
Miscellaneous

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Neurocatching

Submitted

November 15th, 2023

Approved

March 11th, 2024

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Communication & Society

ISSN 0214-0039

E ISSN 2386-7876

www.communication-society.com

2024 – Vol. 37(3)

pp. 91-106

How to cite this article:

Álvarez Villa, À., Femenía Almerich, S. & Ausin Azofra, J. M. (2024). The best advertising strategy to communicate about the Paralympic Games?,

Communication & Society, 37(3), 91-106.

<https://doi.org/10.15581/003.37.3.91-106>

The best advertising strategy to communicate about the Paralympic Games?

Abstract

This article presents the results of an integrative of the Most research to date on the media treatment of the Paralympic Games has used content analysis and the comparative method to determine whether people with disabilities are being discriminated against by the media. However, the need to investigate the effect of media communications on audiences has long been recognized. This study presents the results of a visual analysis of two advertising spots with very different discursive strategies, and of an experiment using neurological measurements with a sample of 40 subjects to assess the differences in positive emotion of the recipients related to each advertisement, taking the EEG frontal asymmetry as a measure of approach motivation. Our results found that the advertisement that *a priori* had more rhetorical resources to achieve positive emotion in a general population had an effect only on the subgroup of people with disabilities and, particularly, on those with disabilities who practice some form of sport.

Keywords

Advertising, engagement, Paralympic Games, narrative, eeg.

1. Introduction

The Paralympic Games are the most important sporting showcase for people with disabilities and, perhaps, the most important communication channel for the development of the social image of people with disabilities. For this reason the last decade has seen an increase in research focused on the Paralympic movement, in general (Mauerberg-DeCastro, Campbell & Tavares, 2016), and on

the media's coverage of sport featuring people with disabilities (Antunovic, 2022; Rager, 2020; Brittain, 2018; Gilbert & Schantz, 2012; Álvarez-Villa & Mercado-Sáez, 2015); this is considered to be of particular importance because of its specific influence on the integration processes of disabled people (Mataruna-Dos-Santos, 2018; Coates 2016; Beacom, 2016; Cheong, 2016; Purdue, 2013). Indeed, a field of social research has developed which has a specific focus on the analysis of media coverage of the Paralympic Games, which, above all, seeks to determine whether the media's treatment of this sporting event is quantitatively and qualitatively "appropriate" and whether, therefore, these athletes are being discriminated against on the grounds of their disability.

Most studies have used content analysis and the comparative method. For example, coverage of the Paralympic Games has been compared to that given to the Olympic Games (Bissell, 2022; De Almeida, Marchi Junior & Pike, 2014; Golden 2003), and the treatment of athletes with disabilities has been compared to that of their Olympic companions and that of male Paralympians (Jackson-Brown, 2020). In general, the strategy of these studies has been to draw inferences from comparative data about the differences between the groups and, consequently, establish if there is discrimination towards some of them.

However, the need to investigate the effects of communication on audiences in relation to the Paralympic Games has long been recognized (Craven, 2023; Leséléuc 2012). This approach emphasizes that it is important to study the media content around this issue and examine in depth the actual effects that it has on the recipients of informational and persuasive media products related to the Paralympic Games (Mitchell, 2021). That is, it is important to analyze the “results” or “effects” on the recipients of this product, for example, how they identify with Paralympic athletes, and their emotional reception processes (Bryant & Miron, 2002). This might also include the study of specific groups, linked, or not linked, to sport, such as, among others, people with disabilities.

The new discipline of neuromarketing can be helpful in achieving this objective (Guixeres *et al.*, 2017; Braidot 2013). In this technique subjects’ brain processes are analyzed to extract valuable information from the central nervous system, based on the sensory stimuli of advertisements, product tests or actual experiences with brands. Neuroscientific techniques obtain more accurate data about consumers’ reactions, which enables improvements to be made to products, their characteristics and acceptance, etc.

As a result of research into how the citizen-consumer thinks and behaves, it is possible to develop more precise and effective communication activities. This new discipline allows us to assess how the plot transmits the advertising message, with attractive storytelling that generates emotional involvement, that is, engagement.

Current research attempts to interpret subjects’ brain activity while they watch advertisements and to correlate it with measures of memory, attention and emotional engagement (Langleben *et al.*, 2009; Vechhiato *et al.*, 2010). The emotional processing of engagement can be calculated by measuring activity in specific brain structures linked to emotion processing in humans, such as the prefrontal cortex (PFC). It is well known that the role of the prefrontal cortex is linked to emotional engagement (Davidson, 2002). Experimental findings have suggested that the left prefrontal lobe is an important brain area in the neural circuit or circuit of positive emotions, while the right prefrontal lobe forms a component that is more a defensive retreat or negative emotion.

Thus, our aim is to investigate the modulation of the power spectral density (PSD) of the EEG rhythms in participants’ prefrontal areas as they watch advertisements featuring groups of Paralympians and non-Paralympians.

This article sets out the results of an experimental study whose objective is to measure precisely the effect of communication products produced by social agents; the products are designed to prompt a change in the societal perceptions of disability through non-stigmatizing social representations; and we try to identify what kind of narrative discourse might be most persuasive and effective in this context.

Advertising campaigns aim to cover an informational need (reporting), maintain a good level of notoriety (remember) and modify the prior perception of an event or product, that is, persuade (Kotler, 2003). In the context of a sporting event such as the Paralympic Games, the objective is to increase the visibility of the event itself, to convey the values associated with it and to pursue aims linked to the improvement of individuals and societies.

The present study is based on research into the effects of social communication in the environment of the Paralympic Games. This communication is an element of increasing predominance in the image formation of people with disabilities. The aim of our research is

to assess whether this image is producing the desired effects –greater engagement in the wider society– as well as to explore which elements of the advertising product might produce greater engagement.

The results of our research can help managers in the disability social communications field develop their messages more effectively; this might support them in achieving their objectives.

There has been a widely held view in recent years that the London Paralympics were a turning point in the field of communications in this macro-event, basically for two reasons. First, because of the involvement of Britain’s Channel 4 –a TV network with a commercial and creative approach– which acquired the broadcasting rights and used commercial communication criteria typical of most spectator sports. Second, because, according to some indicators, the channel’s business approach and communications strategy had the effect of changing viewers’ perceptions, in general, of people with disabilities, so that they developed a more positive assessment of this group than they previously held. In late 2012, for example, the BBC announced that, according to a survey conducted for the network by ComRes, three-quarters of Britons had a more positive view of people with disabilities after the Paralympic Games. Nearly 80% of non-disabled respondents said that their perception of disability had improved after the Games¹.

A key factor in the Channel 4 communication strategy was advertising. The channel followed this approach in their television coverage and treatment of the Rio Paralympic Games in 2016. The Channel 4 spot entitled “We’re the Superhumans” became, in fact, the symbol of that choice of narrative. According to the digital magazine *Campaign*: “Within weeks of its launch, ‘We’re the Superhumans’ became the second most shared Olympics’ themed advertisement of all time on social media, behind Procter and Gamble’s ‘Best job’ in 2012”. In addition, the magazine noted that among the results demonstrating the effectiveness of the piece, that the content broadcast by Channel 4 was seen by half of British society; in fact, the September 2016 audience rose by 50%. 40 million reactions were made on social media and shared more than 1.8 million times. The advertisement became the *trending topic* 10 minutes after its launch. The piece was used in Australia as part of the promotion of the Olympic Games and in the United States in discussions about disability at the United Nations.

Dan Brooke, Channel 4’s Director of Marketing, explained the evolution of the campaign²: “2012 was about strength and defiance, which fitted the job in 2012. Now we want to be warm and celebratory and that fits with the point in the journey the Paralympic movement is on, to be mainstream and inclusive.”

Following this logic, we consider that the discursive characteristics of this advertisement, its narrative elements, and the persuasive resources employed by its creators, produced a positive effect –greater engagement– in the audience. In other words, these resources could be used, hypothetically, to transform the perception and conception of disability in the general public.

To assess whether this communications proposition about the Paralympic Games is true, in general, and about elite athletes with disabilities in particular, this article takes two approaches: a) a content analysis of the Channel 4 spot (see <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/campaign-year-2016-channel-4-were-superhumans/1418721>) and of a spot using a very different discursive strategy (an advertisement entitled “Paralympic TV” (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuV13Qfm7tpo>), produced by the Spanish Paralympic Committee (CPE), an entity defined Public Utility that receives institutional support and is responsible for organizing, coordinating and supervising

¹ <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-20693024>

² Interview published in *The Guardian*, July 17, 2016. Retrieved from https://as.com/tikitakas/2016/07/17/portada/1468706851_527315.html

highly competitive sports practiced by people with disabilities at the national level). In this academic article, both spots were chosen to know what was doing in Spain and out. The international one, was notable and visible worldwide, and the national one, which allows us to know what and how it is communicated in Spain, both dealing with the topic of the Paralympic Games. These were analyzed in detail to observe their narrative and persuasive differences (the first lasts 3 minutes and 12 seconds, the second, 2 minutes and 53 seconds); and b) an experiment with neurological measurements in which the advertisements were shown to samples of people, with and without disabilities, who do or do not play sports, to assess the differences in engagement achieved by each advertisement.

The research questions in this study is which of the two spots analyzed generated the most positive emotion? And we have one hypothesis:

- H1. The “We’re the superhumans” ad, by containing more narrative and emotional elements, will generate greater positive emotion which will translate into a higher level of engagement.

To validate this hypothesis, is supported by a double methodology, one experimental and the other descriptive, with a qualitative part and a neuroscientific part (EEG). Firstly, we conducted a visual and content analysis of the two advertisements and secondly, we undertook an experiment to measure levels of prefrontal asymmetry, that we identify with that positive emotion.

2. Method

2.1. Visual analysis. Parts design

The log of analysis variables that were identified in this study was based on four elements:

1. *The base narrative structure* was analysed using the following elements:
 - Presentation mode: Simple, narrative, or mixed (Caballero 2015; Chiroque *et al.*, 2011).
 - Shot types: Foreground, general shot, group shot, close-up, American shot (Cruz & Requena 2013). The shots used for the analysis are: Foreground; General shot; an American shot, also known as a three-quarter shot, the Group shot, and the Detail shot.

2. Communications strategy:

This section identifies the communication objectives, based on attitude. They can be cognitive; affective/emotional; and behavioral (Blackwell 2002; Schiffmann 2005).

The type of strategy applied was observed, whether persuasive, collaborative or participatory.

3. Message structure:

In this section we focus on understanding the main messages transmitted, and whether they are purely rational, emotional, or mixed. We seek to examine which approach prevails, whether it is one of inoculation (sending messages to the recipient to allow him/her to develop counter arguments “to protect” him/her from damaging information transmitted about the sender), or two-sided (a message raising a partial weakness of the advertiser which it is then seen to resolve).

In the creative field we delve into the rational level of the message, the emotional dimension, and the collaboration and complicity of the viewer (Segura García, 2017).

We also examined the order of the arguments deployed, the types of conclusions, and the articulation of the visual and/or the verbal. In addition, we examined the arguments, the internal evidence, and the external evidence (Martin, 2007). We also assessed whether the focus of the message was task or ego orientated. In addition, we sought to identify the creative strategies employed, and examined the treatment of image and sound.

Finally, another aspect analyzed was the treatment of sound. In this sense, we identify whether or not music is a persuasive resource, and if so, its origin (van-Zummeren-Moreno & Haro-Almansa 2018). Similarly, we consider level of presence, that is, whether it is closer or further away (sound levels), and musical style (Sánchez 2014).

4. *The creative musical score* (uncertainty, inference and discovery):

This section covers aspects related to the narrative and creative design of the pieces, that is, the combined formula of scenes and shots to persuade the viewer to accept the message. The key is to surprise recipients with small stories about products, services or brands, within the stimuli saturation they encounter daily. Moliné (2000) noted that to highlight and make an advertisement effective, the producers need to understand how to structure it. To examine this, we compared the musical scores, in which notes (planes, in the case of a spot) are written that combine to achieve a coherent harmony, that is, a composition of planes that captures the interest to achieve the communication objectives of the producers.

Our brains are designed to forget, and everything that is not considered novel goes unnoticed (Braidot, 2013; Damasio, 2010). Therefore, when designing advertisements producers should be aware that they involve the same processes as attention, perception, emotion, memory and thought (Moliné 2014). Through creative advertising it is possible to create a state of uncertainty that arouses the individual's curiosity, which generates mental activity. The creator includes in the composition inferences that resolve uncertainty and flow into the discovery of the meaning.

2.2. *Experimental design*

2.2.1. Participants

A total of 40 participants were recruited, ranging from 18 to 42 years old, athletes and non-athletes, with and without disabilities:

- 10 athletes with disabilities
- 10 non-athletes with disabilities
- 10 athletes without disabilities
- 10 non-athletes without disabilities

2.2.2. Procedure

Before the experiment, each participant sat comfortably in an armchair for a few minutes. An electroencephalograph (EEG) was fitted during that time, and they were given guidelines for the experiment in which they were about to participate. A Vaseline-coated EEG receptor was used to take measurements; B-alert software was used.

To reproduce television content as close as possible to the real thing, the sample watched a 30-minute documentary containing two 5-minute ad breaks, one 7 minutes after the start, and another 7 minutes before the end. These breaks featured advertisements for perfumes, food, drinks, clothing, public service, and anti-animal abuse etc., each lasting 30 seconds, taken from www.youtube.com, and the two advertisements under study.

2.2.3. Recording of the physiological signals

The EEG results (measured by mental workload, distraction, drowsiness, and engagement) were recorded using wireless headphones (Channel 10 of the B-Alert X10 Advanced Brain Monitoring, Inc., USA). Measures were made of brain waves on 8 scalp sites, Fz, F3, F4, Cz, C4, POZ, P3 and P4, at a 256 Hz sampling rate. Foam with highly conductive electrodes was used with sensors on these sites to provide electrically conductive interfaces between the headset and the scalp. A pair of reference electrodes were placed behind the ears, just above the mastoid process of the temporal bone. The collected data were transmitted wirelessly to a

computer running Windows 7. The data transmission range was up to 10 meters, so the participants were able to move their hands freely.

The international location system 10-20 was used. After recording, the signal was decontaminated from artefacts caused by eye and muscle movements and flickering. The EEG baseline and channels corrupted by nearby channels were removed (Colomer *et al.*, 2016). Kurtosis was applied when erroneous data was found, and the signal was standardized on each electrode.

Next, to analyze the viewers' preferences, measurements of brain frontal asymmetry were carried out; thus, a comparison was made between the amplitude of the power in the alpha bands of the frontal right and left hemispheres. The calculation was done through a frequency-based analysis, applying the fast Fourier transform with a one second window (Berka *et al.*, 2014) in a segmented alpha frequency range from 8 to 13Hz; the formula below was used.

$$\text{Frontal asymmetry} = \log \log (f4_{\alpha}) - \log (f3_{\alpha})$$

3. Results

3.1. "We're the Superhumans" Spot. Visual analysis results

3.1.1. Description and Parts Design

At the beginning of the advertisement there is no explicit reference to who the advertiser is, or the title –"We're the superhumans"– of the advertisement. These are presented in the closing, or *backshot*, just before the name of one of the channel's sponsors, Allianz Insurance. The piece ends with the message: "Allianz Insurance, proud to support the Paralympics Games on 4."

The spot is characterized by a first scene which features a music group, the "Superhuman Band," people with disabilities performing on a stage. Next appear many more shots where athletes with disabilities are seen practicing different sports, such as high jump, football, weightlifting and archery, and dance. These are interspersed with shots of the daily life activities of people with disabilities: caring for a baby, refueling a vehicle, piloting a plane, brushing teeth. The band, led by vocalist Tony Dee, link the scenes by singing and repeating the key message of the spot: "Yes I can."

The base narrative structure is a composition of quick shots (around 55), featuring different characters, athletes and non-athletes, almost all of them with disabilities. The types of disability are shown via a close-up, foreground, or American shot. In addition, in the background, images are shown of people without disabilities: an employer, a nurse, spectators, family, etc. These are made up of a combination of different approaches and types of shots (group, foreground, close-up, American) that give much vitality and dynamism to the composition. They highlight details of the abilities and skills of the people performing the activities, not their disabilities, although where these exist, they are quite clear. This hooks the viewers who become curious to know the nature of the disabilities of the protagonists.

3.1.2. Communication Strategy

The communication objectives are affective and emotional, awareness raising with a very positive and cheerful demeanour towards people with disabilities. This is achieved by a combination of energetic and positive music and lyrics that encourages and motivates the characters to achieve their aims, as well as the viewer who can empathize with them. The characters that appear in the different scenes achieve success in some cases, in others they compete without any clear result. Of the 140 athletes who feature in the audio-visual piece, seventeen look at the camera and speak to the viewers, usually with the tag: "Yes, I can." The scenes chosen, their arrangement and the words expressed, suggest that the message seeks to appeal to the viewers' feelings.

The advertisement was preceded by the spot created by the network in 2012, entitled “Meet the Superhumans,” which sought to raise awareness and educate about the normality of disability. On this occasion, the message was reinforced with a persuasive strategy.

3.1.3. Message structure

The emotional message employed goes beyond the sporting aspect. It is a proof and a vindication of the talent and potential of the advertisement’s protagonists. Many of them show they can do extraordinary things, while others are shown going about their ordinary daily home activities, in the most private, anonymous, and individual aspects of their lives. The cry “Yes, I can” aims to explain to society that disability is not an impediment to these people, who can perform jobs and take responsibility. They can. They have no limits that prevent them.

In minute 2’12” of the spot a school careers’ master is seen advising a schoolboy in a wheelchair that he cannot do a particular job. At this point a plot twist shows the reality of the work life of people with disabilities. It is here that the viewer is prompted to reflect, through the message, on the plot’s two-sided approach: the first part is built on achievements, and then a single scene marks a rupture in the narrative, and then there is reinforcement of the message about abilities and the potential to achieve personal goals. The argument line is coordinated with the song lyrics, illustrating the meaning of the story, without being descriptive. It is an optimistic song, going from “It’s possible,” to “No to no.” It is a motivational call against the negative “No to the job,” repetitively counterpointed with “Yes I can.”

The conclusion is easily understood by the viewer interpreting the scenes, who must be involved to connect the initial 22 seconds of the music played by the band (made up of disabled people) with the Paralympic Games, and with people with disabilities. This is achieved by the combination of, and the complementary nature of, the visual and the verbal (song lyrics), and by the simplicity of the arguments. The protagonists, all of them people with disabilities, are credible because they are shown performing activities. Their efforts are shown to be individual acts, that is, with ego orientation and extrinsic motivation, not task orientated or based on intrinsic motivation. This links them to a social, sporting identity in which the athlete seeks to prove that (s)he is the best.

The structure of the spot is also linked to creative paths: the piece combines implicit testimonials (they do not make clear or explain the work, it is shown) and slices of life in locations where the athletes train or compete, and in their homes and public spaces (petrol stations, garages, streets, etc.). All this appeals to the viewer to join in the song or motto of the spot: Yes, I can. This, added to the singer in the foreground addressing the camera, speaking to the viewers and, from minute 1’42” to 2’18”, where the protagonists say “Yes, I can,” hooks us, like a hymn, to reinforce memorability.

As for the advertisements’ persuasive resources, from the point of view of the source, besides being credible because they show what the athletes can do, they feature well-known professionals, expert in their own sports, for example, the British athlete H. Cockcroft and the American M. Stutzman. Through the piece, the viewer feels connected to people with disabilities through attitudinal similarity, by the “Don’t give up” and the “It’s always possible.” A highlight of the spot is the combination of natural and artificial lighting, and the use of color and black and white, which hooks the brain onto these changes until the end of the message.

The images are realistic, with a miscellany of cinematically produced sounds (cries of support in the stadiums, applause, a car skidding, festive explosions that form part of the musical show, etc.).

The soundtrack has a leading role throughout the piece. It drives the rhythm of the message, using a swing musical style. The melody, the tone and lyrics –“Are you ready? I can climb Everest, Yes I can, I can fight here all night and never rest, Yes I can, I was just born today I can go all the way, Yes I can”– are a call to arms, to overcome, to the can do. As the soundtrack, a cheerful, lively, quick rhythm, says: “Yes, I can.” Although we belong to different

cultural contexts the message is understood. We can say that, in this case, the pre-existing music, has a very prominent role and acts as a mnemonic resource accompanying each sequence, unifying the images and giving meaning to the whole piece. There is no verbal discourse to replace the common cry of all the characters: “Yes, I Can.”

3.1.4. Creative score

The piece contains different inflection points which the viewer is encouraged to link, through a logical process, to make sense of the whole shot. The first is in the initial 22 seconds when the Superhuman Band appears on stage; through short shots, close-ups and group shots we discover that all the band members have a disability, and thus we deduce that this is a campaign by some institution focused on this segment of the population. We are surprised by a special effect: the singer leaves the performance stage and joins in with a group of runners with disabilities who are competing or training in the open. Thus, there is a series of sequences where the common thread between the characters is the singer and/or band members watching athletes with disabilities. These fast, surprising images do not allow us to process clearly what is behind the singer and the group of athletes or non-athletes. We look for elements that will help us to understand. The piece has us processing, thinking, trying to discover. After 28 seconds, the action moves from an outdoor to an indoor shot, with a person posing in a chroma key screen, as if they are being photographed. In the 30th second one of the athletes leaves the shot via a sequence that leads to an Olympic stadium.

We have discovered that these are athletes with disabilities, but something is unsettling our curious minds, the quick shot of the band in the stadium shows that it is singing for us, not for the competitors. The mind wants to know what happens to the people who are appearing, so attention is maintained. And this time, instead of showing an athlete, the shot shows a young woman with disabilities employed in an office, a girl at home eating at a table, and a mother with her baby in their home living room, interspersed with shots of an archer, and a rally driver, both with a disability, then returns to the band in the middle of a scene with a pirouetting rally car; the driver uses his feet to turn the wheel as he has no arms. The action then returns to the interior of a classic room where people with functional diversity are dancing. In a snowball effect the sequences are linked with inferences and discoveries that hold our attention up to the final shot, which signs off with the message: “We’re the Superhumans.” The piece has a very balanced creative score which, despite its duration –3 minutes– manages to keep us intrigued until the great final discovery: the Paralympic Games, accompanied by a positive social message. Thus, we argue that this is a narrative formula that seeks to create suspense in the viewer, combining sports and real-life scenes in what appears to be a video clip or musical show.

3.2. “Paralympics TV” Spot. Visual analysis results

3.2.1. Design and Description

The first image identifies the spot promoter. The piece starts with a close-up of the advertiser (Spanish Paralympic Committee, CPE), and a succession of images of athletes training hard under the motivation and pressure of their coaches (from second 5 to 47). The different angles alternate and focus the attention on the coach and the training that the athletes are carrying out (table tennis, swimming, classroom sessions, gym, weight training, horse riding, football, etc.) to the achievement of the results of their efforts at 1 minute 36 seconds (end of the race, during the trials, in the competition arena or field, raising the Spanish flag, scoring a basket, celebrating successful actions, the satisfied faces of the protagonists interspersed with images of symbols of Brazil and of triumph, such as medals). The advertisement closes with the corporate visual identity of the Spanish Paralympics Committee and shots of the sponsors’ logos.

The main mode of expression is narrative. Different types of shot are used, mostly group (36.9%) and close-ups (39.7%) of coaches and some of the protagonists concentrating before their competition or celebrating the results of their hard training.

There is a combined series of brief shots of different duration. The spot begins by presenting the advertiser (5"), then a shot of a weightlifter with a disability (2"), a female athlete with a disability with her trainer (3") encouraging her to work hard, a blind female swimmer (5") in different shots (foreground, American shot, group) etc.; this sequence is so fast that we might say that the athlete's disability goes unnoticed.

3.2.2. Communication strategy

The objective of the persuasive communication strategy is to make the work and achievements of these athletes more widely known to society. The audio-visual piece brings us closer to the work of the Spanish Paralympic Committee. Thus, the persuasive composition shows the viewer the work of the coaches as well as the effort of the athletes. The spot thus deploys the tactic of focusing on the athletes' intrinsic motivations –it reinforces their real identities as opposed to how they are perceived by the wider society.

In the words of Luis Leardy, CPE Director of Communication and External Relations, discussing the 2016 Paralympic Games communication campaign:

We proposed a video-spot with a succession of spectacular, striking, powerful images that conveyed the variety of sports, in which the disability can clearly be seen as a differential element of Paralympic sport, using some of our more recognizable "stars." [...] We wanted to convey effort, eagerness for improvement, success, recognition of great sporting exploits³.

3.2.3. Message structure

The piece structures its message in 2 parts. The first part of the message is direct and rational, showing that the effort and dedication of the coaches and athletes is rewarded; the second part takes a more emotional approach.

The first section lasts until 1' 35'. The verbal communications of the trainers-characters have significant predominance over the other sounds, such as the epic instrumental background music. In turn, this is subdivided based on whether the coaches are verbally communicating (from second 5 to 48, and from 1.31 to 1.35) or not (from 48 to 1.31). And from one minute 36 seconds there are no verbalized motivational messages, and the music becomes more emotional and prominent, and there are changes to the way the images are recorded and displayed.

The narrative formulas used in the first part have the appearance of documentaries or news programs. Everything is very real, believable, the source being attractive, because of attitudinal similarity (for the effort), and figurative (who would not want to be the protagonist on the podium?). Finally, the creative path used is that of demonstration (teacher/coach and student/famous athlete, or not, during training sessions).

The use of symbols, such as the Spanish flag, the act of biting the winner's medal, listening to the national anthem... can be categorized as resources that seek to appeal to the feelings of Spaniards and let them share in the satisfaction of a national representative's success. All the images are in color, with different lighting, and with a prop directly linked to the sporting discipline shown.

³José Solves, member of GIDYC, Grupo de Investigación en Comunicación y Discapacidad from UCH-CEU, interview with Luis Leardy, Director of Communication and External Relations at the Spanish Paralympic Committee (December 14, 2022). As Leardy noted, the Madrid metro offered to put a spot on its video channel (shown on platforms and trains) in the summer months of 2016 prior to the Paralympics. The asked only that it last 40 seconds. Thus, a video-spot was suggested to raise awareness among metro travelers of Paralympic sport and the Spanish team that was to participate in the Rio games.

In the treatment of the images the real sounds stand out; in the first part, the coaches cheering on their pupils to motivate them, and the spectators applauding the triumph of the Spanish athlete on the podium (2'10'). The second part features a series of shots of athletes with their medals. The music, now instrumental and epic, does not have as prominent a role as in the first part, but reinforces the sentiment, and strengthens the images.

3.2.4. The creative score

As we pointed out at the beginning of the analysis of this advertisement, the identification of the sponsoring body at its outset leaves little to the viewer's imagination, if (s)he knows what the Spanish Paralympic Committee is and does. The opening with the word "Paralympics" prepares us for what we will see in the following shots.

The scenes analyzed show us that the composition is made up of identical shots (athletes training, with disabilities more evident in some than in others) that try to raise doubts in the viewer, with messages of encouragement from the coaches. This formula continues up to shot 55. From 55 to 66 there is a sequence of images of symbols of Brazil, sailing boats competing on the high seas, and of athletes in competition. At shot 66 there is an image of a Spanish athlete with the flag of Spain celebrating towards the stands, and that is the discovery point: images of disabled athletes competing, and their achievements, are shown, (shots 69, 78...).

The creative formula used in the piece is not particularly logical because it is possible to guess what is going to be shown next, which can lower the viewer's interest and cause him/her to pay less attention as his/her assumptions come to pass. On the other hand, the second part is a musical score composed of quick shots of the performance of various sports. By being different, by taking a different approach, by interspersing emblematic images of Brazil, the advertisement might maintain the viewer's attention. But simply frequently repeating the creative formula decreases interest through fatigue or boredom. There are no surprising, different resources that break the dynamic. Thus, in this second part, although there is more emotional color, there are no guarantees –at high rates– of viewer engagement.

3.3. Experimental test results

The normality of the data extracted from the measurements of the participants' brain activity was analyzed through the Kolmogorov test, using an ANOVA.

For H₁, the advertisement "We are the Superhumans" generated a higher level of *emotional engagement*, but only among the group of sporting participants with disabilities ($p < 0.01$). The engagement metric shows a result of 0.002 for the Spanish spot and 0.006 for the British spot. So, H₁ is accepted, but only for this part of the sample. Our results showed a higher level of asymmetry among the sporting participants with disabilities for the Channel 4 advertisement (0,030) versus Paralympic Tv spot (0,026). Thus, athletes with disabilities feel closer to this advertisement than non-disabled athletes.

Thus, our experimental study showed that the Channel 4 advertisement achieves greater engagement (greater emotional connection, is more appealing and effective and, therefore, it rises above advertising saturation) only among athletes with disabilities, while its message produced a higher level of asymmetry (more motivating) for people with disabilities, whether or not they are athletes.

4. Discussion and conclusion

In research on the effects of advertising, a question arises that has often been neglected or insufficiently addressed: how does advertising contribute to awareness of social problems? In this sense, the analysis of the appropriate resources, styles, and approaches to communicate social problems responsibly and effectively becomes a challenge in this field of communication. In the context of social advertising, it is essential to examine the mechanisms to capture

the initial attention of the public and generate the complicity necessary to transmit the message (Storey, 2011).

The study of audiovisual narrative applied to advertising involves knowing the structural, formal and narrative elements that have contributed to the positioning of the brand. Brands are committed to storytelling, to tell stories to get closer to their audiences, and storytelling contributes to engagement (Segarra-Saavedra *et al.*, 2016).

If we look at the results of the comparative analysis between the narrative structures of both pieces, there are significant differences. One of the first is the focus on advertiser identification. The “We’re the Superhumans” does not signpost the advertiser, while the Paralympic TV advertisement does. In the Channel 4 advertisement the protagonists, people with disabilities, are mostly athletes, but it also shows people with disabilities who are not athletes. This unbalanced combination generates uncertainty and a desire to discover the outcome in the viewers, so they are more likely to be hooked until the end. In compositions where the recipient has to solve mental puzzles, the message is more likely to get through, and be remembered because of the high-intensity thinking needed to understand it.

“We’re the Superhumans” clearly shows the type of disabilities present. The shots do not dwell on the disabilities, but neither are they hidden, they are shown as normal. In the CPE Paralympics TV advertisement, they are not always noticeable, their presence is treated more subtly. They are not hidden, but they are not highlighted. In “Superhuman” the characters are people with disabilities, athletes, and non-athletes, famous or not, which is a more universal message; in the Paralympics TV advertisement the focus is exclusively on athletes with disabilities, famous or otherwise.

In addition, work and effort are shown in both pieces, but from different angles. In “Superhumans” training is seen as a challenge, while in the Paralympics TV advertisement it is seen as an effort supported by others (trainers and teammates). The message in “Superhumans” is motivational, positive, and self-focused: I can. In the Paralympics piece the emphasis is on third-party motivational support. Increasingly, there is a commitment to humanize the relationship with consumers so that they have an experience that marks them (PWC, 2012).

A good brand experience is a priority and is based on it offering extra values that are perceived by consumers as an added plus, which would consequently generate a greater connection with the brand, customer engagement (Harris Interactive, 2012). Thus, “Superhumans” sends an indirect emotional message, which appeals to the viewer’s feelings and self-esteem; rapid, surprising shots in different scenes encourage him/her to deduce the underlying message, what is essential to increase brand value (Csikszentmihalyi, 2005), but there are more formulas and resources.

This contrasts with the first part of the Paralympics advertisement, which is direct and rational, and highlights the effort and previous work carried out, and which orients the viewer towards the more emotional and direct approach of its second part (if there is hard work and effort, there is the more intangible reward of success). So, there are two distinct strategies, the persuasive-informative of the CPE and the affective-emotional of Channel 4; the first is more explicit and the second uses suspense.

Similarly, both pieces use music as a persuasive resource, but again taking different approaches. “We’re the Superhumans” uses lyrics to transmit its message and the Paralympics TV advertisement uses instrumental music. In the first case the music plays a prominent role, is a protagonist and appeals to feelings. “Superhumans” is adapted from a Sammy Davis Jr song, which was a musical “hit” in Britain. The piece shows an integration between music, sounds and image. In the Paralympic TV spot, the instrumental music begins as background, and moves into the foreground mid-advertisement. Its reiteration of the same “musical note” on the score renders the melody monotonous. The instrumental music in the first half provides background to the coaches’ messages of encouragement; it is only in the second part, when the intensity of the music changes, that it takes on a more prominent role. Thus, in the

case of the Paralympics TV advertisement, the music is only integrated with the image in the second part.

On the other hand, it is the differentiation of the message –if it delivers real value at argumentative and executive levels– that ensures its effectiveness (León, 1996). Channel 4's "Superhumans" piece is different, novel and narrative in a social campaign. Thus, in creative advertising messages, perception is influenced by factors such as originality, elaboration, aesthetics, and opacity.

Considering the content analysis in the light of theories about sporting identity and motivation, it can be observed that both proposals are different. Channel 4 highlights the idea of the spectacular and the athletes' superhero status in relation to their social identity; this reinforces the perception of the athletes with disabilities by focusing on how others see them, that is, their perception by the wider society as true sportsmen/women. The CPE spot focuses on the two-fold aspect, effort = triumph, and shows the athlete with disabilities as his/her own self-reference point, which links actual identity to social identity.

In addition, the Channel 4 advertisement endorses the ego-orientated athlete, extrinsically motivated, and a competition model taken from the sporting model of athletes without disabilities who seek to be champions. On the other hand, the CPE spot opens the door to a task-orientated or intrinsically motivated model, which can be more inclusive and have a higher impact on the sporting activities of people with disabilities.

Thus, the two spots represent two models of an advertising narrative that portrays different motivational aspects, one ego orientated, and one task orientated, one with intrinsic motivation and one with extrinsic, one based on social identity, one based on self-identification.

The Channel 4 spot generated more hook, albeit only with the sample group of athletes with disabilities, by expressing an extrinsic, ego-orientated social sporting identity and using more creative and spectacular narrative resources linked to emotion. However, this Channel 4 strategy did not work with the other sample groups.

The model endorsed by Channel 4 focuses on sporting competence, and the other on the culture of effort. The CPE should work on its communication strategies to improve the public's level of engagement with its spots, which will involve exploring different narrative formulas and approaches to sporting identity in the plots.

This study used an experimental design of social sporting identity advertisements with neurophysiological measures to explain the effects of advertisements on their viewers. In conducting this study, we have tried to capture the users' unconscious and emotional responses to different types of visual stimuli.

The results suggest that, at a cerebral level, the motivational content oriented to the socio-sports identity that can be seen in the Super Human spot on Channel 4 works better, generating more emotional commitment with a more differentiated message; However, in view of the results of the study, this is only achieved with one of the four groups studied, that of athletes with disabilities, so future research would need to investigate why this premise is only met in one of the four groups studied. Furthermore, we observed a reduction in cognitive load and an increase in asymmetry, these being very reliable indicators to identify which strategy generates greater advertising effectiveness, through which greater attention to the Paralympic Games is achieved.

In the Paralympic Games campaign for the edition held in Tokyo 2020, Channel 4, once again uses the same communication strategy (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OjIP9EFbcWY>) where focuses on the concept of "superhumans" –started in 2016– to attract the audience to its coverage of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, using the emotional narrative and the resources described in the analysis before and incorporating new elements such as humor in order to help overcome resistance to the persuasive message in the recipient and improve positive association with the brand

(Strick *et al.*, 2012) and increase recognition, memorability and willingness to purchase (Cifuentes & Sánchez, 2006). On the other hand, the Spanish Paralympic Committee changes its communication strategy with respect to the piece analyzed in this work and presents in 2023, to generate visibility around the Paralympic Games in Paris 2024, a video (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Bk-uzKll3k>) in which, making a simile with the meteorological news, warns that, between August 28 and September 8, there will be a “rain of medals” in our country, highlighting the presence of a succession of archive images of the participation in professional competitions of athletes with disability. An informative message that appeals to the success of what is to come.

The study confirms that the greater the integration of emotional narrative elements in the storytelling of the advertising piece, the capacity to provoke commitment increases. Information gathering, visual scanning, sustained attention and activation levels are increased, which means greater engagement.

It can be said that this work sheds light on the field of advertising, specifically in social advertising, and provides information of interest so that effective communication strategies can be used, but we must investigate what brands need to change so that the message appeals to society (people with disabilities or not, interested in sports or not) so that the idea transmitted resonates with them.

Grant Ref. PID2021-124969NB-I00 funded by MCIN/AEI/ 10.13039/501100011033 and by “ERDF A way of making Europe.”

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