

Uncommon Beauty: Physically-Disabled Models in Ads Positively Affect Consumers' Responses and Choices

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Abstract

Traditionally, companies have used beautiful models in advertisements as they have a positive impact on consumer attitudes and sales. Beautiful models, however, also enhance negative self-evaluation in viewers, and more and more companies are using models who deviate from classical standards, such as minority spokespeople, overweight models, and lately also disabled models. Theoretically, however, it is not clear how disabled models in advertisements—as compared to non-disabled models—will affect consumers' attention, affective responses, and choice. Based on social categorization theory, we hypothesize and show that disabled models have a positive impact on consumers' attitude towards the ad and the brand (study 1), evoke more pity but also more admiration for the model, and are judged as more novel (study 2). Disabled models draw consumers' attention but not at the expense of attention paid to the brand (eye-tracking study 3), and energy drinks advertised with disabled models are preferred over those advertised with non-disabled models, in private as well as public choices (study 4).

Keywords: *disabled model; advertisement; consumer attitudes and choice*

Track: Consumer Behaviour