

INSPIRATIONAL AND WORTHY OF CHARITY: (MIS)REPRESENTATIONS OF DISABILITY IN SPORT MEDIA

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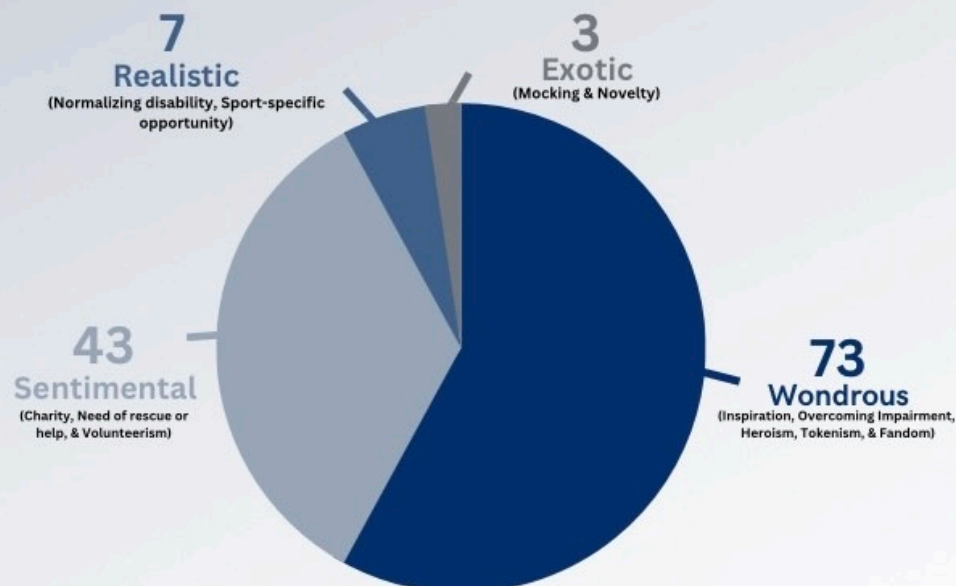
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THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY WAS TO EXPLORE THE ONLINE REPRESENTATION OF DISABILITY BY A MAJOR SPORTS MEDIA COMPANY (SMC).

This study explored how one United States-based sports media company (SMC) represents disability through its Twitter account. A directed content analysis approach was utilized to analyze the tweets of the SMC for the calendar year 2019. Of the 6,080 tweets that were reviewed, only 126 were deemed to represent disabled athletes or individuals.

These 126 tweets were then coded into one of 4 categories of disability portrayal:



This study provided significant insight into the various ways disabled individuals and athletes were represented, in part by revealing that only 43 of the 126 tweets (34.1%) represented disabled individuals as sport participants, while approximately two-thirds of representation relegated disabled individuals to spectator or other non-athlete roles, thus reinforcing stigma and bias against disabled individuals as incapable of becoming sporting individuals.

By drawing attention to these inequities, we may be able to promote change and provide more equitable opportunities for disabled athletes as sports journalism is cemented in digital platforms.

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