose cut-offs in relation to sample size, such as Hair et al (1998), who propose a value of at least 0.45 for a sample size of 150. For a sample size of 200, they propose a value of at least 0.4. Others such as Stevens (1992) suggests using a cut-off of 0.4, irrespective of sample size. In our case, with a sample size of 190, these values were exceeded for all items. It is worth noting that all positive factor loadings significantly exceeded 0.7, while negative factor loadings were around 0.5 and 0.6, thus indicating a more moderate correlation.

To assess discriminant validity, we will use the approach proposed by Henseler and colleagues (2015) defined as the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT). According to Henseler et al. (2015), discriminant validity is achieved when HTMT <0.85.

Table 3.7. below shows the output based on the HTMT criterion, confirming that discriminant validity has been established between each pair of constructs.

Table 3.7.

	VC	Aad	BA	BI	BE
VC					
Aad	0.7021				
BA	0.6737	0.8013			
BI	0.4841	0.5659	0.6881		
BE	0.4368	0.5551	0.6985	0.6038	

3.6.3. Structural model

In this section, the evaluation of the goodness of fit of the model will be conducted. When there is a high level of fitness, it means that the hypothesised model reproduces the multivariate structure underlying the set of variables (Ryu, 2014). There are several indices to measure the fitness of the model. Generally, scholars recommend using several indices to overcome the limitations that each index presents (Jaccard and Wan, 1996).

One of the most widely applied indices is the chi-square (χ^2). If the chi-square value is not significant, the model is considered acceptable. This is because it means that the observed covariance matrix is similar to the predicted covariance matrix, which corresponds to the matrix predicted by the model. If, on the other hand, the value of the chi-square is significant, the model is considered, more often than not, unacceptable. However, this index has some limitations, one of which is the fact that it is highly sensitive to sample size (Hox & Bechger, 1999). This is why several authors prefer to use the relative chi-square (χ^2/**DF**), also called the normed chi-square. This value equals the chi-square index divided by the degrees of freedom.

Another relevant index on which SEM relies is the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (**RMSEA**) Index. It is an absolute fit index that measures how far from a perfect model a hypothesised model is. RMSEA calculates the discrepancy between the predicted covariance matrix, and the observed covariance matrix per degree of freedom (Chen, 2007). The initial RMSEA value was 0.092, which indicated, as stipulated in the existing literature, a poor fit. If the goodness-of-fit indices are not satisfactory, it is advisable to analyse the modification indices to see if there is a significant covariance of the error term between certain paired construct variables. Having checked the modification indices, a rather high value of the error term appeared between the following pairings: VC1 and VC3, Aad1 and Aad4, Aad7 and Aad8, between BA6 and BA7, BI2 and BI3 and BE2 and BE3. Against this result, the hypothesised model was then re-specified, by adding covariances among these pairings to improve the goodness of fit of the model. Although this practice is sometimes used in the literature, some scholars remain rather sceptical about it. They argue that it is necessary to do so with some caution, and where such modifications are made, they have to be motivated (Hooper, et al., 2007).

In our case, it turned out to be necessary to refine the model by adding covariate relationships as I verified that where the modification indeces were high, it was due to the fact that the terms used in the above-mentioned items were rather similar to each other, such as in the case of Aad1 and Aad4, which correspond to " moved" and "excited" respectively. The adjustment of the hypothesised model generated a far more satisfactory fit value, not only for the RMSEA but also for all the other indices used.

Another fit index commonly used to describe the SEM fit is the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (**SRMR**). It is an index that gauges the average of the standardised residuals between the observed and hypothesised covariance matrices (Chen, 2007). Like the RMSEA, it is an absolute fit index, which means that if a value of 0 is obtained, it means that there is a perfect fit.

CFI and GFI, the final two fit indices applied, are incremental indices. Through the use of incremental indices, the model is placed on a continuum between 0 and 1, where 0 represents the worst possible model, and 1 indicates the best possible model. The objective of the comparative fit index (**CFI**), also known as Bentler's comparative fit index, is to compare the fit of a target model to that of an independent model or null model, in which the variables are assumed to be uncorrelated. The Goodness of Fit Index (**GFI**), the second incremental index, is used to determine the minimum discrepancy function necessary to achieve a perfect fit under maximum likelihood conditions (Tanaka & Huba, 1985).

Table 3.8. below summarises the different indices used to verify the goodness of model fit, with the relative values obtained and their accepted values accordingly to the literature.

Table 3.8.

INDICATOR	VALUES	THRESHOLD VALUES	AUTHOR
χ^2/DF	1.990	≤ 3 = acceptable fit ≤ 2 = good fit	(Schermelleh-Engel, et al., 2003)
RMSEA	0.072*	0.08 ≤ x ≤ 0.1 = neither good nor bad 0.05 ≤ x ≤ 0.08 = acceptable fit ≤ 0.05 = good fit	(Cangur & Ercan, 2015)
SRMR	0.051	≤ 0.1 = acceptable fit ≤ 0.05 = good fit	(Schermelleh-Engel, et al., 2003)
CFI	0.930	≥ 0.90 = acceptable fit ≥ 0.95 = excellent fit	Fan et al. (1999)
GFI	0.870	≥ 0.80 = acceptable fit ≥ 0.95 = excellent fit	(Browne & Cudeck, 1992)

* RMSEA after re-specification of the hypothesised model

3.6.4. Hypothesis testing and effect decomposition

In this section I will report the results of the hypothesis as well as the results of total and indirect effects obtained via effect decomposition.

The first hypothesis (**H1**) asserted that value congruence had a positive effect on attitudes toward advertising. The regression analysis results (β = 0.785; p<0.01; 95% CI) support this hypothesis.

The second hypothesis (**H2**), held that in turn, attitude towards the advertisement produced a positive influence on attitude towards the brand. Again, the hypothesis was supported considerably (β = 0.833; p<0.01; 95% CI).

Hypothesis H3 and H4b argued that the brand attitude construct positively impacted both brand image (**H3**) and brand equity (**H4b**). In both cases, the hypotheses were supported, although brand attitude was found to have a slightly higher impact on brand image than brand equity (H3: β = 0.685; p<0.01; H4b: β = 0.541; p<0.01; 95% CI).

Finally, the first part of the fourth hypothesis (**H4a**) argued that brand image generates a positive influence on brand equity. Again, the hypothesis was supported, although the influence was much more modest than the others observed above (β = 0.240; p<0.01; 95% CI).

In figure 3.4, the various hypothesis and the regression coefficients β are graphically illustrated.

To determine the direct, indirect and total effects for each path, the effect decomposition technique is employed (Sobel, 1987). The indirect effect results from the mediation of one variable between two other variables and it is equivalent to the product of the direct effects. For example, value congruence has an indirect effect on the brand attitude of 0.6537. This value is given by the product of the direct effects between VC → Aad (0.785) and Aad → BA (0.833). All indirect effects are summarised in Table 3.9. below.

Figure 3.4.
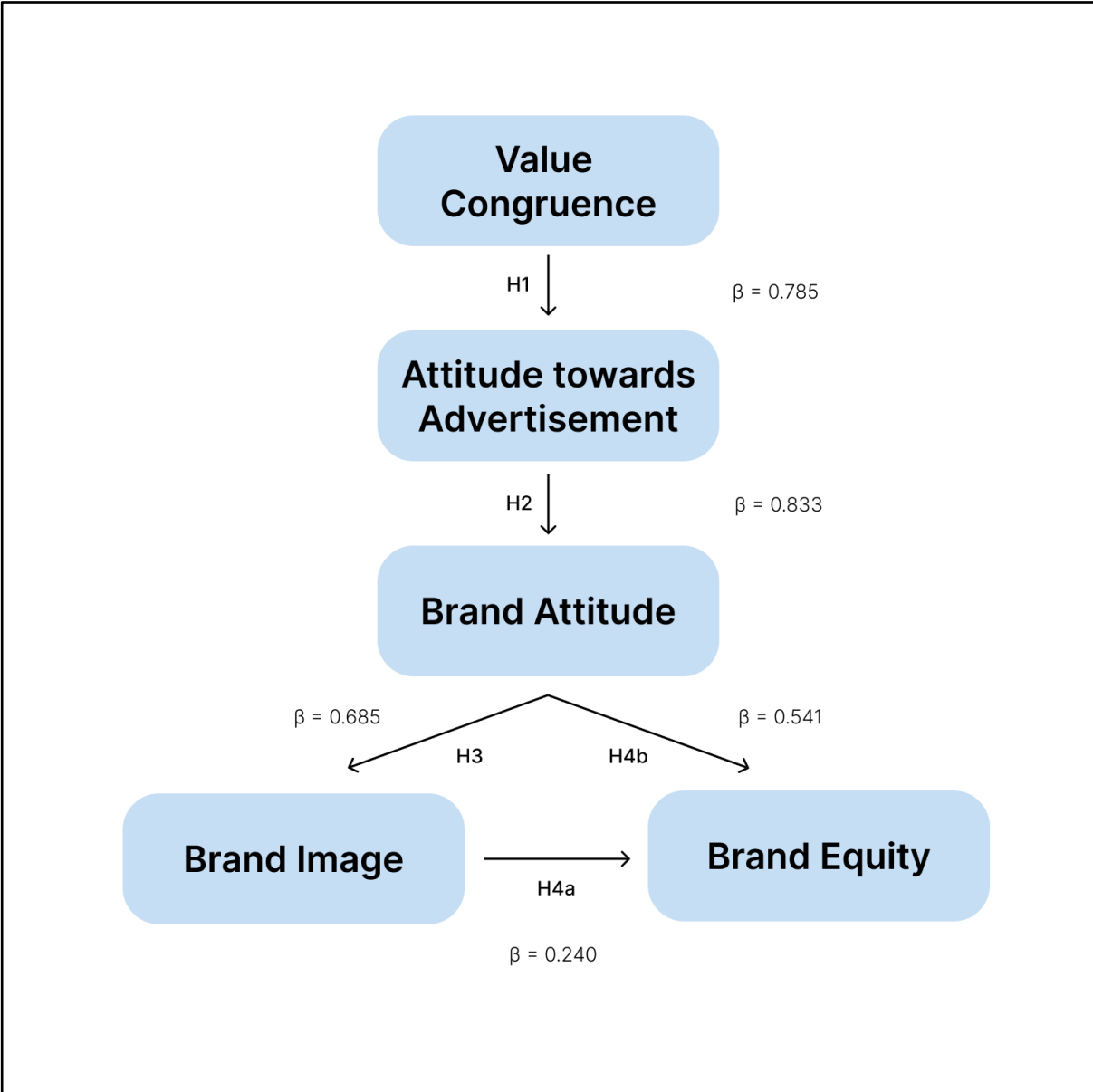
Source: personal elaboration on Figma

Table 3.9.

CONSTRUCTS	INDIRECT	TOTAL
VC → Aad	0	0.7845
VC → BA	0.6537	0.6537
VC → BI	0.448	0.448
VC → BE	0.4613	0.4613
Aad → BA	0	0.8328
Aad → BI	0.5707	0.5707
Aad → BE	0.5877	0.5877
BA → BI	0	0.6853
BA → BE	0.1647	0.7057
BI → BE	0	0.2403

3.7.   Findings of the research

As argued by several scholars, the value system that characterises each individual constitutes a set of norms that serve as a guide for our behaviour and perceptions (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1994). Such a set of norms pertains to what a person does or values as important for him/her. These considerations, when put in the context of marketing, imply that when the values that each individual holds are found in advertisements, it is more likely that such commercials will stimulate that person's interest and positively influence his or her attitude towards that advertisement. This effect has already been ascertained by several studies, and similarly, the present research found that when values are congruent, this positively influences consumers' attitude towards advertising ($\beta = 0.785$). This is due to the fact that values are what represents us, what motivates us to behave in a certain way rather than another, to have a certain opinion towards something, and as such, when the same values are expressed – either implicitly or explicitly – in advertisements, the latter are significantly more engaging. In turn, it is believed, again based on studies and research carried out, that the attitude consumers have towards an advertisement positively influences the general attitude towards the brand. This is because the emotions, feelings, and perceptions that arise after seeing an advertisement are reflexively transferred to the brand. In my research, the attitudes towards advertising were determined on an emotional level, and the participants in the study were required to express the emotions they felt after seeing the commercial. The emotions felt by the participants, whether positive or negative, were found to have a considerable influence towards attitude towards the brand itself ($\beta = 0.833$), further confirming previous academic research. Although this result significantly reflected the expectations of the hypothesised model, it must be reiterated that this effect may be influenced by the perceptions already existing in the minds of consumers towards the brand Adidas, being a well-known brand worldwide. This represents admittedly one of the major limitations of this research, which will be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Regardless of whether brand awareness and familiarity are more or less pronounced, in general, the perceptions and beliefs present in the minds of consumers towards the brand combine to constitute the so-called brand image. It is believed that the various associations that consumers create towards a brand – even at different times and

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occasions – then combine to form and shape the brand image (Park, Jaworski and Maclnnis, 1986). This, therefore, presupposes a causal relationship between brand attitude and brand image. Again, in accordance with the outcome of previous studies, a certain influence of brand attitude towards brand image emerged, albeit slightly less significant than the previous relationships ($\beta = 0.685$).

In addition to influencing brand image, it is believed by some scholars that brand attitude also positively influences brand equity. Although this relationship has been rejected in some studies (Faircloth et al., 2001), other studies have found that where positive attitudes towards a brand are present, consumers have the incentive to purchase that brand over another, but also to pay a premium price. Similarly, in our study, brand attitude was found to discretely positively influence brand equity ($\beta = 0.541$). This is because the associations that consumers form in favour of the brand at different times and occasions, i.e. their brand attitude, serve to stimulate a greater propensity to purchase because the brand is perceived as more desirable.

Finally, in the proposed research model, it was hypothesised that brand equity was positively influenced not only by brand attitude but also by brand image. This is because, in line with the definition attributed to brand image as a synthesis of the various associations that make up brand attitude, like the latter, it is expected that brand image, too, can determine a certain influence towards brand equity. Several studies have proven this causal relationship and a certain influence was also found in the present study. However, in disagreement with expectations, of the various hypothesis formulated, this is the least significant ($\beta = 0.240$). In my opinion, this slight influence may be due to the strong brand image of Adidas already firmly formed within the minds of consumers, which is the result of previous experiences and exposure to the brand, whether positive or negative, and which therefore undermines a higher level of causality between the two constructs.

It is also noteworthy that each component analysed in the model not only has a direct effect on the related construct, but also entails an indirect effect on other constructs in the model. For example, value congruence was found to have a positive indirect effect on brand equity ($\beta = 0.4613$). As noted above, the value system we possess influences our everyday behaviour. Therefore, where there is a strong value congruence between consumer and brand values, consumers have more incentive to buy that brand's products

or services or to pay a higher price, as supported by other academic studies (Cazier, Shao and Louis, 2017). In addition to value congruence, another component that certainly influences consumers' purchasing behaviour, and thus brand equity, is the attitude towards advertising. Again, a significant indirect effect was found between attitude towards advertisement and brand equity ($\beta = 0.5877$). This is because, as shown above, attitude is seen as consisting of three parts: the cognitive component, the affective component and the conative component. The latter suggests that attitude towards advertisement, whether positive or negative, implies a certain behaviour on the part of the consumer. Moreover, by its very nature, advertisement has as one of its main purposes to induce consumers to a certain behaviour, i.e. to buy the advertised product or service, through persuasion (Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard, 1993). Therefore, where the attitude towards advertisement is positive, consumers are expected to have more incentive to buy the brand's product or service.

3.7.1. Qualitative findings

The last part of the questionnaire sought to qualitatively analyze people's opinions with respect to brands' deployment of more inclusive strategies toward people with disabilities.

The analysis showed that 86.3 per cent of the sample (corresponding to 164 people) believed that brands necessarily play an active role in promoting a more inclusive culture toward people with disabilities. The remainder was divided into 9.5 per cent who had no opinion on the matter and 4.2 per cent of participants who argued the opposite.

It was also investigated what participants considered to be the most effective methods and strategies for companies to promote a more inclusive culture in society. It was found that 44.7 per cent of participants believe that the best way is to include more people with disabilities within the corporate workforce. On the other hand, 37.4 per cent said that it is more incisive for a change in society to implement communication activities such as the one by Adidas that was presented at the beginning of the questionnaire. Finally, 17.9 per cent believe that the best solution is to support events such as donations to associations, organizing awareness events, etc.

Next, participants were asked whether they believed that people with disabilities were sufficiently represented in advertisements. 55.8 per cent responded that they felt that they are not at all, and that progress still needs to be made in this regard. 37.9 per cent of participants said that people with disabilities are sufficiently represented in communication strategies, although there is still room for improvement. Finally, according to 6.3 per cent of participants, people with disabilities are largely represented in advertisements, as great strides have been made in recent years.

Lastly, a section was included where participants could express themselves freely about the topic. Out of 190 total participants, 32 decided to express their opinion about it. Of these, I will report only a few, which I believe gave significant insights for the research conducted:

- "*I find the Adidas commercial interesting, even though it is not the brand I usually choose. I appreciate their willingness to convey messages of inclusiveness and being in step with the times. I hope this commitment of theirs does not stop at a mere marketing strategy.*"

- *"Intellectual disabilities are often missing from the commercials, while physical disabilities are already more present from what I see."*
- "*I believe that along with such an important commercial, other more concrete actions of inclusion should also be pursued, both in work and through other activities for people with disabilities. In addition to taking care of a brand image, it is necessary to give concrete help.*"
- "*I see these ads as marketing moves to make more money rather than merely wanting to integrate people with disabilities. Which may fit, but it doesn't have the same value.*"
- "*Brand advertising made with people with disabilities represents a great opportunity to turn a corner in public opinion and mine, which is that part of people who still see disability as a big problem and as a set of difficulties perceived by me and many people as insurmountable.*"

In general, it turned out that people are quite aware that disability is still an issue that is not very much included in brands' communication strategies. However, it also emerged that, according to the participants, to create a more open and egalitarian society that is substantially inclusive of people with disabilities, it turns out to be more effective to take concrete action within the company, such as embedding people with disabilities among the stakeholders on a par with others. This thinking can also be found among the free responses above, in which more than one person found Adidas' commercial authentic and touching, and able to convey an important message; however, they believe that in order to achieve real change in today's society, it is also necessary to engage in other activities in support of disability, both internally and externally within the company.

Finally, what emerged from the open-ended responses and in line with the responses found above, there is still a long way to go for people with disabilities to be included in communication strategies. Not only this, but as reported by one participant, at the moment, the type of disability that is included in advertisements is only physical. The less visible and perceptible intellectual one, on the other hand, is hardly ever included. When researching the stimuli to propose, I also became aware of the absence of representation for intellectual disability; as a result, this lack of portrayal represents a novel possibility of representation that I hope will be developed in the years to come.

3.8. Managerial implications

Overall, the results of the study shed light on the importance of changing existing practices within the business environment and provide valuable insights into the current situation and the steps that should be taken to advance towards a more inclusive environment. More specifically, the findings offer some important insights into the use of more diverse and inclusive communication strategies, especially with regard to the inclusion of people with disabilities, and provide insights for managerial choices in creating value for brands. Indeed, it was found that brand values, especially if they are congruent with the values of the target group of consumers, play an important role in both influencing brand perception and influencing consumer behaviour. This means that when brands display the values of diversity and inclusion in their communication strategies, in our specific case by including the topic of disability, this is highly appreciated by the public, and in addition to influencing their purchasing behaviour, it leads them to remember the brand in their minds in a positive light, and consequently also to generate positive WOM. It is worth noting that over the last few years, there has been an increasing public awareness of these issues, and this implies that brands must also adapt to these changes, and consider changing their values as well, or at least give more prominence to some values than others.

The values of inclusion and diversity conveyed by the brand, however, cannot be reduced to mere communication strategies. This is because some brands might incorporate people with disabilities in their campaigns solely to foster positive attitudes and sentiments towards the brand and increase their customer base. Others may integrate certain persons with disabilities into their products or services just to show to the general public that they are inclusive of a diverse range of customers. However, these commercial strategies, termed '*brand tokenism*' can cause serious damage to the brand, as companies underestimate the depth of change required at the brand level, and end up making 'inclusive' statements just to attract customers' attention and make profits. Furthermore, an exaggerated and above all superficial display of their support for the social challenges of the moment, can end up conveying a meaningless message of the values behind these movements and thus achieve the opposite of the desired result. This can have a devastating impact on the reputation of the brand in question, causing consumers to lose faith in it and even turn against it.

Therefore, the commitment of brands to create a more inclusive culture towards disability should also be seen in other related activities. For example, as revealed by the qualitative part of the study, consumers expect inclusion and diversity practices to be implemented within the company as well. One such example is a greater effort on the part of brands to include more and more people with disabilities in the corporate workforce. To this end, companies should allocate specific budgets to support projects and activities related to the inclusion of people with disabilities in their organisation and business processes. In this way, companies contribute to the creation of a diverse workforce and to the empowerment of people with disabilities; at the same time, brands can reap substantial benefits because they receive interesting insights from these people on how to devise and develop communication strategies regarding disability, making inclusiveness and diversity a salient part of the brand culture.

3.9. Limitations and directions for future research

The study presents several limitations which will be outlined shortly. To begin with, Adidas is a world-renowned brand, therefore I expect that the answers given by the participants were partly influenced by their knowledge, exposure and experience with the brand. Although the stimulus presented is original, as still few brands nowadays include people with disabilities within the commercials, the participants' answers may have been influenced by the perception they already possessed towards Adidas.

Secondly, again due to the scarcity of advertisements that include people with disabilities, it was difficult to find a stimulus in which people with disabilities were included in the advertisement, but were also visibly recognisable. It emerged from some of the participants' answers that no persons with disabilities were present in the advert. This may be because the model with a disability in the commercial, Ellie Goldstein, is only visible for a few seconds and therefore participants with a lower attention span could not catch her.

Thirdly, due to the time limitation, the sample size (= 190) is neither deep nor wide enough. Furthermore, the use of online surveys distributed through non-probabilistic snowball sampling risks capturing only a specific part of the population, i.e. those most willing to cooperate with the survey. There was a prevalence of participants from the Veneto region, a region where my network is certainly more developed given my origins, and consequently, the responses are not representative of the Italian national population.

In future research, it is recommended in the first instance to introduce more appropriate selection criteria, as far as possible. It would be of great interest to use an unfamiliar brand stimulus in order not to risk a biased view on the part of the participants and to ensure that the presence of the disability in the advertisement is easily identifiable by the participants. In our case, this was not possible, since at the time of the research, very few advertisements include people with disabilities without emphasising them negatively in relation to others, or without using them for the purpose of donations to medical research associations. Likewise, it would be interesting to compare the results from two different stimuli, one in which disability is represented and the other in which it is not represented, to understand the differential effects that the use of diversity and inclusion communication strategies may have on consumers. Lastly, it would be interesting to test

the robustness of the hypothesised model in a representative sample of a national population.

Conclusions

The analysis presented during the third chapter can be considered experimental as very few scholars in the existing literature have dealt with the evaluation of the effects that the use of more inclusive commercials embedding the theme of disability may have on a brand. This is due to the fact that, although the concepts of Diversity and Inclusion have been known, studied and applied in the marketing world for some time now, more specifically, the subject of disability in advertisements is still in its infancy. Over the years, advertisements that included people with disabilities in commercials were devised solely with the purpose of presenting products for medical use, or promoting charity foundations. Although some progress has been made and people with disabilities are also included outside the medical and charitable context, in general, as noted in Chapter 2, people with disabilities are still very much under-represented in brands' communication strategies, and where they are represented, they sometimes risk being so in a stereotypical manner. Nonetheless, in recent years, some brands, driven by the growing wave of interest in a more inclusive marketing style, have taken steps forward, moving away from conventional representations in advertisements to include more representative portrayals of the general population. Some brands seem to be heading in the right direction and the Adidas ad in the questionnaire is an example of this. Ellie Goldstein, the cover model with Down syndrome featured in the ad, is included as an equal footing with other people, without emphasising her disability as several brands sometimes do. The non-emphasis on disability in the commercial is certainly an important achievement, as it means that disability is treated on a par with every other diversity that characterises the human race. This strategy, certainly desired by Adidas, was also confirmed by some of the answers received in the questionnaire, as some participants did not realise the presence of people with disabilities – as they expressed in the personal considerations part. This brings to light a further reflection on the public's expectations of advertising; in fact, it seems that many people are still accustomed to seeing disability in advertisements according to an erroneous and stereotyped logic, which emphasises their diversity in a negative light, without naturally incorporating it together with the other diversities within the commercial. Therefore, producing more content similar to that proposed by Adidas must become a priority for brands. This is because advertisements have always had enormous potential to permeate the public's thinking

and transfer values and messages that have the ability to influence perceptions and opinions. But to reflect diversity authentically and accurately in brand communication, it becomes crucial to adopt diverse teams that can best understand the ideals and aspirations of various minority groups. Indeed, as was held by almost half of the respondents, to promote a more inclusive culture towards people with disabilities, it is necessary to include such people to a greater extent in the corporate workforce, and in this specific case, in the marketing and advertising departments. In this way, on one hand, organizations can have an active role in increasing the visibility of such groups and in developing their abilities and potential in the economy; on the other hand, brands themselves can become true representations of the community to which they belong and avoid alienating anyone by projecting a one-sided view of the society they address, as has been the practice until now in most cases. Another possible route to achieve this is to collaborate with external advertising agencies to produce inclusive marketing content. A valuable example of how this strategy is highly effective is the agency Wunderman Thompson, whose commitment and dedication were outlined in Chapter 2. By partnering with agencies such as Wunderman Thompson, brands have the opportunity to better understand what is valued by the target audience and can cooperate in the development and refinement of advertising content that will reflect a fairer and more diverse image of the society the brands wish to represent.

Lastly, it is certainly important for brands to establish partnerships with associations or institutions specialised in the interest of disabled people. As was mentioned by some of the respondents, brands should also engage in events which support donations or create awareness about disability issues. On these occasions, companies are given an opportunity to present their brands in a positive light and provide valuable opportunities for users and customers to interact with the brand in a more personalised and meaningful way. By doing so, brands can become part of a broader movement that encourages consumers to break free from stereotypes and actively promote diversity. Furthermore, they contribute to the empowerment of people with disabilities, encouraging them to embrace their identity and perceive the brand as a symbol of opportunity and not as an obstacle to the realisation of their ideals.

APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

"Niente è impossibile"

Ciao, sono Anna una studentessa di Management dell'Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia.

Per la mia tesi di laurea magistrale, sto effettuando una ricerca che esplora l'impatto che ha il marketing della diversità, in particolar modo le campagne pubblicitarie che includono persone con disabilità, nel creare una cultura più inclusiva e nel migliorare la percezione di un brand.

Il questionario è completamente anonimo e i dati verranno elaborati esclusivamente in modo aggregato: non è possibile risalire all'identità del rispondente, pertanto sentiti libera/o di rispondere con totale sincerità.
Il tempo di completamento stimato è di circa 4 minuti.

Grazie mille per la collaborazione!

(Per informazioni sulla ricerca, contattare la mia Relatrice Elena Rocco all'indirizzo email rakele@unive.it)

🚫 anna.farina2412@gmail.com (non condiviso) Cambia account ☁

"*Niente è impossibile*" ADIDAS
(Se hai problemi con la visualizzazione, per favore
visita https://youtu.be/sNc-lXMoINo e torna al questionario)

PRIMA PARTE

Dopo aver visto lo spot, in che misura ti trovi d'accordo con le seguenti affermazioni? *

	Per niente	Poco	Abbastanza	Molto	Moltissimo
I valori trasmessi da questo spot sono simili ai miei valori	○	○	○	○	○
Questo spot rappresenta i principi di cui sono orgoglioso/a	○	○	○	○	○
Gli ideali promossi dallo spot riflettono la mia visione del mondo	○	○	○	○	○
Supporto pienamente l'intenzione e gli obiettivi legati a questo spot	○	○	○	○	○

Come ti senti dopo aver guardato lo spot? *

	Per niente	Poco	Abbastanza	Molto	Moltissimo
Commosso/a	○	○	○	○	○
Ispirato/a	○	○	○	○	○
Energico/a	○	○	○	○	○
Emozionato/a	○	○	○	○	○
Entusiasta	○	○	○	○	○
Disinteressato/a	○	○	○	○	○
Dubbioso/a	○	○	○	○	○
Scettico/a	○	○	○	○	○

Dopo aver visto lo spot, ritengo che ADIDAS sia un brand ancor più: *

	Per niente	Poco	Abbastanza	Molto	Moltissimo
Piacevole	○	○	○	○	○
Apprezzabile	○	○	○	○	○
Interessante	○	○	○	○	○
Accattivante	○	○	○	○	○
Desiderabile	○	○	○	○	○
Valido	○	○	○	○	○
Affidabile	○	○	○	○	○

SECONDA PARTE

Nel complesso, ritengo che ADIDAS sia un brand... *

1= Per niente d'accordo   7= Pienamente d'accordo

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Autentico	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Progressista	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Aperto	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Coraggioso	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sorprendente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Al passo con i tempi	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Responsabile	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Che si distingue	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

In che misura ti trovi d'accordo con le seguenti affermazioni? *

	Per niente	Poco	Abbastanza	Molto	Moltissimo
Trovo ragionevole affidarmi a ADIDAS rispetto a un altro brand, sebbene offrano lo stesso servizio/prodotto	○	○	○	○	○
Se un altro brand presenta le stesse funzionalità di ADIDAS, preferisco affidarmi a ADIDAS	○	○	○	○	○
Se un altro brand non differisce da ADIDAS, trovo più saggio affidarmi a ADIDAS	○	○	○	○	○
Rispetto a un altro brand, sarei disposto a pagare di più per affidarmi a ADIDAS	○	○	○	○	○
Consiglierei ADIDAS a un amico/famigliare	○	○	○	○	○

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TERZA PARTE

Ritieni che i brand possano avere un ruolo attivo nel promuovere una cultura più inclusiva verso le persone con disabilità? *

◯ Assolutamente sì

◯ No

◯ Non saprei

Tra quelle elencate, quale modalità ritieni sia più opportuna ed efficace per promuovere una cultura più aperta alla disabilità? *

◯ Attività di comunicazione (ad esempio, lo spot appena visto in cui sono incluse persone con disabilità al pari delle altre)

◯ Coltivare la diversità all'interno dell'azienda (ad esempio, includendo nell'organico più persone con disabilità)

◯ Altre manifestazioni di supporto (ad esempio. donazioni ad associazioni, organizzazione di eventi di sensibilizzazione, etc.)

In generale, ritieni che le persone con disabilità siano sufficientemente rappresentate nelle pubblicità? *

◯ Sì assolutamente, negli ultimi anni sono stati fatti grandi passi avanti

◯ Sì abbastanza, però si può ancora migliorare

◯ No, c'è ancora molta strada da fare

Hai altre considerazioni personali da fare?

La tua risposta

QUARTA PARTE

Dati demografici

A quale fascia d'età appartieni? *

◯ 18-24

◯ 25-34

◯ 35-54

◯ 55-64

◯ 65+

In quale genere ti identifichi? *

◯ Femmina

◯ Maschio

◯ Genere non-binario / Terzo genere

◯ Preferisco non dirlo

Qual è il livello più alto di istruzione che hai conseguito o che stai per conseguire? *

○ Licenza elementare/Licenza media

○ Diploma Superiore

○ Laurea Triennale

○ Laurea Magistrale

○ Laurea a ciclo unico

○ Master/Dottorato

Indica la tua regione di residenza, se risiedi all'estero, inserisci questa opzione *

Scegli ▾

Sample profile in detail

Age Profile	Sample size	%
18-24	46	24.2%
25-34	48	25.3%
35-54	42	22.1%
55-64	47	24.7%
65+	7	3.7%

Gender	Sample size	%
Male	45	23.7%
Female	143	75.3%
Non-Binary	0	0%
Rather not say	2	1.1%

Qualification	Sample size	%
Primary/Middle School Diploma	9	4.7%
High School Diploma	67	35.3%
First Bachelor	34	17.9%
Master Degree	48	25.3%
Single-cycle Degree	18	9.5%
Master/PhD	14	7.4%

Region of residence	Sample size	%
Abruzzo	0	0%
Basilicata	0	0%
Calabria	0	0%
Campania	0	0%
Emilia Romagna	2	1.1%
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	15	7.9%
Lazio	0	0%
Liguria	1	0.5%
Lombardia	11	5.8%
Marche	1	0.5%
Molise	0	0%
Piemonte	1	0.5%
Puglia	0	0%
Sardegna	1	0.5%
Sicilia	2	1.1%
Toscana	1	0.5%
Trentino Alto-Adige	4	2.1%
Umbria	0	0%
Valle d'Aosta	0	0%
Veneto	144	75.8%
(Estero)	7	3.7%

APPENDIX B

Covariance Matrix

```
VC1  1.0000
VC2  0.7775 1.0000
VC3  0.7955 0.7158 1.0000
VC4  0.6692 0.6639 0.6613 1.0000
Aad1 0.4622 0.5292 0.4255 0.4663 1.0000
Aad2 0.6073 0.5922 0.5919 0.6156 0.6273 1.0000
Aad3 0.4849 0.5499 0.4516 0.6000 0.6087 0.7775 1.0000
Aad4 0.4611 0.5716 0.4653 0.5931 0.7606 0.6662 0.6785 1.0000
Aad5 0.5318 0.5762 0.5170 0.6486 0.6179 0.7327 0.7691 0.7783 1.0000
Aad6 -0.4545 -0.4573 -0.3988 -0.3641 -0.4458 -0.4929 -0.4439 -0.4639 -0.5104 1.0000
Aat7 -0.2928 -0.2612 -0.2674 -0.3044 -0.2301 -0.3469 -0.2295 -0.2341 -0.3374 0.4699 1.0000
AaB  -0.3413 -0.2631 -0.2673 -0.2522 -0.2851 -0.3559 -0.2729 -0.2812 -0.3583 0.5536 0.8221 1.0000
BA1  0.4303 0.4723 0.4748 0.5400 0.5320 0.6449 0.6186 0.5899 0.6432 -0.3718 -0.2642 -0.3017 1.0000
BA2  0.5203 0.5388 0.5329 0.6592 0.5217 0.6837 0.6521 0.6046 0.6744 -0.4278 -0.3600 -0.3361 0.8046 1.0000
BA3  0.5154 0.4649 0.5070 0.5799 0.4370 0.6528 0.5991 0.5499 0.6200 -0.3956 -0.3178 -0.3213 0.7982 0.8337 1.0000
BA4  0.4942 0.4413 0.5019 0.5592 0.4630 0.6749 0.6275 0.5781 0.6695 -0.4091 -0.2857 -0.3035 0.7048 0.6714 0.7275 1.0000
BA5  0.4671 0.4046 0.4926 0.5284 0.5109 0.6431 0.6144 0.5866 0.6698 -0.3485 -0.2475 -0.3310 0.7976 0.7325 0.7976 0.8077 0.8126 1.0000
BA6  0.4235 0.4738 0.4848 0.6254 0.6004 0.6283 0.5964 0.5559 0.6418 -0.3673 -0.3310 -0.2987 0.7717 0.6989 0.7717 0.7543 0.6978 0.7090 1.0000
BA7  0.4036 0.3887 0.4166 0.5339 0.4781 0.5485 0.5604 0.5559 0.6015 -0.3513 -0.2967 -0.2522 0.6975 0.7330 0.7612 0.7114 0.7662 0.8808 1.0000
BI1  0.3390 0.3071 0.2977 0.3517 0.3804 0.4012 0.4475 0.3911 0.3946 -0.2162 -0.1591 -0.1611 0.5645 0.5503 0.4208 0.5060 0.5326 0.5484 1.0000
BI2  0.3488 0.3394 0.3420 0.4061 0.3579 0.4085 0.3991 0.3799 0.3550 -0.2667 -0.2138 -0.1963 0.5309 0.5777 0.4627 0.4541 0.5526 0.5407 0.7932 1.0000
BI3  0.3184 0.3070 0.3144 0.4008 0.2297 0.3803 0.4106 0.3503 0.3358 -0.2301 -0.1309 -0.1457 0.4719 0.5248 0.5232 0.4239 0.4354 0.5327 0.5027 0.7717 0.8993 1.0000
BI4  0.3505 0.3646 0.3312 0.4480 0.3836 0.4311 0.4554 0.3910 0.4135 -0.3265 -0.2085 -0.1947 0.4982 0.5750 0.5734 0.4733 0.4877 0.5945 0.5723 0.7458 0.8387 0.8306 1.0000
BI5  0.3014 0.3517 0.2964 0.4138 0.4567 0.4383 0.4809 0.4413 0.4486 -0.3845 -0.1768 -0.1386 0.5383 0.5720 0.5590 0.4834 0.5197 0.5894 0.6051 0.7492 0.7763 0.7302 0.8687 1.0000
BI6  0.4114 0.4208 0.3744 0.5111 0.4104 0.4555 0.4935 0.4260 0.4260 -0.3278 -0.1046 -0.1097 0.4930 0.5726 0.5230 0.4560 0.4439 0.5545 0.4998 0.6881 0.8271 0.8439 0.7972 0.7672 1.0000
BI7  0.3434 0.3682 0.3194 0.4051 0.4283 0.4036 0.4638 0.4029 0.4392 -0.3827 -0.2548 -0.2221 0.5399 0.5860 0.5456 0.4354 0.4918 0.6187 0.6048 0.7745 0.7650 0.7581 0.6862 0.7311 0.8146 1.0000
BI8  0.3499 0.3861 0.3303 0.4346 0.4467 0.4298 0.4840 0.4224 0.4341 -0.3327 -0.1794 -0.1672 0.5609 0.5871 0.5213 0.4799 0.5124 0.5802 0.5667 0.7581 0.7311 0.6862 0.7484 0.8290 0.7354 0.8042 1.0000
BE1  0.3361 0.2974 0.3700 0.3716 0.4252 0.4604 0.4320 0.4516 0.5027 -0.2892 -0.2054 -0.2440 0.5525 0.5666 0.5168 0.5270 0.5433 0.5225 0.4799 0.4709 0.4271 0.4805 0.4245 0.5132 0.5630 1.0000
BE2  0.2890 0.2597 0.3083 0.3548 0.3505 0.3904 0.3502 0.3961 0.4693 -0.2970 -0.2678 -0.2554 0.4804 0.4895 0.4358 0.4412 0.4514 0.5249 0.4767 0.4231 0.4196 0.3992 0.3996 0.4116 0.3763 0.4600 0.5009 0.7919 1.0000
BE3  0.2880 0.2897 0.3049 0.3574 0.3380 0.3960 0.3696 0.4024 0.4530 -0.3014 -0.2356 -0.2545 0.5450 0.5440 0.5090 0.4180 0.4976 0.5360 0.5112 0.4805 0.4237 0.4222 0.4047 0.4539 0.3838 0.4920 0.5125 0.7533 0.7971 1.0000
BE4  0.2915 0.2765 0.3472 0.3196 0.3655 0.3661 0.4278 0.3661 0.5135 -0.3320 -0.1761 -0.2146 0.5439 0.4831 0.5070 0.4259 0.5310 0.5243 0.5076 0.4821 0.4222 0.3859 0.3621 0.4334 0.3531 0.4663 0.5126 0.7665 0.7011 0.6995 1.0000
BE5  0.3257 0.3133 0.3364 0.4193 0.4084 0.4573 0.5174 0.4663 0.5486 -0.2963 -0.1879 -0.2305 0.6273 0.6396 0.6104 0.5325 0.5325 0.6094 0.6466 0.6330 0.5887 0.5268 0.5146 0.4991 0.5438 0.5412 0.6058 0.7885 0.7446 0.7408 0.7308 1.0000
     VC1  VC2  VC3  VC4  Aad1 Aad2 Aad3 Aad4 Aad5 Aad6 Aat7 AaB  BA1  BA2  BA3  BA4  BA5  BA6  BA7  BI1  BI2  BI3  BI4  BI5  BI6  BI7  BI8  BE1  BE2  BE3  BE4  BE5
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