

# Perceptions of Disability: Effects on New Product Design and Marketing

**Maayan Malter**

Hebrew University Business School

**Melanie Brucks**

Columbia University

**Gita Johar**

Columbia University

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## Abstract

The needs of people with physical disabilities (PWD) are often overlooked or misunderstood. Although we advocate a fully inclusive design approach, in which PWD are integral to decision making processes affecting them, the current reality is that many decisions are made on their behalf by others. As a result, marketers, product designers, and individuals need to understand the needs of PWD to create, market, and support products that better fulfill these needs. Across nine studies, we explore how observers perceive the needs of PWD, identify inaccurate perceptions leading to suboptimal outcomes, and test how to improve outcomes. In contrast to prior work on dehumanization, finding that observers diminish the importance of high-order (psychological) needs of “othered” groups, we find observers elevate the importance of high-order needs of PWD and show how this elevation bias impacts product design and response to marketing. We discuss implications for managers, public policy, and research.

*Keywords: Disability, Inclusive Design, Psychological Needs*

*Track: Consumer Behavior*