



TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION FOR **DISABILITY INCLUSION**

The Valuable 500 Global Trends Report

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ISSUE 8

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Identifying the most
significant changes in
this quarter



Hybrid and remote working

Employees with disabilities have long advocated for remote and flexible work alternatives. The “new normal” of remote working makes it possible for more people with disabilities to enter the workforce. However, this should not be viewed as an alternative to making physical spaces accessible.

Promoting diversity in hiring

Many businesses feel that DEI is an important focus and the stakes have never been higher. In particular, Gen Z places high importance on business values in their employment decisions.

Artificial intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies

People with disabilities are becoming more autonomous as a result of AI. Technology creators are attempting to understand the challenges they face and devise solutions to make their lives and the world more inclusive.

Inclusivity in the fashion industry

Many organisations are working towards inclusion for all in the fashion industry. They aim to raise awareness of adaptive clothing and to promote representation of disabled people in advertising.

An inclusive revolution in the digital space

Gaming continues to grow in popularity and digital spaces are now becoming more inclusive due to popular demand. The success of diversity initiatives is improving the digital environment for disabled people and helping to raise awareness.

Equity in product development

There has been growth in organisations seeking insight from the disabled community when developing products and services. This approach helps to ensure that products targeted at the disabled community adequately meet the needs of people with disabilities.



LET'S DISCUSS

How can technology empower
people with disabilities?



How does technology empower disabled people?

Technological innovations make life easier for people with disabilities on a daily basis, and many products and tools originally designed for disabled people have now entered the mainstream.

Technological advances in the past century have seen our world change beyond recognition and this rapid growth has seen a huge expansion in the development of assistive technology. Assistive technology includes screen readers, braille displays and screen magnifiers as well as more familiar equipment like mobility aids, hearing aids, walkers and wheelchairs, designed to make daily life easier for disabled people. Although the first self-propelled wheelchair was invented in 1655, the past few decades have seen technology have a major impact on wheelchair design with devices such as **DEKA's** iBOT now boasting remote control, self-balancing and stairway climbing features.

Assistive technology has also risen to the challenges posed by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the digital revolution that has been occurring since the middle of the last century. Screen-readers have become a vital tool for people with visual impairments navigating the internet, and improved captioning functionality has made the use of captions on digital content more widespread. **Verizon Media** estimates that 80 per cent of people who now use captions on a regular basis are not D/deaf.

A number of formerly niche assistive technology applications have also developed into mainstream technologies. These include text-to-speech and verbal command functions on smartphones, which were originally developed for people with visual impairments. The strong link between assistive and mainstream technologies is not really that surprising, since all technologies are by their very nature, assistive. They all help people use their varied abilities to do the things that they want or need to do, from commuting to cooking and communicating. This includes people with disabilities.

Apple's 2016 [accessibility film](#) featured **Sady Paulson**, a video editor living with cerebral palsy, navigating software with the help of assistive technology as part of a new series of videos featured on Apple's redesigned accessibility website.



Technology is not the only answer



Even though advancements in assistive technology have significantly improved the inclusion of people with disabilities, there is a danger for technology to be viewed as a fix-all solution to the societal barriers and exclusion that disabled people face. Many of these technological solutions focus on the individual, and not on the environment.

For example, relying on wheelchairs that can navigate stairs takes the responsibility away from society to be more inclusive in the design of built environments, and places a burden on wheelchair users to possess the appropriate technology. This approach is exclusionary, as it expects people with disabilities to conform to society, rather than encouraging society to include disabled people.

The recent surge in remote working as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic allowed many more disabled people to enter the workforce and participate equally via video-conferencing services and digital communications technology. Prior to the pandemic, working from home was even considered a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”).

However, as more businesses look to encourage workers to return to the office, there is a danger that continued use of this technology will substitute longer term accessibility measures for disabled employees. If the future of work is back in the office, employers need to ensure that people with disabilities can participate equally by improving the accessibility of physical workplaces.

This issue is also exacerbated by the lack of access to assistive technology. New research by **Samsung UK** found that 70% of people with disabilities feel that their workplace could do more to provide tech that enables greater accessibility, showing the need for greater access and awareness of accessible technology features amongst employers.

Technology is only half the story.
To embrace openness, we need to evolve
and change workplace culture, and promote
inclusion to be at the centre of an
organisation to empower employees.

Steven Woodgate, Head of Category Management,
Samsung Electronics

Technology can create barriers

There are also problems with adopting accessible technology solutions that are still in their infancy. The development of automatic captioning services in recent years has led many businesses to rely on this approach, rather than invest in more accurate, human generated captions for events, meetings and online videos.

Lawsuits brought against **The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)** and **Harvard University** in 2015 said people who were D/deaf or hard or hearing couldn't benefit from the schools' online educational resources because they had inaccurate captions, forcing **MIT** to settle in 2020.

This case illustrates the importance from a reputational and risk perspective of businesses prioritising and investing in accessibility measures rather than relying on cheaper, automated solutions.

Auto-captioning is not equal.
Auto-captioning is not equivalent
to accurate, professional captions.

Haben Girma, Human Rights Lawyer



Credit: [@philosophequeer](#)

Further barriers to inclusion

A reliance on assistive technology raises other issues, such as the cost and availability of these tools.

Disability tax

Most assistive technology is incredibly expensive. This means that many products are inaccessible to the very people who could benefit from them. The **Screwobro** mobility aid costs an eye-watering \$39K, while a **Liftware** spoon, designed to stay still in a shaking hand, will set you back \$195.

This is just one component of what is known as the 'Disability Tax'. In 2018, **Scope** calculated the average additional monthly income a disabled person would need in order to enjoy the same standard of living as a nondisabled person, finding that on average, disabled adults face extra costs of £583 per month. For almost a quarter of families with disabled children (24 per cent), extra costs amount to over £1,000 per month. This means that even though appropriate assistive technology may be on the market, most disabled people cannot afford to buy it, making reliance on its widespread use a cause for concern.

Assistive technology is difficult to access

There is also a lack of awareness surrounding assistive technology. On the supply side, manufacturers and suppliers lack information to estimate demand. On the demand side, buyers from all sectors (i.e. public, private, non-profits) and users are not equipped with necessary information that allows them to compare product features and purchase products. Many assistive products also require pre- and post-purchase services involving trained personnel that should be integrated into health, education or social services rather than being linked to the standalone purchase. All this can make it very difficult for people with disabilities to access and use the tools they need.



The price gap between accessible and non-accessible products is definitely an issue. Take Liftware, a consumer would have to spend nearly \$300 for a basic cutlery set. Comparatively, a person without the need for accessible cutlery could purchase a 16-piece cutlery set from IKEA for less than \$4.

–
Poppy Greenfield, disability activist



A lack of understanding

There is a lack of awareness within the technology industry, and at government level, meaning that many products and solutions are not designed with disabled people in mind and assistive technology is not prioritised.

One of the reasons why assistive technology is so expensive is the lack of investment in it. There is inadequate funding for products and services, and a lack of investment in strengthening national assistive technology programmes and systems. Funding mechanisms for assistive technology can reside with ministries, be privatised, or follow a hybrid model. During budget decision-making at national or district levels, assistive technology may not be a distinct category but instead covered under a general line. Without a dedicated budget for assistive technology (and for specific types), it is hard to advocate for increased spending or track assistive technology expenditure.

In general, there is a wider problem that developers and designers simply do not design with disabled people in mind. A review by **Teach Access** found that less than 3% of engineering and computing technology course descriptions reference “accessibility” or “people with disabilities”, and 60% of industry respondents said that it was difficult or very difficult for their organisation to hire candidates with accessibility skills.

But this lack of understanding is leading to a huge wasted opportunity for businesses. In 2019, **Click-Away Pound** found that UK retailers lose out on £17 billion every year by failing to meet the online needs of shoppers with disabilities, who click away before making a purchase. In order to capitalise on this market, businesses need to understand and accommodate disabled people, and this includes understanding the assistive technology they are using.

Teach Access is an active collaboration among education, industry, and disability advocacy organisations to address the critical need to enhance students' understanding of digital accessibility as they learn to design, develop, and build new technologies with the needs of people with disabilities in mind.



In conclusion

Technology is a tool that should be included in the toolbox when seeking to tackle the barriers faced by people with disabilities. However, it should not be viewed as the only solution.



The way ahead

Technology can provide answers when it comes to disability inclusion. The key to success is simply changing the way we use and think about technology, balancing the weight of responsibility more evenly between the individual and society as a whole. This involves avoiding an over-reliance on technology to provide quick fixes to complex problems.

In the digital environment, websites need to be designed and maintained in a way that is compatible with assistive technology so that people with disabilities can navigate them effectively. Built-in accessibility features should also be used to enable people without access to assistive technology to engage with online content. This will require a greater understanding of accessibility and assistive technology within the technology sector itself.

Businesses should also continue to invest in physical accessibility in the built environment. However, new technology can significantly improve the way we design and build spaces, to better accommodate people's needs. Software can also be utilised effectively at a government level to enable people to plan accessible journeys through towns and cities.

For the widespread and successful application of assistive technology, disabled people need to have access to the correct tools at an affordable price. More needs to be done to make these products available and accessible to the people who could benefit from them most. It is hoped that the future will see greater investment in these technologies both from the private sector and from local and national government.

Most importantly, we should remember that innovating for disability inclusion has led to some of the most exciting technological developments of the last century, and it is an area that promises huge potential for the future.



THE GLOBAL VIEW

Analysis of notable moves,
changes or development



The global view

Business leadership

Software for all

Multiple leading technology companies have launched software features to improve the experience for people with disabilities using their products and services. These features also introduce new ways for users with disabilities to connect and communicate with other businesses more effectively.

A collaborative approach

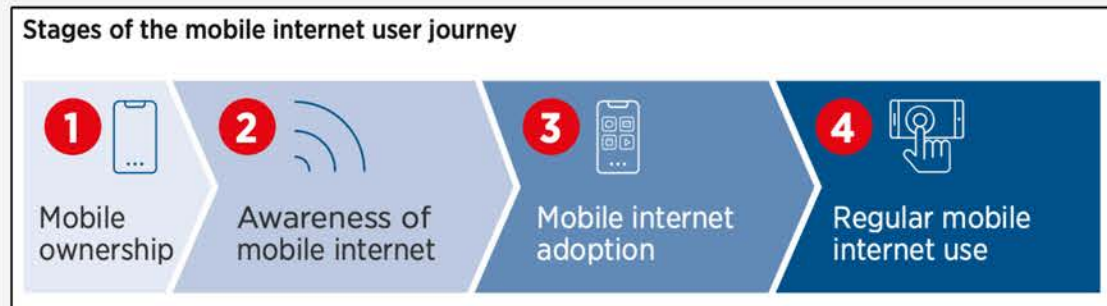
This quarter has seen industry leaders and experts pioneer collaborative approaches to advancing inclusion and representation across multiple sectors. These include campaigns and joint programmes for common aims, as well as knowledge-sharing initiatives.

Major technology companies pledge to tackle disability inclusion at Mobile World Congress 2022

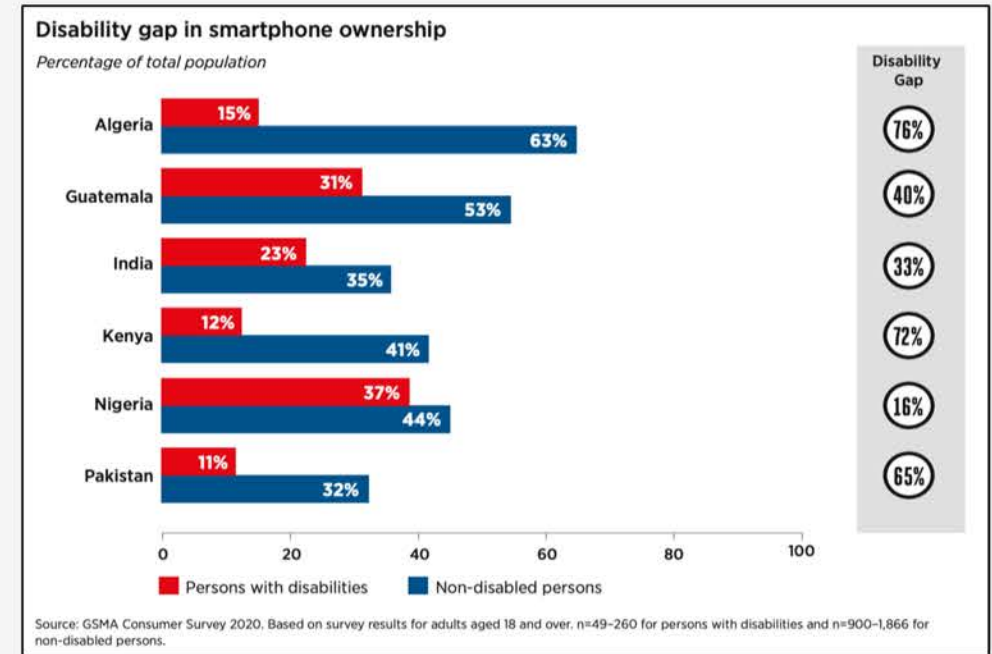
Google, Apple, and Microsoft pledged to focus innovation on removing barriers for people with disabilities to address the 'mobile disability gap', the term used to describe the global gap in mobile ownership between disabled people and non-disabled people.

Analysis by **GSMA** shows that the disability gap typically widens at each stage of the user journey. For instance, in Kenya where people with disabilities are 11 per cent less likely to own a mobile phone than non-disabled people, 36 per cent less likely to be aware of mobile internet and 85 per cent less likely to use mobile internet.

Mobile technology enables easier access to banking, healthcare, employment, and entertainment and in low- and middle-income countries, mobile is the primary way in which most people access the internet. The failure to accommodate disabled users at all stages of the mobile internet user journey exacerbates their exclusion from these fundamental services.



Sources: [GSMA – The Mobile Disability Gap Report 2021](#). [The Valuable 500](#)



At Google, we are committed to building helpful products with and for people with disabilities, as well as creating an inclusive workplace for the disability community.

Eve Andersson, Senior Director of Accessibility at Google

LinkedIn contributes to shifting the perception of career breaks

LinkedIn's new 'career break' feature allows users to list one of 13 types of career breaks to give context and clarity to prospective employers. Users can also add details about what led to the career break and what they've done during the break.

“
We need to start recognizing that life experiences are part of our work experiences. In a lot of cases, it's your 'off-résumé' experiences that get at the heart of your passions and your strengths.

Camilla Han-He, LinkedIn Senior Product Manager

Many disabled people will need to take time off from employment at some point during their career, mainly for health reasons. The same is true for parents of disabled children who may need time off to act as full-time carers. CV 'gaps' can be a big problem for people with disabilities and carers looking for employment, as employers often view gaps with suspicion and negativity.

Disability charity **Scope** offers advice on its website on 'How to deal with employment gaps', stating that 'For long employment gaps due to illness or impairment it's often best to briefly explain these in your personal statement or in a cover letter. This avoids the risk of recruiters jumping to their own conclusions.'

LinkedIn's 'career break' feature now allows users to list one of 13 types of career breaks including caregiving, full-time parenting and health and well-being. This functionality will hopefully help to rewrite the narrative on career breaks and alleviate some of the pressures disabled people face when seeking employment.



Wheel The World introduces affiliate programme for travel advisors

The online travel booking platform works to empower people with disabilities and older people to explore the world by making travel and adventure more accessible.

Wheel The World has launched its new industry affiliate programme to enable travel agents to partner with them and benefit from their certified accessible travel experiences. These include accommodations, transportation and activities, to better serve travelers with disabilities, older people and their accompanying friends and family.

The programme was formalized after more than 50 travel agents reached out to the startup on behalf of their own clients, seeking partnership and insights on accessible travel, illustrating the scope of the untapped market for accessible experiences.

Travel agents who partner with **Wheel the World** are advised and assisted in becoming certified by the company, as well as gaining exclusive access to almost 800 up-to-date accessible travel listings in 117 destinations, across 27 countries. Travel advisors who sign up for the affiliate programme can also access the **Wheel the World Academy** - a complimentary programme with 'expert tips about accessible travel'.

The company continues to expand its offerings to consumers and travel agents in an effort to connect the more than one billion people with disabilities around the world to unforgettable travel experiences.

Source: [Travel Daily News](#)



Our hope for the new affiliate programme is to encourage travel agents to consider the full experience from start to finish for travellers with disabilities.

Alvaro Silberstein, Co-Founder and CEO, Wheel the World



The BBC's 50:50 Project Impact Report shows progression in disability representation

In addition to the BBC, 143 partner organisations in 30 countries have adopted the 50:50 Project, from a wide range of industries including media, fashion, law and finance.

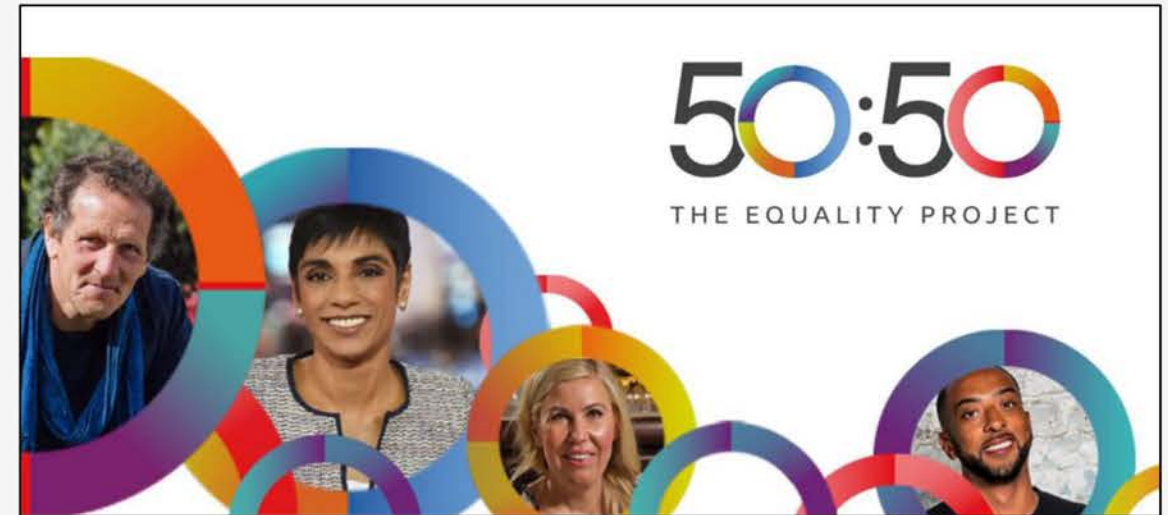
The **BBC** launched the 50:50 Project in 2017 to measure the gender of contributors in their content. The methodology used has been adopted by 750 teams across the BBC, with 250 of those teams now also committed to monitoring the representation of disability and ethnicity contributors.

BBC teams tracking disability and ethnicity for at least 18 months achieved the following in the **50:50 March Challenge Month**:

- **53%** of datasets achieved their targets for **disability representation** – showing an increase of 35 percentage points compared to when they started.
- **65%** achieved their targets for **ethnicity representation** – showing an increase of seven percentage points compared to when they started.

The expansion to include additional characteristics to gender is in support of the Corporation's 50:20:12 aim – for 50% women, 20% Black, Asian and minority ethnic, and 12% disabled representation in the BBC workforce.

Source: BBC



BBC

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It's already made a huge impact on the BBC and our global partners. There's potential to do so much more. I encourage any organisations interested in taking up the challenge to get involved.

Tim Davie, Director General, BBC

Apple previews innovative new accessibility features

Software features coming later this year offer users with disabilities new tools for navigation, health, communication, and more.

In May, **Apple** previewed innovative software features that introduce new ways for users with disabilities to navigate, connect, and get the most out of **Apple** products. These updates combine the company's latest technologies to deliver unique and customisable tools for users, and build on **Apple's** long-standing commitment to making products that work for everyone.

The features use advancements across hardware, software, and machine learning, and include:

- **Door Detection:** people who are blind or visually impaired can use their iPhone and iPad to navigate to their destination
- **Apple Watch Mirroring** : users with physical and motor disabilities who may rely on assistive features like Voice Control and Switch Control can fully control Apple Watch from their iPhone
- **Live Captions on iPhone, iPad, and Mac** for the D/deaf and hard of hearing communities.

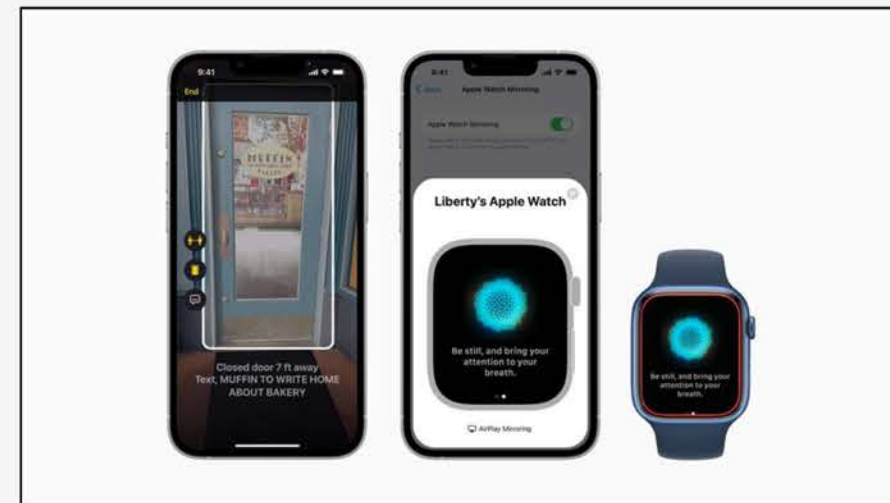
Apple is also expanding support for its industry-leading screen reader **VoiceOver** with over 20 new languages and locations. These features will be available later this year with software updates across **Apple** platforms.

Source: [Apple](#)



We're excited to introduce these new features, which combine innovation and creativity from teams across Apple to give users more options to use our products in ways that best suit their needs and lives.

Sarah Herrlinger, senior director of Accessibility Policy and Initiatives at Apple



The global view

Culture + Brand

Inclusion of skills

Employers are realising that neurodiverse thinking can and should be classed as a desired skill in the job market.

Professional networking platforms such as LinkedIn are adapting to reflect this and employers are collaborating to ensure they are equipped to access a largely untapped pool of talent.

Joined up thinking

Brands are waking up to the benefits of inclusive marketing, with organisations such as Google and Mastercard finding new and innovative ways to connect with their disabled customers. These examples show a joined up approach to marketing, showcasing inclusive actions and products with equally inclusive campaigns.

LinkedIn adds 'Dyslexic Thinking' to list of skills and talents

Research and lived experience show that people with dyslexia can have heightened creative problem-solving skills and emotional intelligence in communication.

LinkedIn has made it possible for users to add “dyslexic thinking” as a skill on their profiles after Richard Branson, founder of **Virgin Group**, and global charity **Made By Dyslexia** launched a campaign called #DyslexicThinking. The aim was to help recognise the creative and problem-solving skills that people with dyslexia bring to their work.

The #DyslexicThinking movement aims to help the world better understand and value dyslexia. According to the **Made By Dyslexia** website, dyslexia influences as many as one in five people and is a genetic difference in an individual’s ability to learn and process information. Many employers are missing out because they aren’t aware of the strengths people with dyslexia have to offer, said the charity in its latest report.

The tasks dyslexic people typically find more challenging, such as spelling, reading, and memorising facts, are increasingly being done by machines. Meanwhile, the soft skills that people with dyslexia are strongest at, are increasingly in demand.

The campaign is also highly relevant to marketers because it demonstrates how empowering people’s differences can help a brand align itself with the idea of inclusivity.

Sources: [Bloomberg](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Made by Dyslexia](#)



”
Dyslexic thinking is a skill that can give you the edge at work: you're likely to have strong problem-solving skills, a great imagination and creative, big-picture thinking. I'm proud to be a dyslexic thinker.

Richard Branson

Google highlights inclusion with new website

Belonging.com shares examples of how Google is building a culture of belonging.

The site features details on the actions the company is taking to promote racial equity, disability inclusion, gender equity, LGBTQ+ inclusion and veteran inclusion.

Working to better recruit, hire, and co-create with Googlers with disabilities

Googlers with disabilities make critical contributions across the company, and on Belonging.com, the company lists some of the steps that have been taken to create a place where everyone can 'learn, grow, and have an impact'. These include:

- Launching a new careers site to better recruit people with disabilities, including information about workplace accommodations.
- Creating a training on Disability Fundamentals for managers at **Google**, partnering with **Disability:IN** to make the course available to their partner companies.
- Cultivating community through Disability Alliance, the internal employee resource group (ERG), which was named ERG of the Year 2020 by **Disability:IN**.

The site also lists examples of some of the collaborative work **Google** has undertaken with members of the disabled community to improve its products and services. The company's **Start with One** experiments are a collection of projects that began with a maker working with one person to innovate for them and their community using **Google** technology. Many of these projects then spread to impact many more beyond their initial scope.

Sources: The Drum; Embrace Autism



Aubrie Lee (she/her), President of The Disability Alliance at Google



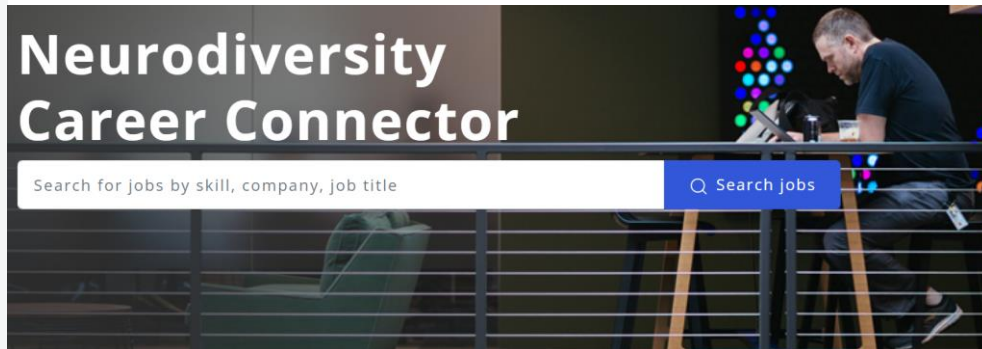
Sarah Ezekiel (she/her), a Look to Speak user

Employers collaborate to avoid missing out on talent



"It's a phenomenal resource. It's made for us, by us"

Jason Ross, Job-Seeker who recently found a job through the portal



In May 2022, a specialist career portal was launched to meet the demand for neurodivergent thinkers in the technology industry.

The Neurodiversity Career Connector was developed by the **Neurodiversity @ Work Employer Roundtable**, a group of nearly 50 companies with neurodiversity hiring programmes including Dell Technologies, Google, HP and Microsoft, alongside **Disability:IN**.

This new marketplace enables candidates to discover job openings and connect with a breadth of employers and position types. It also hopes to answer the following questions:

- **Employers:** How do I reach neurodivergent job seekers?
- **Job seekers:** Where can I find employers that are hiring and supporting neurodivergent individuals?

Those involved with founding the career portal state that many employers are unaware of the untapped talent pool of neurodivergent people who may have struggled in conventional hiring processes, but can offer unique attributes that would benefit employers.

The Roundtable employers have collectively hired 1,400 neurodivergent employees through their dedicated neurodiversity hiring programs. This includes, but is not limited to, autistic people as well as people with ADHD, dyspraxia, dyslexia, dyscalculia, and/or Tourette Syndrome.

Mastercard creates advert to match accessible cards

'Spotlight' encapsulates what Mastercard's accessibly designed cards are all about.

When advertisers promote their products, targeting the right audience is a crucial part of the process. However, when advertising products to the disabled community, brands often forget to ensure their content is accessible, meaning that it can't be accessed by the very people they are seeking to reach.

Mastercard has successfully bucked this trend with **Spotlight**, a film produced by **Fredrik Bond** and advertising agency **McCann**. The film promotes the new inclusive Mastercards, which are notched so visually-impaired owners can tell them apart by touch. A square cut-out signifies it's a credit card, a circle means it's a debit card, and a triangle represents a pre-paid card.

Spotlight stars Marilee Talkington, a legally blind actor and activist, whose character Marjorie explores her neighbourhood in near darkness, illuminated by a spotlight that is cast on other subjects. Throughout, Marilee is in her element and doesn't seem bothered by the changes in stimuli, as the audio describes what is happening on screen.

The film is narrated with audio descriptions, allowing blind and partially sighted people to follow the plot at the same pace as everybody else and sound effects differentiate Marilee's actions, with **Dolby Atmos** spatial audio enabling listeners to trace her movements.

Advertising campaigns like this are a successful way for brands to differentiate themselves and tap into the consumer market of disabled people and their families, which is estimated to represent \$13 trillion annually.

Sources: Mastercard; [DesignTaxi](#)



The global view

Innovation

Technology for empowerment

Technology brands are taking the initiative to design enhanced features which accommodate a diverse range of users. Disabled people have been historically side-lined in the design process. This is now starting to change as more brands collaborate with the disabled community to drive innovation.

Inclusive digital spaces

Using AI and machine learning, brands are now able to develop innovative solutions to make the digital space more inclusive of people with disabilities. This quarter has seen the world's first inclusive Marathon in the metaverse as well as the creation of the first virtual influencer with Down Syndrome.

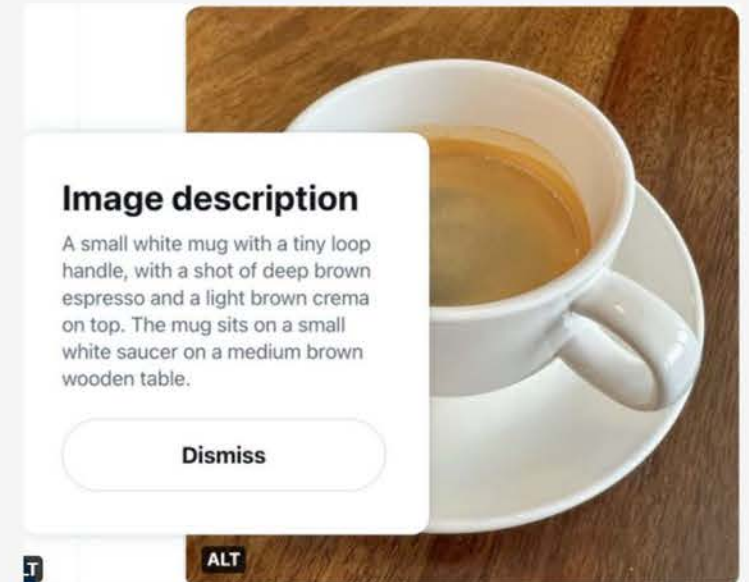
Twitter acts on user feedback for its image description/alt text features

In March, Twitter announced a limited release to test two features: the public ALT badge and exposed image descriptions across Android, iOS and Web to gather additional feedback, before a global launch in April.

Twitter announced in April that its **ALT badge** and improved image descriptions are now available globally; accessibility features that will make alt text descriptions more prominent for all users. Images that have text descriptions will get a badge that reads "ALT" and clicking on the badge will bring up the description. Adding image descriptions allows people who can't see an image to access a written description of what is displayed. This includes people with visual impairments, people who use assistive tech or those who live in low-bandwidth areas.

Before this change, most users didn't necessarily have access to alt text descriptions unless using screen readers. This is an incredibly important development as many disabled people do not have access to assistive technology, as highlighted in this Issue's **Let's discuss** section.

Twitter used ALT, which stands for alternative description, as the image description symbol.



Microsoft introduces new inclusive features

Microsoft introduces new Windows features to improve the experience of virtual meetings and ensure that the requirements of people with disabilities are met in the new era of hybrid work.



The new tools primarily focus on productivity, with AI-powered capabilities such as quieting background noise and automated framing, so the camera follows the speaker's motions. However, the most notable features focus on inclusion, with a subset of tools created in part by **Microsoft** workers with disabilities.

The new live captions feature started as an idea from Swetha Machanavajhala, a deaf senior product manager at **Azure Cognitive Services**, who said she was struggling to keep up in meetings. She needed a device to read captions generated by a human captioner and a computer to take notes, all while focusing on the presentation. The pandemic intensified the need for a change, she said.

Source: [CNN](#)

During a hackathon, Swetha led a team of 10 **Microsoft** employees to pitch universal captions across the Windows platform, allowing any type of audio coming out of the computer to be captioned in real time. She later pitched the tool to executives who agreed to make it an official Windows 11 feature. The new tool can also caption audio captured by the microphone, providing captions for the user if they're speaking to someone in person.

Another new Windows 11 tool called **Focus** was developed in part by a Windows product manager with ADHD. Alexis Kane said she often felt overwhelmed by the influx of notifications while working from home and sought to help Microsoft identify ways to help cut down on the distractions. Now users switch on a do-not-disturb button from any notification.



As someone with ADHD, the way my computer behaves in a day influences my mood, my productivity, and my energy levels," "This became more apparent with virtual work when I had no break from my computer. The number of notifications I was receiving increased significantly and so did my anxiety levels.

Alexis Kane, Accessibility Product Manager at Microsoft

Cisco introduces digital accessibility features for Webex

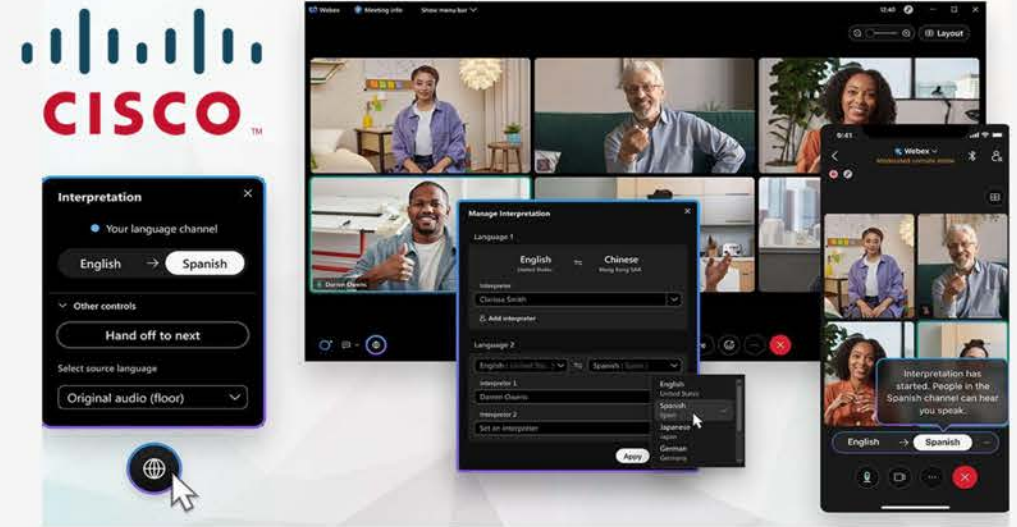
Cisco announced new capabilities designed to make Webex more accessible as digital accessibility lawsuits rise and businesses are under increasing legal and government pressure to equally include disabled workers.

The company has improved sign-language interpretation in Webex and increased the number of languages the collaboration software can transcribe. The transcription service currently only supports English, but the company plans to add 12 languages. These improvements will help people who are D/deaf or hard of hearing engage effectively with virtual meetings.

Cisco also unveiled a feature dubbed "optimise for all voices", which makes it easier to hear meeting attendees who are far away from the microphone. The technology uses AI to filter out background noise and make participant voices more audible, which should aid people who are D/deaf or hard of hearing employees follow meetings.

According to analysts, these changes will help businesses avoid digital accessibility lawsuits, which are on the rise. Accessibility-tool developer **UsableNet**, reports that U.S. courts received more than 4,000 digital accessibility suits in 2021, compared with about 3,500 in 2020 and nearly 2,900 in 2019.

Source: [TechTarget](#)



Businesses must prepare for more extensive accessibility legislation. The **European Accessibility Act (EAA)**, which aims to harmonize rules across EU countries, will require applications and websites in all 27 EU member states to accommodate people with disabilities. By June, EU nations must adopt EAA-compliant legislation and begin implementing it by mid-2025.

Degree hosts world's first metaverse marathon in support of DE&I Initiatives

Degree Deodorant, a subsidiary of **Unilever**, is the latest brand to jump into the metaverse trend, launching the first-ever marathon being held in Decentraland.



To help shape the digital environment into a more inclusive and representative space, **Degree** partnered with **Decentraland** to launch the Degree Metathon, which took place on April 26 at 6 p.m. EDT and covered 26.2 virtual miles of Decentraland's largest district, the Vegas City Sports Quarter.

Source: [Consumer Goods](#), [Marketing Dive](#)

The company stated that this latest initiative is part of a larger push to shape a more inclusive world, allowing anyone to enjoy an environment that is “free of physical limitations and stereotypes” – something the metaverse strives to do, but has been unable to in its early stages, said **Degree**.

Participants encountered an inclusive environment, featuring accessible architecture such as ramps. **Degree** also developed new avatar wearables in partnership with **Decentraland** that are more inclusive – including prostheses, running blades, and a wheelchair. Grammy-nominated recording artist Fat Joe and Paralympic athlete Blake Leeper hosted the event.

The effort was informed by **Wunderman Thompson** research that found 60% of people feel virtual worlds lack inclusivity, with many calling for more accessibility. This is especially important given that nearly half of Gen Z gamers say the metaverse gives them a place to explore their identity, per new research conducted by **Vice Media Group** and **Razorfish**. To inform its work, **Degree** partnered with disability experts to better understand the needs of underrepresented movers in the metaverse, and then polled the **Decentraland** community, finding that 98% of landowners support making movement on the platform more accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities.



Showing people in the virtual world who are running with blades and other prostheses is something that I think will inspire confidence in people with disabilities to get involved and feel welcome to join in on this experience and will ultimately contribute to increased representation.

Blake Leeper, Paralympic Athlete

The world's first virtual influencer with Down syndrome

Kami, a young woman with Down syndrome, is breaking barriers by promoting the idea that the metaverse is inclusive of both disabled and non-disabled people.

Avatars that allow users to choose an "ideal" face and body lead to the heavy underrepresentation and the reduced visibility of people with disabilities. To drive home the idea that the metaverse is for everyone, **Forsman & Bodenfors** teamed up with **Down Syndrome International (DSi)** and global digital modelling agency **The Diigitals** to create Kami, the world's first virtual influencer with Down syndrome.

Kami, short for Kamilah, means perfection, and that is how her creators want the world to see her. As someone who is universally known as 'perfect' in the social sphere, Kami will be a powerful representation that Down syndrome is not a flaw, or a mistake, and that she does not need 'fixing'.

To create a truly authentic representation of real women with Down syndrome, a panel consisting of over 100 young women volunteers with Down syndrome from 16 different countries were consulted to collaborate on her creation as a virtual model - acting as the faces, physiques, gestures, voices, and personalities that Kami embodies. The portraits of the 100+ women with Down syndrome were then aligned, and added to a face averaging program to create Kami.

Kami's platform of engagement is currently live on Instagram: **@itskamisworld**.

Source: [Campaignlive](#). [The Diigitals](#)



We have always been acutely aware that the digital space has had little or no place for people with Down syndrome. Creating Kami as a welcoming and relatable representation in the digital space for young women with Down syndrome is an incredible milestone for DSi. We have high hopes for Kami and the transformation she can bring to digital diversity.

Andrew Boys Executive Director of DSi

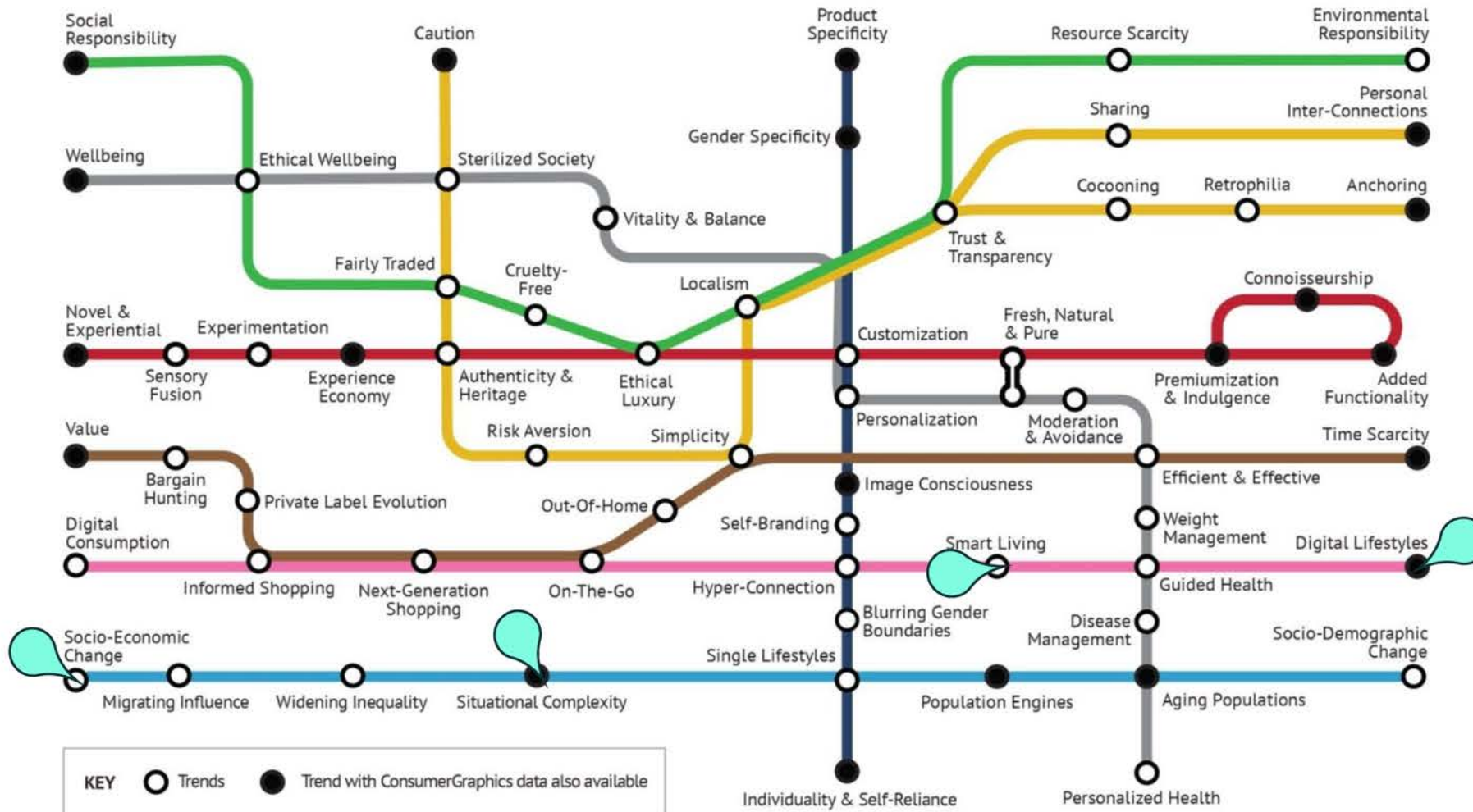


GLOBAL TREND DRIVERS

Analysis of the topic
chapters for each of the
five regions



Leveraging GlobalData's TrendSights framework to build out global drivers



Mega-trends:

- Sustainability & Ethics
- Comfort & Uncertainty
- Sensory & Indulgence
- Easy & Affordable
- Smart & Connected
- Evolving Landscapes
- Individualism & Expression
- Health & Wellness

Smart & Connected

Digital Lifestyles

What is it?

The Smart & Connected mega-trend refers to the increasing innovation in the tech sector and its impact on personal technology, connectivity, and digital solutions.

The Digital Lifestyles sub-trend is a key part of the broader shift towards a smart and connected world, where the internet-of-things, digital profiles, and personalised online connections and experiences play a key role in the progress of society.

Digital Lifestyles are both a consequence and a driver of these broad shifts online. Lives lived online will inevitably change and grow the online sphere as people continue to express themselves, make demands, and find their niche in online spaces.

What does this mean for disabled people?

As more of our lives are lived online, there is an opportunity for people with disabilities to participate more equally both professionally and socially. However, this relies upon digital spaces being accessible and inclusive of disabled people, and improved access to assistive technologies. There is also a danger that continued use of digital technology will substitute longer term accessibility measures for disabled employees and customers. Employers and businesses need to ensure that people with disabilities can participate fully by improving the accessibility of physical spaces as well as digital ones.

For more on this topic, refer to this Issue's **Let's discuss** section.



What is it?

The Smart Living sub-trend refers to the technological advancements in the home and the effect that this is having on the utility, comfort, and feel of individual homes.

Devices like smart speakers have already made huge differences to how people live. App-controlled heating, bathing, and lighting has also had a particularly strong impact on the way people interact with their domestic environment.

What does this mean for disabled people?

The transition to flexible or home-working in many professions has enabled many disabled people to access professions which were traditionally closed off, by allowing them to work from the comfort of their own homes.

In a home tailored to them, employees with disabilities can work more efficiently without the constraints of an inaccessible and disabling environment. However, during the pandemic, people in service and blue-collar occupations were especially hard-hit with job losses—the sectors in which people with disabilities are disproportionately employed. Hence, disabled people were probably less likely than non-disabled people to be teleworking and more likely to be laid off. Therefore, while home-working benefits people with disabilities in certain professions, remote working does not promote inclusion across the board.



A YouGov Poll of disabled workers commissioned by the TUC found the following:

- Nearly two-thirds (**63 per cent**) said that it gave them greater control over their working hours
- Just under half (**47 per cent**) said they had been able to change their work routines
- Two in five (**40 per cent**) said that it reduced their tiredness and fatigue
- More than a quarter (**26 per cent**) said their mental health had improved
- More than one in five (**21 per cent**) said that working from home had helped them better manage their caring responsibilities

Poll commissioned by the TUC to gain insight into the experience of workers with disabilities in light of the pandemic and the change to home-working.

Evolving Landscapes

Socio-Economic Change



Source: GlobalData TrendSights 2022

What is it?

The Evolving Landscapes mega-trend refers to the wide-reaching shifts in business, consumption, and transactions globally. Not only in economic terms but also culturally.

The Socio-Economic Change sub-trend refers to how the global economy has impacted the historic class divisions and conventional means of 'social mobility'. Trans-national corporations affect currency values and job opportunities and blur the lines between markets.

What does this mean for disabled people?

Disabled people are impacted by this in two key ways.

1. The shift towards a company having people working in different time zones feeds into the idea that a 'place of work' is more an online space than a physical one, allowing homeworking or hybrid working.
2. Disabled people can gain employment across borders without emigrating. Some disabled people depend on close family members or existing support networks, making emigration more difficult.

Evolving Landscapes

Situational Complexity

What is it?

The Situational Complexity sub-trend refers to the way people's life journeys have evolved from being a linear path with prescribed "checkpoints" to a more complex passage that defies convention. Lifestyles are now being proactively shaped by a strong sense of individualism, driven by the intrinsic desire to express oneself, or more reactively, by way of gradual social, economic, and demographic forces.

What does this mean for disabled people?

Individuality, expression, and difference are more celebrated now than they were in the past, though this differs across cultures. In Western work environments, there is more scrutiny over the make-up of a company's staff. There is also an increasing opportunity for brands to capitalise on this trend by promoting and celebrating individuality, difference and expression in product development and marketing campaigns. Increasingly, consumers want to see individual lives represented and empowered in products, services and advertising.

Why is this important?

This focus on diversity and inclusion is expected to increase. People will not settle for token moves by big companies, as they want to see real plans and action taken to remove barriers faced by disabled people.



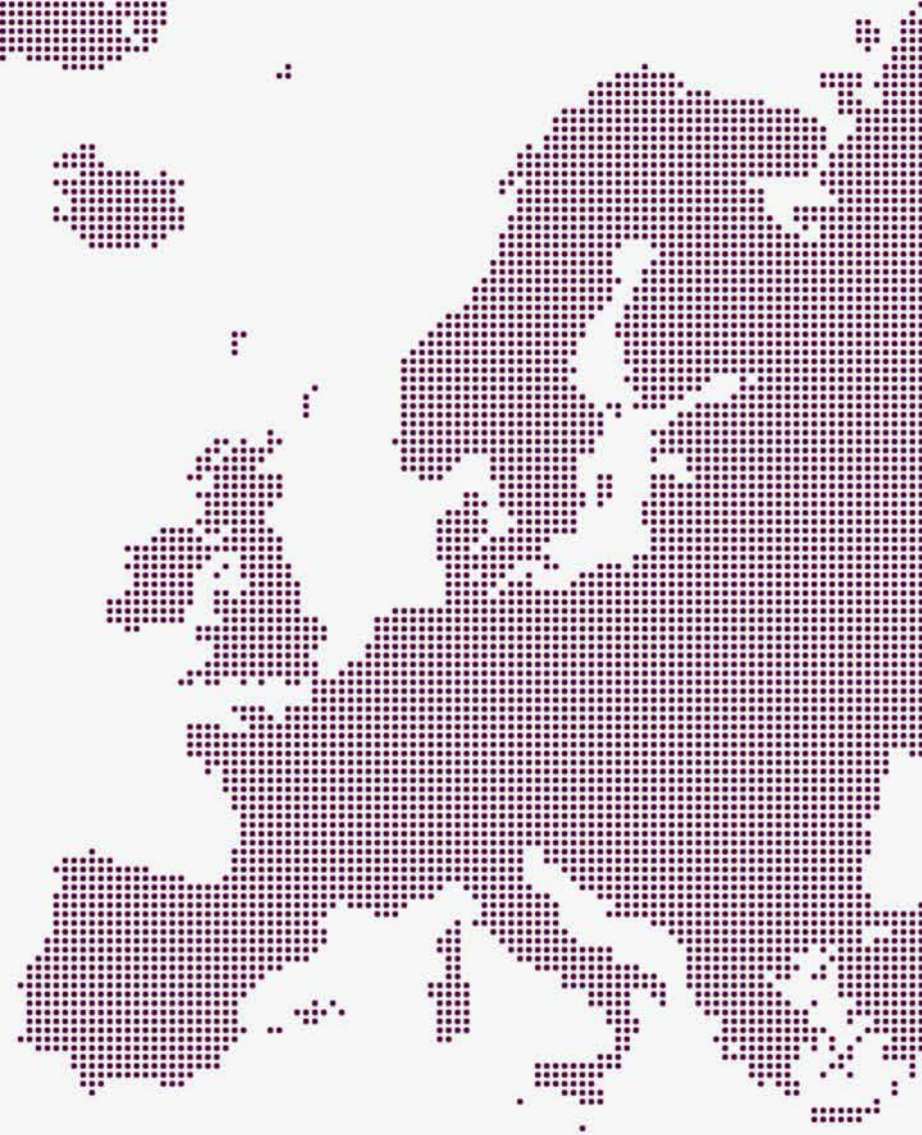
Izzy Wheels designs customised wheel covers for wheelchair users, allowing people to express their personalities and individualise their wheelchairs.



REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Europe | Asia Pacific | North America
South America | Middle East and Africa





Europe



Europe

Diversity in management

Many job roles focusing on diversity and inclusion were advertised in Europe this quarter. They were geographically widespread, with roles identified in the UK, Germany and Scandinavia. However, like in the last two quarters, there was a lack of positions advertised in France and Spain.

Many of the roles advertised in Europe have a global focus or concentrate on other regions.



Too Good To Go
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Program
Manager – Copenhagen, Denmark
Posted in March 2022



International Rescue Committee
Regional Gender, Equity, Diversity
and Inclusion Director – Stockholm,
Sweden
Posted in March 2022



Bolt
Head of Diversity, Equity and
Inclusion, Berlin, Germany
Posted in April 2022



Amazon Web Services
Disability Inclusion Leader,
AWS ID&E- Dublin, Ireland
Posted in April 2022



KPMG
Inclusion and Diversity
Manager – Dublin, Ireland
Posted in April 2022

Travelodge appoints disability charity to advise on policy and training

Travelodge, one of the UK's leading hotel chains, has appointed Disability Positive to advise on policy and training programmes to help customers with lived experiences of disability and long-term health issues and their families.

Travelodge runs over 590 hotels across the UK, Ireland, and Spain. Millions of people visit Travelodge hotels annually, including people with disabilities.

Disability Positive will offer guidance to **Travelodge** on how to improve and evolve its customer journey, making travel more accessible to all. The charity will also assess the whole Travelodge experience for customers with disabilities and long-term health concerns and their families.

This includes looking for a **Travelodge** hotel, reserving a room, checking in and out, and their experiences in the room, bathroom, and eating areas, all of which will help **Travelodge** improve the overall customer experience.



“
At Travelodge we are future facing, committed to putting our customers, colleagues and planet at the heart of our business in order to make a positive difference that really matters. We are delighted to appoint Disability Positive to help us to create a better experience for our customers living with disability and long-term health conditions and their families.

Craig Bonnar
Travelodge, Chief Executive

Vodafone offers cheaper tariffs to customers claiming disability benefits

Major mobile network provider Vodafone first offered a cheaper tariff for VOXI, their social media-only network plan in 2020, with eligibility limited to those claiming unemployment benefits. Now, disability benefits have also been included.



The cost-of-living crisis has made it harder than ever for those financially struggling to stay connected to their mobile service. Without this, they risk losing contact with vital support networks and, for jobseekers, being deprived of an important tool that can help them find work.

Catherine Hiley,
Telecoms Expert at Uswitch

The idea for the cheaper tariff was rooted in the unemployment crisis and reduced wages in the wake of the first year of the coronavirus pandemic.

The current cost-of-living crisis in the UK, driven by goods inflation and huge energy bill increases, has led **Vodafone** to reconsider and include people on disability benefits in the scheme.

Vodafone will benefit from positive publicity and help those on lower incomes receive unlimited social media access. Social media platforms play a significant role in today's life and people with disabilities may miss out on vital connections with friends, family, and fun due to not being able to afford access.

The plan would usually cost £35 per month but **Vodafone** offers its means-tested tariff for just £10 per month.



H&M and UNICEF partner up for new 'Be Inclusive' campaign

The campaign aims to challenge the stigma experienced by children living with disabilities by suggesting and promoting 'practical ways to help them feel included.'



49%

of children living with a disability have a greater probability of never attending school, and 41% have a greater chance of experiencing discrimination - **UNICEF**

Source: Unicef

The campaign was launched through a major report by **UNICEF**, which identified that 240 million children globally need to be further socially included and cared for in their daily lives.

H&M has sponsored this campaign in Europe, giving funds to aid in its promotion and success. This followed on from existing work **H&M** has partnered on with **UNICEF** since 2014.

The 'Be Inclusive' campaign contains 'positive and empowering' messages aimed at removing stigma, and calls into question outdated and discriminatory perceptions of children with disabilities. The campaign targets all audiences.



The key lies in changing societal attitudes and behaviours. The 'Be Inclusive' campaign will be a step in that direction – turning the tide on exclusion and discrimination, to build a more inclusive society that sees, hears, and includes the voices of children with disabilities.

Carla Haddad Mardini, Director of UNICEF's Division of Private Fundraising and Partnerships

McCann Worldgroup Joins Disability Confident Scheme

McCann Worldgroup, along with its sister agencies, McCann Health and Weber Shandwick, have joined the Disability Confident Scheme, a government scheme that aims to help employers make the most of the opportunities provided by employing disabled people in the UK.

The **Disability Confident Scheme** encourages employers to think differently about disability and take action to recruit, retain and develop disabled people. It also aims to eliminate employment and workplace barriers for people with disabilities and chronic illnesses.



This latest initiative underpins our commitment to support, recruit and retain more disabled people and those with health conditions into the UK creative sector... Participating in the scheme is in addition to our on-going actions to address systemic issues through inclusive policies, learning and development opportunities, awareness-raising initiatives, community-wide and leadership DE&I training.

Bertille Calinaud, Regional Director, DE&I, UK & Europe, McCann Worldgroup

Burberry casts amputee model, Iona Hay, in latest campaign

Iona shot for Burberry earlier in 2022 after signing to inclusive talent agency Zebedee, with the images garnering thousands of likes from social media users.

The 19-year-old from Glasgow, who had to have her leg amputated as a child due to bone cancer, was unveiled as the star of **Burberry's** latest campaign in April. Iona has already modelled for **H&M**, **Schu**, **Primark** and **YouSwim** over the last five months.

In the **Burberry** images, the fashion student was pictured in £490 motif sliders and a long black dress in another photo. The pictures appeared on **Burberry's** website and Instagram, with one image from the shoot gaining over 46,000 likes on Instagram in one day.

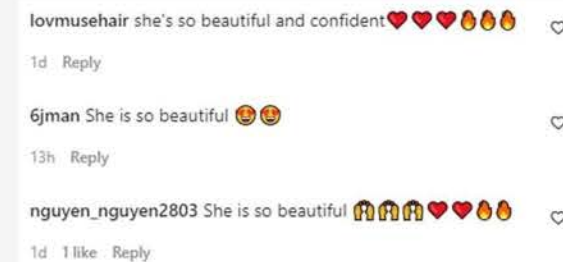
The success of this campaign illustrates the huge rewards available for brands that promote diverse representation in their advertising.

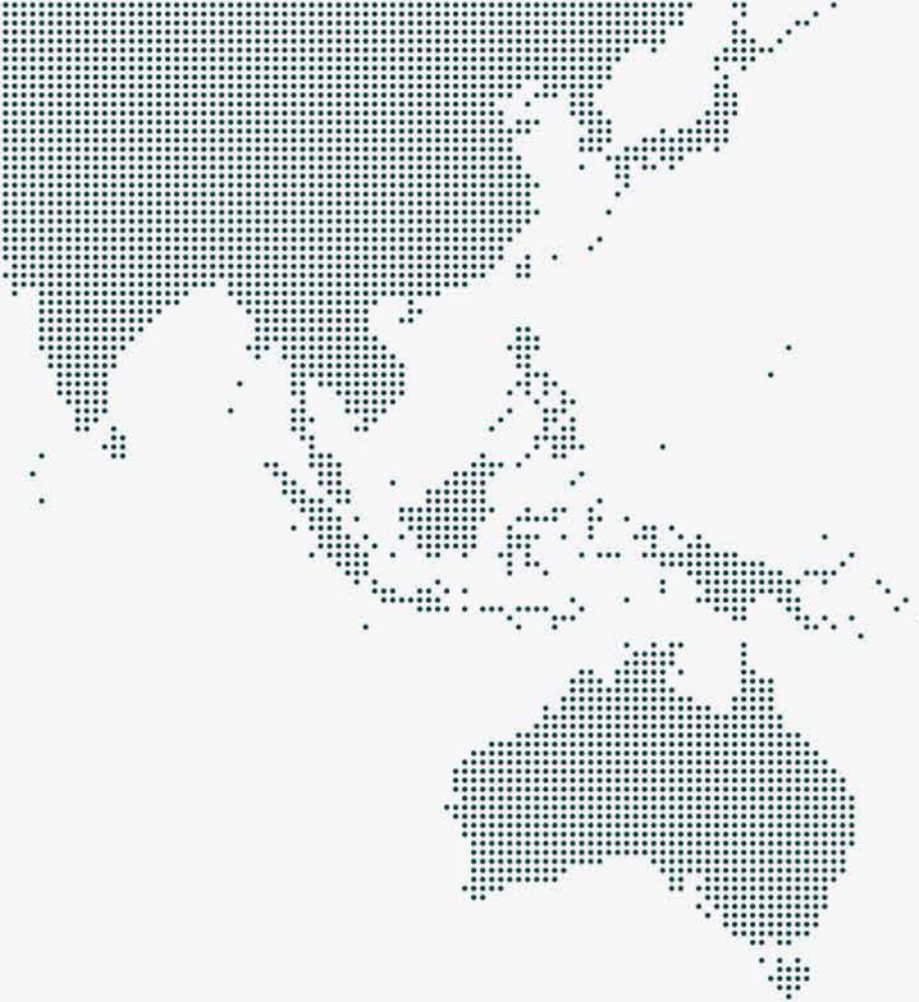
The shoot was really fun and I'm very grateful for being given the opportunity, it was a great experience. I think diversity in the fashion industry is very important.

Iona Hay, Model



BURBERRY





ASIA PACIFIC



APAC

Diversity in management

There is consistently a wide range of diversity-focused roles in APAC. While most are managerial or senior positions, chemical and consumer goods specialist **Henkel** offers a diversity & inclusion internship. Providing entry-level opportunities like this can bring fresh vision to businesses and help grow teams dedicated to inclusion.

Unlike in the previous quarter, roles varied across sectors, and there were some within consumer goods companies (**Henkel, Frucor Suntory**). It is hoped this will help put people with disabilities higher on the agenda when it comes to product development.



CGI
Diversity and Inclusion Program
Manager - Bangalore, India
Posted in March 2022



Agoda
Diversity & Inclusion, Senior
Manager - Hong Kong
Posted in March 2022



The Boeing Company
Global Diversity & Inclusion
Specialist - Singapore
Posted in March 2022

Morgan Stanley

Morgan Stanley
Diversity & Inclusion Advisor -
Front Office - Hong Kong
Posted in March 2022



Avanade
Inclusion and Diversity
Lead - Tokyo, Japan
Posted in April 2022

NOKIA

Nokia
Diversity & Inclusion Talent
Sourcing Specialist - India
Posted in March 2022



Cargill
APAC Diversity, Equity and
Inclusion Lead - Beijing,
China
Posted in March 2022



Dentons
National Inclusion Diversity &
Equity Manager - Sydney,
Australia
Posted in March 2022



Nvidia Corporation
Diversity & Inclusion
Recruiting Program
Manager - Shanghai, China
Posted in April 2022

AI-Based Job Portal for People with Disabilities

The Indian Institute of Technology in Hyderabad (IIT-Hyderabad) has created an employment platform based on artificial intelligence (AI) for People with Disabilities. The Institute claims that the platform, Swarajability, is the first of its kind in India.

The platform was built in collaboration with private companies, and multiple organisations from various fields of expertise collaborated on the project.

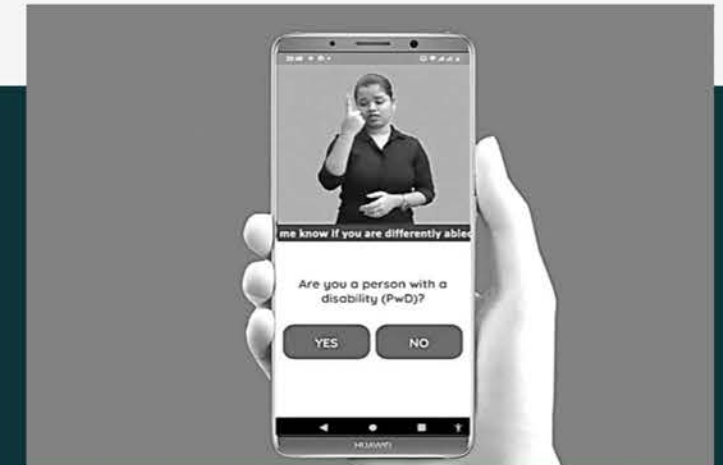
The institute has developed the platform in association with **Youth4Jobs**, **Visual Quest**, and **Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd.**

The platform assists non-governmental organisations (NGOs), educational institutions, and governments in their efforts to promote diversity and inclusion.



In India, there are now 21 million people with disabilities, with over 70% of them unemployed or underemployed. Swarajability is a step in ensuring that the most vulnerable, such as those with disabilities, have the skills and opportunities needed to guarantee that the country meets its demographic dividend.

Swarajability Platform Developers



Baidu Launches AI Platform to help break down communication barriers for hard-of-hearing community

Baidu AI Cloud, a top AI cloud provider, has unveiled an AI sign language platform that can create digital avatars in minutes for sign language translation and live interpretation.



Source: China Daily; PR News Wire: News Releases

By increasing the accessibility of automatic sign language translation, the platform will help improve communication for the D/deaf and hard-of-hearing communities.

The technology will give users access to AI sign language interpreters, which were used during the **Beijing 2022 Winter Paralympics**.

By enabling public service deployment in scale, the translators have been built for a wide range of usage scenarios, including hospitals, banks, airports, bus stops, and other public locations.

The **XiLing AI sign language platform** and the all-in-one sign language translators are designed to fill a significant gap and address the communication difficulties faced by D/deaf and hard of hearing people in both online and offline settings.

The platform can be incorporated widely into mobile applications, websites, and micro programmes, performing services such as sign language video synthesis and livestream synthesis, text-to-sign language translation, and audio-to-sign language translations.

Standard Chartered will make 30 railway stations in India for people with disabilities

Standard Chartered Bank is collaborating with Anuprayaas and Samarthanam Trust to make 30 railway stations in India accessible to people with disabilities by offering a variety of amenities.

This initiative is a part of the bank's "Seeing is Believing" project, which intends to help people with visual impairments, wheelchair-users, and people who are D/deaf or hard of hearing move independently and with dignity by minimising reliance on others.



Source: CSR Journal



The facilities which will be provided include:

- Guiding braille indicators at platforms and railings to identify platform numbers and facilities.
- Braille signs for facilities like a male-female toilet.
- Reflective strips at stairs for people with low vision.
- Braille maps of the station.
- Braille information booklets at the Enquiry counters.
- QR code to watch the video about the station in sign language.
- Portable ramp and wheelchair to board the coach.

Changi Airport Group launches support for people with invisible disabilities

Changi Airport in Singapore, one of the world's busiest transport hubs, has recently launched support and assistance for passengers with invisible disabilities such as autism and dementia.

The initiative seeks to provide a stress-free, inclusive travel environment, allowing travelers with disabilities to navigate the airport with ease.

A crowded, noisy airport atmosphere may be distressing for travellers with invisible disabilities like autism and dementia. The airport has also started its '**Care@Changi**' effort to help passengers on their way to and from the airport.

The programme includes several tools and support techniques to aid travellers with invisible disabilities, such as special lanyards to inform staff of their needs, a customised step-by-step airport guide, and personnel that have been specially educated to assist these passengers.

Passengers and caregivers can go through the process of navigating the airport and flight by using the pictures in the social story during their pre-flight preparation. This downloadable file can be customised to suit each passenger's journey and can be accessed on **Changi Airport's** website or printed for physical use.

Source: Airport Technology



Navigating unfamiliar places and procedures while catching a flight can be stressful, especially for passengers whose disabilities may not be immediately apparent. We worked closely with experts and sought feedback from the community on how we could better support their needs at the airport.

Damon Wong, Vice President of Changi Airport Group's passenger experience



DTAC launches initiatives aimed at empowering people with disabilities to take advantage of the digital world

Digital Total Access Communication (DTAC), Thailand's third largest mobile operator by customer base, has launched three programmes targeted at enabling people with disabilities to make use of the digital world.



Source: DTAC



One in five people across the world has a disability. In Thailand, there are 2.1 million people with disabilities... half of them over age 60. The company can play a role in providing digital access to those living with disabilities to improve their livelihood and promote freedom of expression.

Sharad Mehrotra, Chief Executive of DTAC

This first initiative is developing affordable mobile packages for people with disabilities and their carers. This is important as people who are D/deaf or hard of hearing rely heavily on internet and data plans to communicate with others via video calls, messaging applications, and social media platforms.

For the second measure, **DTAC's** "Net-for-living" digital skill development programme has collaborated with the DEP to provide digital upskilling training to 21 occupational groups as well as several vocational rehabilitation centres for D/deaf people.

The third initiative involves the establishment of a sign-language video call centre where clients may make line video calls to operators who can communicate fluently with them in sign language to answer their questions and give support.

VMware launches new programme to enable people with disabilities to be "digital future-ready"

To advance career opportunities for people with disabilities, VMware Aurora will offer free training in digital marketing and sales.



Source: VMware

VMware's new programme is designed to help people with disabilities overcome barriers to employment and gain an edge on competitors in terms of skills. As the future of work looks increasingly digital, VMware wants to make sure that disabled people are not left out.

The programme will provide free training with a diverse set of courses and learning materials in digital and sales skills, ranging from computer security and internet safety to customer relationship management, to help people with disabilities upskill and increase their employability in the digital workforce.

Outside of its global initiatives, **Aurora** is currently available in Singapore, with plans to expand to other countries in Asia Pacific and Japan.



Our vision of building a more equitable, sustainable and secure future for our region is rooted in creating equal opportunities for everyone. To create a truly inclusive economy, it is fundamental to equip persons with disabilities with the right skills so that they too are future-ready and remain employable in IT and broader industries.

Craig Dobson, VMware's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Lead, Asia Pacific and Japan, and Vice President of Professional Services

Telstra launches pop-up Accessible Tech Experience Lab

The hands-on lab helps digital creators get advice from accessibility experts.

For the 130 members of **TelstrAbility**, Telstra's employee representative group for people with a disability, the opening of a pop-up 'Accessible Tech Experience Lab' on May 19th – Global Accessibility Awareness Day – marked a vital acknowledgement of the importance of "asking the person" in any process that aims to promote truly inclusive design.

Set up in 2019, the **TelstrAbility** ERG has evolved from a support group for employees living with disability to a powerful company-wide advocate for informing and inspiring greater accessibility across the business.

Since the beginning of the year, six ERG members worked alongside Telstra's technicians to develop a pop-up version of the lab, with 4-5 "experience spaces" offering online tasks that simulate the challenges facing people with specific disabilities, the roadblocks they encounter, and the assistive technology they might use.

Designers and developers were able to experience these challenges and frustrations firsthand, before chatting with experts – the ERG specialists – about the best ways of overcoming them.

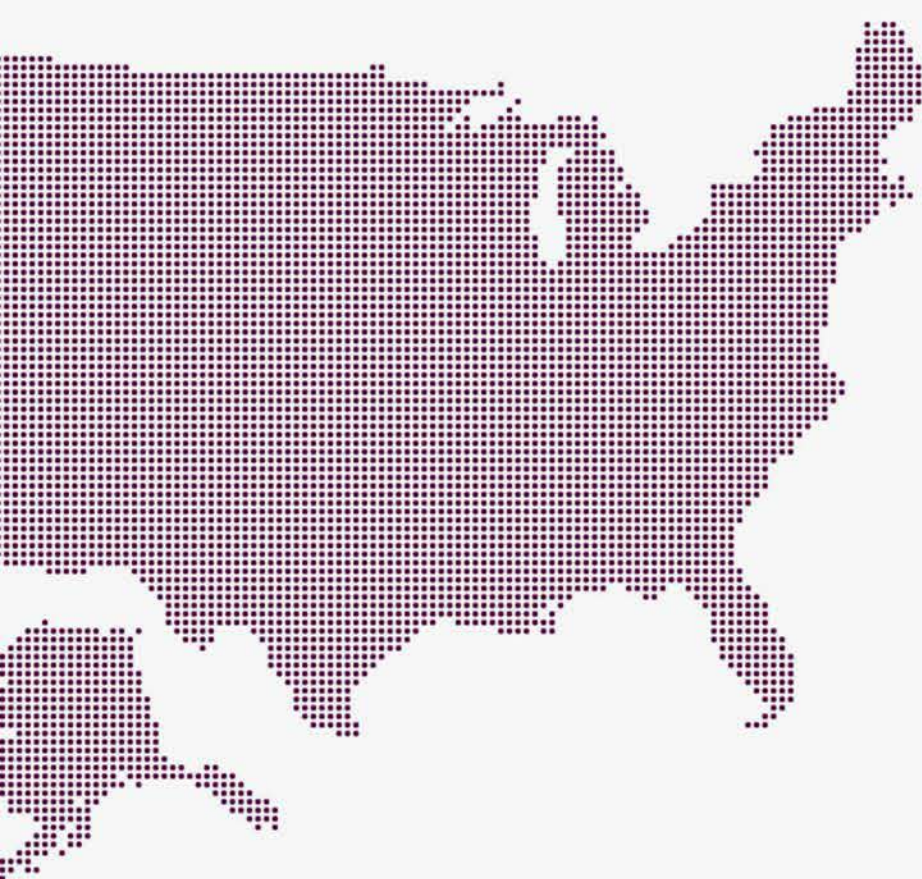
Initiatives like this, which involve disabled people directly in the process of product and service development are vital to improving accessibility.

Source: [Telstra](#)



We never assume how people take their coffee, but always ask them how they want it. Yet when it comes to the type of support that people with disabilities may need – which varies hugely between people and situations – we often assume that we know exactly how to support them.

Brady March, the ERG's co-lead



NORTH AMERICA



North America

Diversity in management

There was no shortage of diversity and inclusion leadership roles in North America this quarter. Like last quarter, many of these roles were advertised by large technology companies such as **Microsoft**.

There were more roles focusing specifically on accessibility in North America than in any other region, as the world's largest businesses continue to invest in improving the experience of people with disabilities when using their websites, devices, and services.



The Institute of Public Administration of Canada
Diversity & Belonging Specialist, Learning – Toronto, ON, Canada
Posted in March 2022



Summit Search Group
Director of People, Culture & Diversity – Ontario, Canada
Posted in April 2022



Microsoft Corporation
Diversity and Inclusion Program Manager – Redmond, USA
Posted in March 2022



Amazon Web Services
Sr. Program Manager, Diversity & Inclusion– Seattle, USA
Posted in April 2022



Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Director for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – Cambridge, USA
Posted in March 2022



Yahoo!
Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging – USA
Posted in April 2022



Dell
Culture, Diversity & Inclusion Business Consultant – Texas, USA
Posted in April 2022



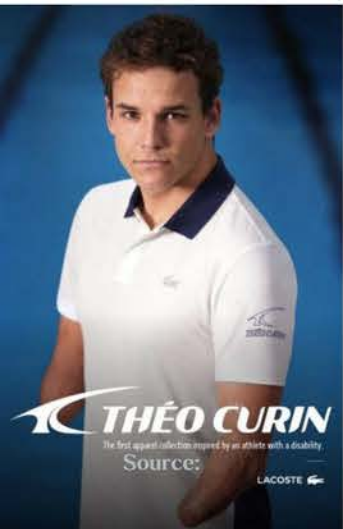
Nestlé
Sr Specialist Diversity Equity & Inclusion – Arlington, USA
Posted in April 2022

Lacoste introduces the Théo Curin line, dedicated to disability sports

Lacoste has collaborated with quadri-amputee swimmer Théo Curin to develop the first collection with a disabled athlete's name that is aimed at both non-disabled and disabled people.

Théo Curin, Louise Trotter, the Creative Director at **Lacoste**, and their teams collaborated to create a universal wardrobe for everyone from the logo to the pieces. Each aspect is inspired by the athlete's life, particularly his swim across Lake Titicaca, which served as the starting point for this new collection.

The attention to detail, inspired by Theo's everyday life, ensures these products have been adapted to meet the needs of disabled consumers.



The fact that a brand like Lacoste asked me to set up a collaboration like this shows that things are continuing to evolve in the right direction. What I liked was to have been involved in each of the stages of the design: choice of products, colors, adaptations etc., and that it was a universal collection. It is a great pride for me!

Confides Théo Curin



It was a joy and an honor to work with Théo on this unique project. He is an inspiration to all of us and his enthusiasm and determination have driven us to new levels of creativity!

Louise Trotter
Creative Director Lacoste

A Fashion Revolution, focused on the latest in adaptive fashions for people with disabilities

Runway of Dreams is a non-profit organisation seeking to promote the inclusion of adaptive clothing into mainstream fashion shows.

In March, **Runway of Dreams**, a nonprofit working toward inclusion for all in the fashion industry, hosted **A Fashion Revolution** at the Majestic Downtown in Los Angeles, focused on the latest styles and trends in adaptive fashion.

Adaptive fashion includes everyday pieces of clothing that can be worn by anyone but include features such as modified closures made with magnets or snaps rather than zippers and buttons, which require more dexterity, as well as shoes with more space under the tongue to make them easier to get on, or Velcro straps rather than laces.

The rise in body positivity within fashion has often focused on a much-needed increase in racial diversity and the inclusion of plus-size models. However, the organisation behind **A Fashion Revolution** highlights the fact that disabled people have been largely left out of this progress.

Hosted by actress and activist Jamie Chung, **A Fashion Revolution** featured over 70 models of varying backgrounds, ages and disabilities modeling adaptive clothing from a mix of mainstream and up-and-coming brands in the adaptive space, including the presenting sponsor of the event, **Kohl's**, as well as **Target**, **Zappos**, **JCPenney**, and **Tommy Hilfiger Adaptive**.

Source: [California Apparel News](#)



Driving awareness is the main reason we have events like this—to show that people with disabilities is the largest minority on our planet that people seem to forget.

Mindy Scheier, Runway of Dreams Founder

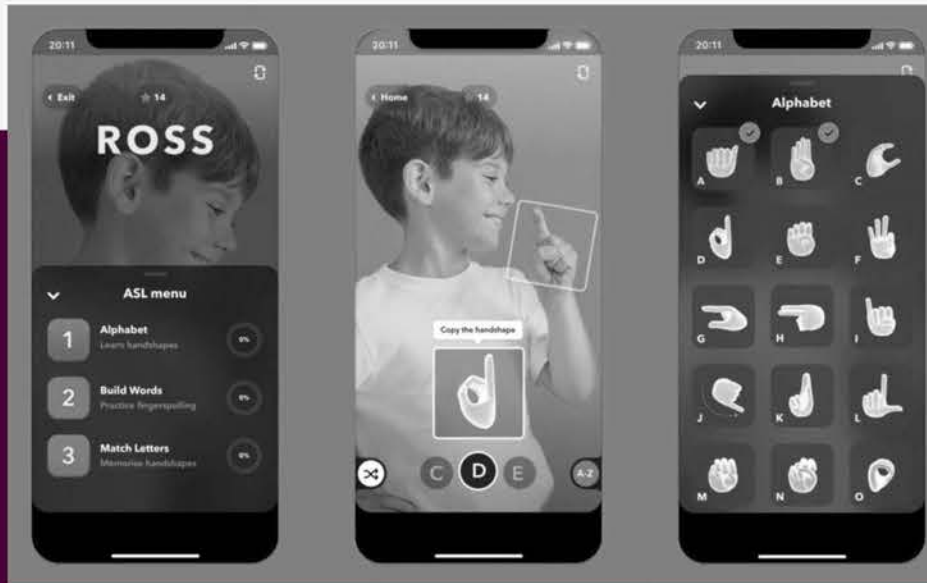
Snapchat rolls out AR technology to teach American Sign Language

In honour of International Week of the Deaf, Snapchat introduces a new type of lens that will help Snapchatters to learn American Sign Language (ASL).

Snapchat has developed an AR-based sign language in collaboration with the Hungarian startup **SignAll**, which aims to bridge the communication gap between people who are D/deaf or hard of hearing and those who are not.

Led entirely by D/deaf and hard of hearing team members at Snap called the **'Deafengers'**, the ASL Alphabet Lens teaches users to fingerspell their names, practice the ASL Alphabet, and play games that put new skills to the test.

[Try the new snapchat ASL lens.](#)



For native signers, in a world where linguistic inequity is prevalent, we believe AR can help evolve the way we communicate. We look forward to learning more from our community as we strive to continuously improve experiences for everyone on Snapchat.

Starbucks makes new commitments to disabled Americans

The global coffee chain has made a public commitment to offer new technologies and 'design standards' to improve inclusivity.

Starbucks aims to vastly improve their service offering to people whose disabilities are under-considered by the majority of coffee shops and quick-service restaurants.

The chain aims to use new technologies such as speech-to-text to assist D/deaf and hard of hearing customers. The brand's commitments also include braille menus for people who are blind and ramps for wheelchair users.

The implementation of these measures will happen over the next few years, but even the commitment itself has been welcomed by advocacy groups.



The coffee chain committed to offering new technologies and design standards to improve inclusivity; will also open 1,000 more community stores by 2030.

Nations Restaurant News, March 2022

Why is this important?

As a global brand leader **Starbucks** plays an important role in setting a precedent for the industry, influencing the future direction other brands should follow. Tailoring services for people with disabilities represents a brand's commitment to inclusion.

Investment in new technology for neurodiverse people

Cognixion is a mission-driven company, aiming to unlock speech for hundreds of millions of people worldwide affected by communication disabilities.

By providing affordable and accessible technologies that are powered by AI (artificial intelligence), the world will look and feel very different in the next decade.

Cognixion



The Californian-based sensory communication start-up company raised a \$12M A-round to design an intuitive brain-monitoring headset and interface specifically for people with physical disabilities.

The company created the first sensorial communication platform, which allows iOS devices to speak on behalf of disabled people who need assistance in this area. This creation is a breakthrough in the world of assistive communication technology.

By utilising technology that captures brain waves and uses them via a device to speak on their behalf, this technology can offer disabled people who are unable to communicate verbally new opportunities professionally.



Bird launches motor attachment that turns manual wheelchairs electric

As part of a New York City pilot program, Bird is giving disabled residents a free attachment that equips their wheelchair with an electric motor and handlebars with a throttle.

In spring 2021, New York City's Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) rolled out a limited pilot, making approximately 3,000 e-scooters available in certain neighborhoods in the East Bronx.

Fulfilling that requirement, one of the companies, **Bird**, is launching a wheelchair attachment, equipped with an electric motor that latches onto manual wheelchairs. The attachment, comprised of a handlebar, a front wheel, and a 350-watt electric motor powered by a lithium-ion battery, secures onto the front of a wheelchair via the legs.

For the foreseeable future, the programme will be free to Bronx residents with disabilities who wish to participate. **Bird** will hand-deliver them to customers' homes, and a technician will install the hardware in a process that takes up to an hour, after which the attachments should easily latch on and off within seconds; the technicians will also demonstrate how to operate the motor.

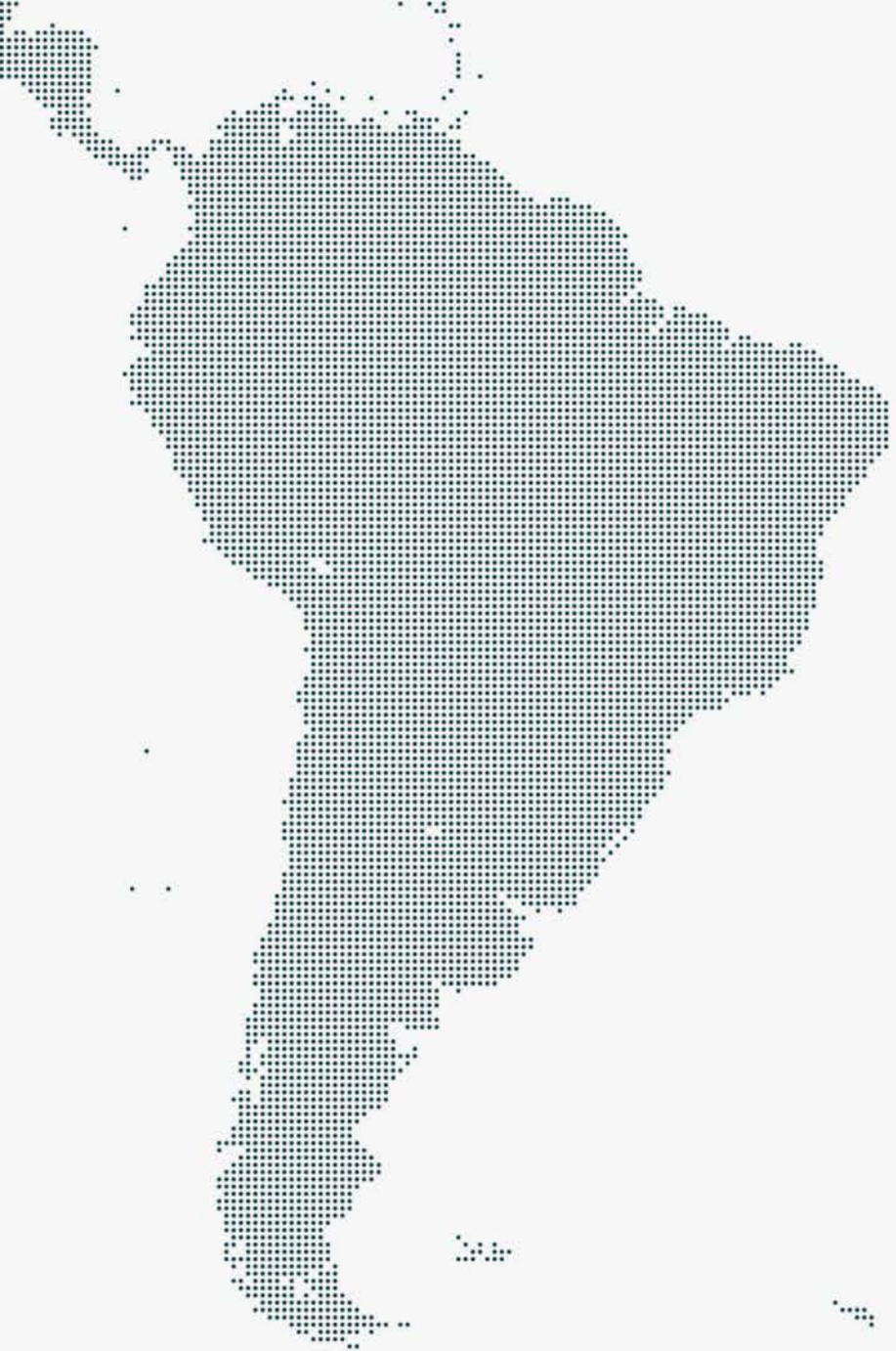
This is the newest addition to **Bird's** accessibility offerings. In July 2021, the company partnered with mobility scooter specialist **Scoot around** to offer electric wheelchairs for Bronx residents, who can reserve them on the Bird app, a programme that has since expanded to San Francisco and San Diego.

Source: MPO magazine, [Fast Company](#)



Early adopter, Eduardo Hernandez, 31, who lives near Yankee Stadium.





SOUTH AMERICA



South America

Diversity in management

As in the previous edition, diversity & inclusion roles were concentrated in São Paulo, Brazil, and many were at technology/online-only companies.

Some advertisements were not for specific roles but for talent banks at companies such as **Amazon** and **Carrefour**. These talent banks aim to contact diverse individuals for potential positions that arise. This helps make workforces more inclusive and helps to ensure that disabled individuals are not overlooked in the hiring process.



Danone
Diversity and Inclusion
Manager Jr. – São Paulo, Brazil
Posted in March 2022



Amazon Web Services
Disability Inclusion Leader –
São Paulo, Brazil Posted in
March 2022



Liberty Latin America
Senior Manager, Equality,
Diversity, and Inclusion –
Panama
Posted in March 2022



Amazon.com
Head of DEI, Prime Video
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion –
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Posted in April 2022



Emerson Electric Co.
Diversity and Inclusion
Coordinating Person– São Paulo,
Brazil
Posted in March 2022



Trustly
Diversity - Inclusion of People
with Disabilities – São Paulo,
Brazil
Posted in April 2022

GQ covers actor Juan Pablo Medina's adjustment to life as an amputee

GQ's article on adjusting to a new disability was an unprecedented success for the company, which now wants to do more to include disabled people's experience in their content.



The fashion and lifestyle industries influence people's ideas of what the world and its people look like. Using the pre-existing fame of an actor who has become disabled later in life helps bridge the gap between disabled people and non-disabled people by delving into the experience of someone who has experienced what it is like to be both.

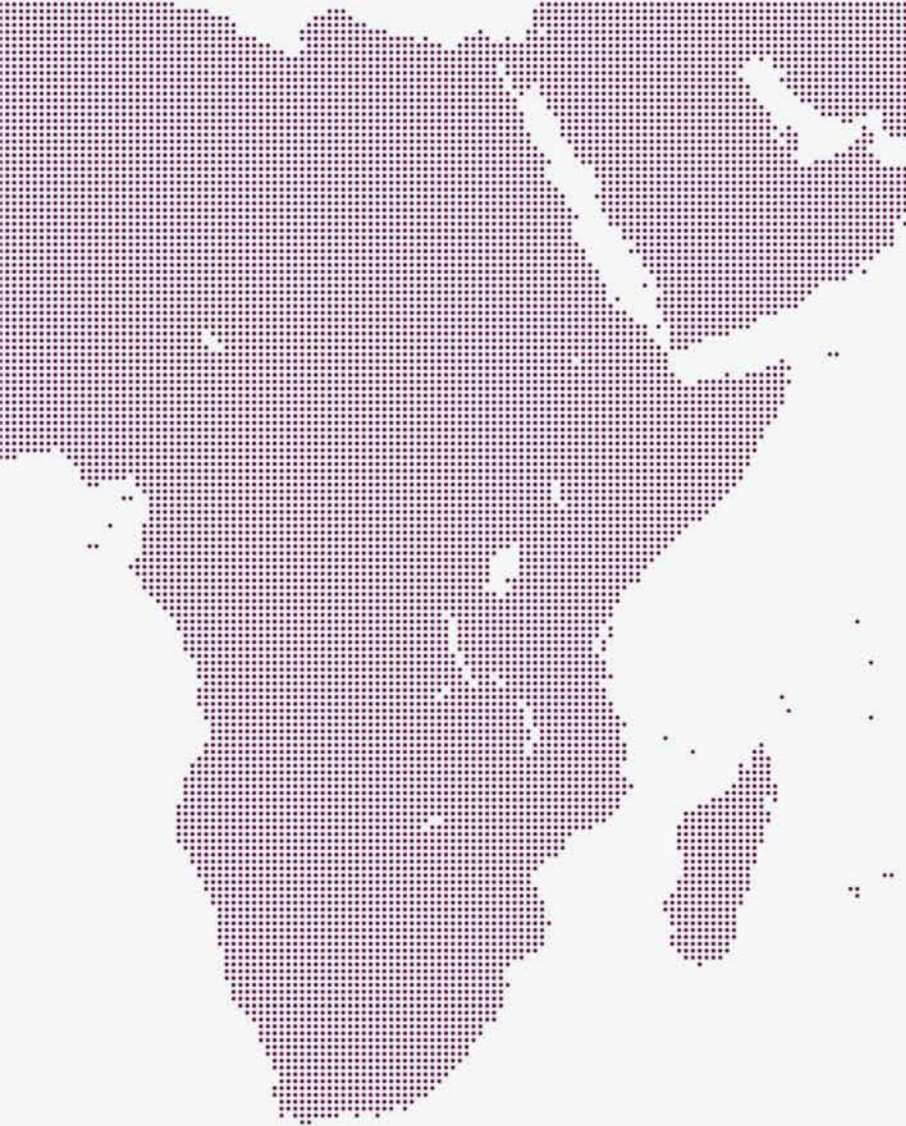
Medina's interview reached a vast 188K unique visitors with an average time of 23 minutes spent reading the article. The content had 305M impressions and 250K interactions on social media. The video had 691K views.

This article's success went beyond any internal expectations from **GQ** and serves as a reminder of the importance of representing disabled people in the lifestyle and fashion press.

”

It has been a long procedure, but I want to do much more and this requires time, dedication and patience. At the moment my recovery is going very well.

Juan Pablo Medina



MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA



Middle East and Africa

Diversity in management

There were more roles focused on gender inclusion in Africa than those focused on disability this quarter.

As found in previous quarters, there is a far smaller quantity of diversity and inclusion roles available in Africa compared to other continents. This will transpire into less inclusive work environments and products/services for people with disabilities.



Emirates Telecommunication Group Company

Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion – Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Posted in March 2022



Aldar Education LLC
Head of Inclusion – Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
Posted in March 2022



World Food Programme
Regional Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator – Gauteng, South Africa
Posted in March 2022



Vodafone Intelligent Solutions
Global D&I Lead – Cairo, Egypt
Posted in April 2022

Ooredoo Kuwait collaborates with Kuwait Sports Club for D/deaf people

Ooredoo Telecom, the first company to provide new digital services in Kuwait, partnered with the Kuwait Sports Club for D/deaf people to ensure they have equal opportunities to reach their full potential.



Source: Zawya

According to the Agreement, **Ooredoo** will improve the infrastructure of the **Kuwait Sports Club** for D/deaf people by providing communication solutions and network reinforcement devices to provide a quicker, more effective, and efficient internet to encompass all its workplaces.

This collaboration will help people with disabilities by providing them with more efficient educational opportunities based on the Internet. In addition, **Ooredoo** employees will receive sign language classes, which will help increase public awareness and allow them to communicate more easily with sign language speakers.



Sesame Workshop's new character uses a wheelchair and walking aids

The new character, Ameera, will soon make her debut on Ahlan Simsim, the version of Sesame Street that airs in the Middle East and North Africa.

The hit kids' show is set to finally include a character with a disability in its middle-eastern iteration, with the explicit intention of making sure no disabled children feel unrepresented or unseen when they watch the show.



Ameera is a really fun and cool girl. She loves sports, and she loves science, technology, engineering and math. We wanted to make sure that that is represented as well – that girls can go against the gender stereotypes and biases.

Deborah Marie Rodríguez García, Education Manager of Humanitarian Programmes at Sesame Workshop

The show only premiered in 2020. It was originally created to help child refugees from the Syrian civil war process their emotions and spread messages of hope and reconciliation.

Scott Cameron, Head of Production, has stated that the latest season will focus on 'kindness'. As well as the actual series, this new character will feature in educational content aimed at children worldwide who have been displaced by conflict. Existing content is currently being adapted for Ukrainian children displaced by the Russian Invasion of 2022.





CONCLUSION



Re-evaluating perceptions of neurodiversity

Businesses need to reassess perceptions and preconceived notions around the diversity of minds. Defining disabilities such as dyspraxia by positives as opposed to perceived negatives allows for greater opportunities for both employers and employees and ensures a more accurate representation of people who are neurodiverse.

Inclusion in the creation of new technologies

Concepts such as the metaverse are in their infancy and will be shaped by everyone who participates. Inclusion of disabled people in these new ventures is essential to making them truly inclusive and avoiding past mistakes where disabled people were included by retroactive changes, as opposed to being part of the design process.

Representation in fashion

Fashion brands must continue to improve their offering by collaborating with prominent figures with disabilities to market collections aimed at both disabled and non-disabled people. This will have the effect of bridging the divide that has historically existed within the fashion industry, and prevent the disabled community being viewed as a separate market.

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