



# Empowering Persons with Disabilities in the Fashion Industry: A Case Study of Layak Indonesia's Inclusive Branding Strategy

**1 Ade Indriani Siagian\*, 2 Naurah Lisnarini, 3 Maudy Rizkiana**

<sup>1</sup> Master of Communication, Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta, 12450, Indonesia

<sup>2,3</sup> Communication Studies, Universitas Padjadjaran, 45363, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup> [adesiagian@upnvj.ac.id](mailto:adesiagian@upnvj.ac.id)\*; <sup>2</sup> [naurah@unpad.ac.id](mailto:naurah@unpad.ac.id); <sup>3</sup> [maudyrizkiana@gmail.com](mailto:maudyrizkiana@gmail.com)

\*Correspondent email author: [adesiagian@upnvj.ac.id](mailto:adesiagian@upnvj.ac.id)

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history

Received 2025-10-24

Revised 2025-12-23

Accepted 2025-12-26

### Keywords

Disability;  
Empowerment;  
Inclusive branding;  
Persons with disabilities.

## ABSTRACT

The fashion industry often relies on tokenism or “pity narratives” when representing persons with disabilities, which limits their potential and perpetuates marginalization. This qualitative study addresses this critical gap by analyzing the strategy of Layak Indonesia, a local fashion brand that places the empowerment of persons with disabilities at the core of its mission, thereby challenging conventional industry norms. This research contributes by offering an empirical model of authentic and holistic inclusive branding within the Southeast Asian context, moving beyond purely theoretical discussions of social justice and woke-washing. Guided by a constructivist paradigm and employing a case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with the founder and talents of Layak Indonesia, complemented by observational analysis of documents and media narratives. Data analysis utilized Categorical Aggregation, as proposed by Stake, which involves the systematic collection of events to interpret and construct meaning. The findings reveal that Layak Indonesia implements a holistic and structural strategy by prioritizing persons with disabilities as operational staff and creative partners, while explicitly rejecting the inspiration porn narrative. This approach effectively reframes disability identity in the public sphere, transforming individuals from objects of sympathy into professional, creative, and empowered subjects. As a result, the strategy contributes to increased self-confidence and expanded career opportunities for persons with disabilities. However, the study also identifies a significant “say-do gap” among consumers, wherein high levels of brand awareness and moral support do not consistently translate into purchasing behavior, largely due to price sensitivity and competition related to product quality. In conclusion, Layak Indonesia’s model provides a robust framework for authentic brand activism. Nevertheless, its long-term sustainability depends on the ability to balance strong social values with competitive business strategies within the highly demanding fashion market.

This is an open access article under the [CC-BY-SA](#) license.



## 1. Introduction

Layak Indonesia, a local fashion brand based in Jakarta, Indonesia aims to be an inclusive brand for everyone, including persons with disabilities. Layak Indonesia is not just a clothing brand but has the mission to promote equality and empowerment of disabilities. Layak Indonesia is



committed to supporting persons with disabilities through collaboration by providing spaces that foster self-confidence and enable individuals to discover and develop their talents (Machmud & Noer, 2025).

The presentation of persons with disabilities in the media and advertising in Indonesia remains a crucial issue that requires serious attention. Previous research shows that the media tends to illustrate them as figures who deserve pity (Halim, 2021). Also objects of empathy as a "pity narrative" (Basana & Sidabutar, 2025). This biased representation not only further marginalizes persons with disabilities, but also limits their opportunities to demonstrate their potential in various fields. This vulnerability even leads to exploitation, where disability is often used as a unique "selling point" for commercial interests (Goethals et al., 2022). Some brands even use models with disabilities as a form of inspiration porn, that is portrayal of persons with disabilities designed to inspire non-disabled peoples rather than to promote equality, genuine empowerment, or meaningful inclusivity (Anisa, 2025; Santoso et al., 2025).

This lack of representation and empowerment leads to broader social exclusion, reinforces discrimination, lowers the self-confidence of persons with disabilities and creates inequality of chance in social and economic spheres (Afrilie et al., 2025; Basana & Sidabutar, 2025). As a result, public often perceives them as a group incapable of making meaningful contributions, which further reinforces inequality (Södergren & Vallström, 2024). Empowering representation requires brands and organizations to abandon tokenism, which refers to the practice of creating an appearance of inclusivity and equality. By involving a limited number of individuals from marginalized groups without addressing underlying structures of discrimination, and instead adopt inclusive strategies that foreground the skills, achievements and contributions of diverse persons with disabilities in society (Panarese et al., 2025; Qureshi et al., 2025).

The media plays a strategic role in shaping public perceptions of social issues, including views on disabilities. Inclusive campaigns such as those carried out by Layak Indonesia's instagram account in Fig. 1, provide prospects for disabilities to appear not only as consumers, but also as representatives of beauty, creativity, and potential in the fashion world. This step helps broaden the narrative about their abilities and break stereotypes that have been a major barrier to inclusivity (Shuman & Caldeira, 2024). Inclusive campaigns in the media have great potential to change the way public views persons with disabilities (E. Kramer et al., 2024).



Fig. 1. Portrait of Layak Official Model on Instagram

The Instagram account (@layakofficial) serves as the primary front-line visual communication channel. Content on this platform consistently features persons with disabilities as professional models for fashion products. However, amid the success of building high awareness, a challenge arises that the commercial objectives of this brand are susceptible to misinterpretation. Marketing, as a complex process, encompasses various strategies to promote products or services to consumers (Debusscher, 2025; Malli et al., 2025). Traditionally, marketing often focuses on market segmentation to target specific consumer groups based on demographics or preferences (Toorn, 2024). The goal is to build sustainable relationships between brands and consumers through measurable and planned strategies (Ijomah et al., 2024).

In recent years, the concept of inclusive marketing has gained greater attention in response to the need for diversity and representation (Kim, 2024; Malli et al., 2025). Inclusive marketing goes beyond demographic segmentation; it aims to create campaigns that reflect the lives and experiences of diverse individuals, including those from marginalized communities such as persons with disabilities. This shift reflects a social trend in which consumers increasingly seek authentic and diverse representation in advertising (Verbytska et al., 2023).

Several strategies have been identified as effective measures in inclusive marketing, including creating a unified brand identity, prioritizing accessibility, and developing campaigns related to social issues (Hwang & Roulstone, 2022). Social issue-based marketing campaigns, such as inclusivity can increase consumer engagement (Deng et al., 2024). Layak Indonesia's strategy, particularly through its "Style for Awareness" concept and its emphasis on empowerment as a core social issue explicitly reflects and implements these principles of inclusive marketing.

Inclusive branding is the process of designing products and services that serve a diverse range of consumers regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, and social identity. This means that inclusivity in branding is an approach that prioritizes diversity and equality in building a brand image. Inclusivity is adopted in order to remain competitive in an increasingly creative market, especially since with an inclusive branding approach, brands tend to have stronger appeal (Venkatesan et al., 2025). This strategy not only serves to expand the audience reach also ensures that groups that are often underrepresented. For example persons with disabilities have a place in various industries, including fashion (Hwang & Roulstone, 2022). Inclusive branding is not just part of a marketing strategy but also reflects a brand's commitment to broader social values (Deng et al., 2024).

This approach is in line with the concept of empowerment in branding where a brand not only presents certain groups as part of their campaign in addition to provide real possibilities for them to thrive in the industry (Mokodompit & Fardiansyah, 2023). Therefore, it is essential to examine how Layak Indonesia acts as a platform for disabilities in the fashion industry and its social and economic impact.

This study is based on the Theory of Inclusivity in Branding, which explains how a brand can build its identity through diversity and the active involvement of various social groups (Verbytska et al., 2023). This theory highlights that today's consumers increasingly value authentic representation in the brands they support, so that inclusivity can be a significant competitive advantage. Furthermore, previous research shows that the involvement of marginalized groups in brand campaigns and operations can increase customer loyalty and strengthen the brand's positive image (Hwang & Roulstone, 2022).

Inclusive representation is not just a trend, it is also a strategic step in building a more sustainable business ecosystem. Empowering person with disabilities in this industry can have a wide-ranging impact, from increasing employment opportunities to changing public perceptions of

their abilities in the professional world (Goddard et al., 2024). On the other hand, by making disability their brand model, these brands have shown that they have uniqueness (Foster & Pettinicchio, 2022) and luxury (Das et al., 2021).

Layak Indonesia, a local fashion brand, emerges as an interesting and contrasting case study. Layak Indonesia aims to be an inclusive brand for everyone, including persons with disabilities and has a mission that promotes equality and empowerment. Layak Indonesia consistently highlights disabilities as professional, charming and skilled talents, focusing on their skills and achievements in the fashion industry. Based on others research findings on vulnerability to exploitation (Goethals et al., 2022) and inspiration porn practices (Setyowati et al., 2020). It is crucial to analyze in depth the model implemented by Layak. Although studies have focused on criticism of biased representation, a comprehensive analysis of local brands that consistently apply authentic inclusivity from upstream to downstream (from internal employment to brand narrative) in the context of Indonesian culture is still rare. This study provides the first empirical model of inclusive branding by a local fashion brand.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the inclusive branding strategies implemented by Layak Indonesia in building a brand image that empowers persons with disabilities; as well as analyzing the impact of these strategies on persons with disabilities, including increased self-confidence and professional opportunities and their implications for changing public perceptions and the fashion industry as a whole.

## 2. Method

In observing this phenomenon, researchers used a constructivist paradigm. According to Creswell the constructivist paradigm is a paradigm that has a different worldview, where researchers can believe that the world can be understood through individual subjective experiences that are then understood through senses and directed at certain objects. Sense here is often formed within the individual, through a series of complex and diverse ways. Therefore, researchers need to understand this meaning and categorize it into several categories and ideas. Then, in this study, researchers used a qualitative approach.

Essentially, qualitative research falls within the constructivist paradigm, an approach that utilizes holistic explanations. Holistic explanations, in this context, mean that researchers develop a picture of complex phenomena by incorporating multiple perspectives, identifying the various factors involved, and generally depicting the bigger picture that is likely to emerge. Through this approach, researchers play a central role and serve as key instruments, reviewing documents, conducting observations, and interviewing participants. To gain a deeper understanding of Layak Indonesia's inclusive branding, researchers employed a case study method.

Case studies are commonly used as a method. However, to ensure the stages in this method align with the research objectives, researchers use the stages outlined, divide the technical aspects of case studies into four stages: the foundation phase, the pre-field phase, the study protocol phase, and the field phase (Hancock et al., 2021). Considering that the case study method is closely related to the field, in the pre-field phase, researchers collect evidence through appropriate procedures and techniques. Data collection techniques are carried out holistically and collected over time, involving questions of "how and why" (Alam, 2021).

In this study, the researcher used purposive sampling with predetermined criteria: willingness to be interviewed (both in terms of the informant's situation and comfort) and having attended at least one batch of a Layak school. The key informant in this research is a Layak founder that surely understanding the challenges in empowering persons with disabilities in the fashion sector. In data

collection, the researcher employed in-depth interviews and observation techniques. As seen in [Table 1](#), the following is the informant's profile:

**Table 1.** Source profile

No	Nama Informan	Status	Note
1	KA	Founder Layak	-
2	AS	Layak's talent	Intellectual disability
3	MK	Talent's parent (AS)	-
4	GN	Layak's talent	Intellectual disability
5	KM	Talent's parent (GN)	-

The interviews lasted approximately two hours with the talent informant and their parents. This simultaneous interview was conducted to ensure the talent informant's comfort and to help the researcher understand the intent and meaning of the talent informant's answers.

With the background of the use of a more holistic case study, researchers used data analysis techniques described by Stake, namely two strategic methods, Categorical Aggregation and Direct Interpretation ([Miller et al., 2023](#)). In this study, the researcher used Categorical Aggregation, a technique that gathers information from multiple informants and analyzes the resulting meaning. This data analysis technique begins with Identifying Instances, Initial Aggregation, Categorization, Establishing Patterns of Correspondence, and Understanding Making Related to Issues.

### 3. Result and Discussion

Based on in-depth observations and interviews with informants from Layak Indonesia, three main strategies were identified in Layak Official's inclusive branding, namely (1) Use of Inclusive Narratives (Authentic and Holistic), (2) Reframing (New Representation) of Disability Identity, and (3) Brand Image Development and Conversion Challenges.

#### Use of Inclusive Narratives (Authentic and Holistic)

One common mistake in inclusive brand building is the creation of narratives that unconsciously still contain biases against persons with disabilities. This bias usually appears in two forms. The first is the pity narrative, which depicts persons with disabilities as weak and dependent on the help of others. The second is the heroic narrative (supercrip narrative), which portrays them solely as inspirational figures because they are able to "overcome their limitations." The second form often intersects with a phenomenon called inspiration porn, which is the representation of persons with disabilities that is used to inspire non-disabled people, rather than to fight for equality and the elimination of structural barriers ([Setyowati et al., 2020](#)). Both approaches indirectly reinforce differences and maintain a hierarchy between "the normal" and "the different" rather than building equal relationships within a framework of inclusivity.

Layak Indonesia rejects narratives of pity and heroism by presenting persons with disabilities in a natural way, namely as individuals who live, work, and are empowered in their daily lives. This inclusive narrative is not merely a temporary marketing strategy (marketing gimmick), but rather the foundation of the brand's existence. An interview with Layak's founder revealed that the idea of empowering persons with disabilities emerged long before Layak was established as a clothing brand. This motivation stemmed from personal experiences and social awareness that grew from involvement in the Asian Para Games, where the founder witnessed the low media representation of athletes with disabilities.

"...actually, I want to be an inspiration for other clothing brands to start using persons with disabilities. I really want the end goal to be for Indonesia to become a trend center for inclusive fashion," (KA, Founder of Layak, Interview on January 12, 2025).

This finding confirms that brand authenticity is a key factor in building public trust. Layak's authenticity does not stem from marketing strategies, but from the social mission that is the reason for the brand's existence. Thus, Layak places inclusivity at the core of its identity, not merely as a market differentiation. In line with the views of previous research, diversity in Layak becomes a communicative dimension that shapes the relationship between the brand and the public (Goddard et al., 2024). Layak's narrative has succeeded in creating an alternative discourse in marketing communication where persons with disabilities are not portrayed as objects of pity, but as productive, fashionable, and inspiring subjects.

Diversity in Layak becomes a communicative dimension that shapes the relationship between the brand and the public (Verbytska et al., 2023). Layak's narrative has succeeded in creating an alternative discourse in marketing communication, where persons with disabilities are not portrayed as objects of pity, but as productive, fashionable, and inspiring subjects. The brand DNA of Layak is rooted in the empowerment of persons with disabilities. Inclusive values do not stop at visual representation, but are implemented thoroughly in the organizational structure. Persons with disabilities not only play a role as models, but also as makeup artists, photographers, and social media managers. This practice reflects a transformation from symbolic representation to substantive participation in a brand's ecosystem.

Layak's structural commitment is reinforced by an internal culture of inclusion, where 40–50% of staff and partners, including models/talent, photographers, makeup artists, and creative teams are persons with disabilities (Layak Official Profile, 2025). In addition to empowerment through employment, Layak Indonesia also provides training and support to help persons with disabilities develop their potential and explore talents that may not yet be apparent. As a form of sustainable contribution, 40% of the profits from each product purchase are allocated to skills development activities and raising public awareness about the disability community. With concrete steps taken, Layak Indonesia supports an inclusive future, ensuring that every individual has the same opportunity to develop and show their potential.

"...The focus is on fashion, beauty classes, photoshoots, so it's not academic in nature, but rather for personal development that is not academic in nature. But most of what they can do doesn't require a lot of thinking. We can further explore their potential..." (KM, Parents of a Layak talent, Interview on January 24, 2025).

By framing the analysis around Bourke & Dillon (2018) framework, the structural nature of Layak's inclusivity becomes evident. Unlike brands that utilize inclusivity as a seasonal marketing tool (e.g., International Disability Day), Layak integrates these values into its foundational business model from clothing brands to talent agencies, namely Layak Agency for talent management and Layak School for training such as modeling. The elements below reflect how Layak Indonesia's operational branches Layak Agency (talent management) and Layak School (modeling training) align with the four pillars of holistic inclusivity: Fairness and Respect, in this element, a person feels inclusive when treated fairly and with respect. Layak Indonesia provides opportunities for anyone to participate and become part of its brand by conducting open recruitment on social media, without imposing specific restrictions in its requirements. This step is taken as a starting point for valuing diversity and participation without discrimination. Valued and Belonging, A person feels inclusive when they are valued and feel part of a group. Layak Indonesia has this element and is

inclusive because every talent or other staff member has the opportunity to be heard, valued for their uniqueness, cared for, and trusted for their abilities. They have a bond or connection as a group.

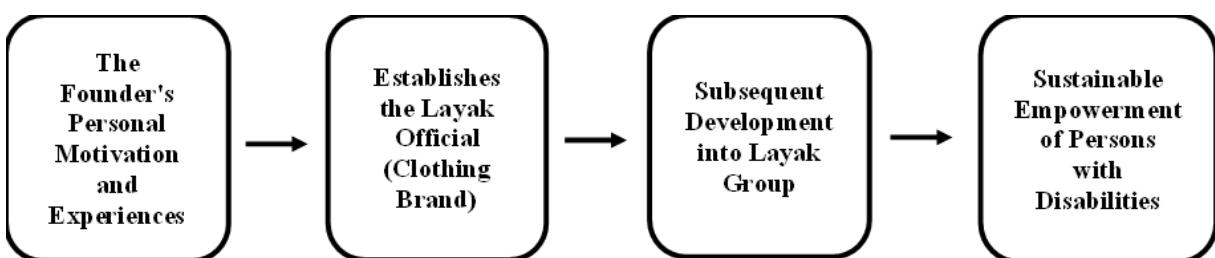
**Safe and Open**, A person feels inclusive when they feel "safe" to express their opinions without fear of being humiliated or receiving negative responses. This was evident when the Layak Indonesia team discussed their ideas, hopes, likes, and dislikes. Information from two informants (parents of persons with disabilities) stated that they felt heard. Layak Indonesia as a business also understands their needs and desires, and asks them what they like or dislike. This is done to provide a sense of security and comfort, while ensuring that every talent has equal access.

**Empowered and Growing**, Layak not only creates space for participation, but also supports individual capacity building through training and creative projects. Persons with disabilities are given the opportunity to channel their best potential while developing their careers professionally.

Through the application of these four elements, Layak Official shows that inclusivity is not only symbolic, but also functions as an internal mechanism that shapes organizational culture and strengthens brand image. Layak's inclusive narrative is reinforced by the establishment of Layak School and Layak Talent Agency as forums for developing the competencies of persons with disabilities. This step represents a long-term commitment to creating a sustainable ecosystem for empowering the disability community.

"...Layak Group has many subsidiaries, including Layak Talent Agency, Layak School, Layak Ofisial, and so on. It also has many programs, such as modeling, creator classes, and many more," (KA, Founder of Layak, Interview on January 12, 2025).

This strategy not only expands the space for representation but also builds a brand community based on social values. By facilitating learning processes, skill development, and job access, Layak successfully integrates the social and economic functions of the brand in a balanced manner. As a result, the inclusive marketing practices implemented by Layak successfully avoid the two main pitfalls in disability communication: pity narratives and excessive glorification. Instead, Layak emphasizes the equality of roles and participation of persons with disabilities as key actors in the brand narrative.



**Fig. 2. Layak Indonesia's Holistic Inclusivity Model**

Based on the illustration in Fig. 2, holistic inclusivity model of Layak Indonesia, it can be concluded that Layak Official's inclusive branding strategy is rooted in the authenticity of the organization's narrative and holistic practices. Layak was not established as a purely commercial entity, but rather as the embodiment of a social mission, where the desire to empower persons with disabilities came first, driven by the Founder's personal motivation and experience (e.g., volunteering at the Asian Para Games). This mission became the brand's identity, triggering the evolution from the Layak Official clothing brand to the broader Layak Group, which includes Layak Talent Agency and Layak School. This structural implementation ensures that the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities is long-term and sustainable, going beyond a marketing gimmick. Thus,

inclusivity in Layak is implemented in the brand's structure, processes, and culture, confirming that inclusive branding based on social values is effective in increasing public trust, strengthening consumer loyalty, and making a real contribution to the empowerment of marginalized groups.

### Reframing (New Representation) of Disability Identity

Layak Indonesia actively changed the narrative of disability in the public sphere by consistently featuring persons with disabilities as key talents. This approach successfully shifted their image from objects of sympathy to subjects with potential in the fields of modeling and art. Interviews with Informants 2 and 3 indicated that this positive representation gave rise to hope, for example, that children with Down Syndrome could produce work and gain opportunities. The direct impact is an increase in self-actualization and self-confidence (such as informants who were previously shy becoming brave enough to appear in public), as well as opening up opportunities to perform at national and international events.

"The most significant thing is self-confidence, Ma'am. So she dares to come forward, dares to be told what to do, wants to... So there is indeed a building of self-confidence in children like this," (MK, Parents of Layak talent, Interview on January 17, 2025).



**Fig. 3. Layak Talents Participating in Layak School & Layak Agency**

Every purchase of Layak Indonesia products supports a positive ecosystem. As seen in Fig. 3, through the "Style for Awareness" concept, the brand seasonally launches new collections in collaboration with persons with disabilities to campaign for equality. In its visual and narrative communications, Layak Indonesia consistently highlights persons with disabilities as professional, charming, and skilled talents, focusing on their skills and achievements in the fashion industry, and explicitly avoiding narratives that elicit sympathy or use disability as inspiration porn.

This finding aligns with Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of representation, which states that media is an arena for the production of meaning. By featuring persons with disabilities as the main actors in fashion advertisements, Layak contributes to reframing their identities from ones that are often

marginalized to creative, professional, and empowered identities (Hall, 2003). This representation goes beyond tokenism because it is accompanied by concrete steps in the form of training and sustainable job opportunities (Layak School and Layak Talent Agency), which directly build the capacity for action and empower individuals with disabilities.

"...It's true that there are pros and cons when it comes to family support. Why does it have to be like that? It's not like he'll be in fashion forever. It would be better if you taught him how to cook, clean the house, and do other household chores that will definitely be useful..." (MK, Parents of Layak talent, Interview on January 17, 2025).

The reframing of identity shaped by Layak is not limited to the general public but also challenges stigma within the immediate environment (family). The informant's acknowledgment of the pros and cons within their family is tangible evidence. Some families still hold on to the conventional view that persons with disabilities are better off being taught only daily skills. However, Layak's involvement as a talent presents "evidence" of a new representation that challenges this old view, showing that there are other professional paths that can be explored.

"...for friends with disabilities, the hope is that friends with disabilities out there will not give up and feel that there are still many people who are willing to give them the opportunity to pursue their dreams... Layak official is one of the inspirations for friends with disabilities to be able to pursue their dreams," (KA, Founder of Layak, Interview on January 12, 2025).

This confirms Layak's role as a catalyst for micro social change. As seen in Fig. 4, by representing potential, Layak provides visual and empirical arguments to families and the immediate environment that children with disabilities are able to contribute significantly to the creative sector, thereby facilitating increased social acceptance at the interpersonal level.



Fig. 4. Layak Indonesia's Reframing Strategy

### Brand Image Building and Its Challenges

Beyond sales, Layak empowers persons with disabilities in the fashion industry by establishing a structural ecosystem for empowerment through its Layak Agency and Layak School, involving them in roles such as modeling and creative production to demonstrate that branding can drive empowerment. Guided by the tagline "Look Good. Feel Good. Do Good," the brand operationalizes four core concepts: "Style of Awareness" for consistent equality messaging, "Community Heroes" for inclusive recruitment and workplace diversity, "Stepping Up Our Impact" for professional talent training, and "Hope in Every Purchase," which reinvests profits into community skill development.

It has resulted in a very positive, sympathetic, and unique brand image in a saturated market, as evidenced by high media exposure and engagement on social media. The founder of Layak confirmed this significant impact:

"When asked about engagement and exposure, of course it's huge... We've even been covered by a German media outlet," (KA, Founder of Layak, Interview on January 12, 2025).

This image was built because Layak sells values and a mission (value proposition) that go beyond functional products. This positive impact is felt directly by the disability community. The mother of one of Layak's talents conveyed these tangible benefits:

"So, for parents who have children like this, don't lose heart, don't give up... Yes, this is Layak School, perhaps God moved K\*r\*n's heart to recruit these children, who may be looked down upon, for this moment..." (KM Parents of Layak talent, Interview on January 24, 2025).

Layak's practice is a concrete example of Brand Activism, where brands take a proactive stance on social issues of inclusivity. The key to the success of this image is the authenticity described in point 1, which has enabled the brand to build trust and credibility amid the trend of woke-washing.

This strategy reinforces the concept of Shared Value (M. R. Kramer & Porter, 2011), where businesses not only pursue profit but also create social value, in this case, increasing social acceptance and making a meaningful contribution to the empowerment of the disabled community. Thus, Layak's inclusive branding has proven to be an instrument of empowerment, not just image differentiation. Despite its success in building awareness, there is a gap between high engagement and sales conversion. Layak's founder acknowledges that image success is not linear with business performance in the first year:

"But in terms of sales, it didn't really have much of an impact... In terms of sales growth, the target milestone is actually in the following year, so it's still below our expectations," (KA, Founder of Layak, Interview on January 12, 2025).

The founder identified price competition and visual quality as the causes:

"The difficulty lies in the fact that... amid Shopee's super-duper low prices, our prices are also not cheap, not below 100 thousand rupiah, because we have value to sell," added the founder of Layak (KA, Founder of Layak, Interview on January 12, 2025).

This phenomenon reflects a Say-Do Gap among consumers, where moral support through social media (say) does not always translate into purchasing actions (do). Although the audience appreciates and supports Layak's social mission, rational factors (price competition, quality, and fashion trends) remain the primary considerations in purchasing decisions.

Therefore, Layak's case study shows that a strong social mission must be balanced with a competitive business strategy. Layak implements the concept of co-creation by involving persons with disabilities as creators, creating shared value (skills for talent and authentic content for the brand). Going forward, the sustainability of the Layak brand will greatly depend on their ability to maintain inclusive values while improving product quality and competitive pricing strategies amid the red zone of the fashion industry.

#### 4. Conclusion

Layak Indonesia has successfully implemented an authentic and holistic inclusive branding strategy. This is realized not only through campaigns but also by involving persons with disabilities through empowerment, which has become a consistent brand DNA. This success is built on rejecting the reframing of the identity of "persons with disabilities" by building an authentic, holistic business ecosystem, realized through structural implementation. Layak's business ecosystem is created by involving persons with disabilities as staff, models, photographers, and partners. Therefore, Layak

does not use a narrative of pity to empower persons with disabilities by simply making them objects of photo. Through this empowerment, Layak has successfully rejected narratives of inspiration porn, instead building a narrative of persons with disabilities as empowered, professional, and creative. Inspiration porn is one form of empowerment movement that goes wrong, normalizing the powerlessness of persons with disabilities. This powerlessness will hinder the values of equality. Therefore, Stuart's description of media as a means of producing meaning is apt, as Layak's media has shifted the meaning of "inability and powerlessness" for persons with disabilities to a more capable professional potential.

Furthermore, through this empowerment, Layak has had a significant impact on increasing self-confidence and opening career opportunities for individuals with disabilities. However, despite its success in building high awareness and a positive image as a form of Brand Activism, a commercial challenge has emerged in the form of a "Say-Do Gap." Despite high audience moral support and engagement, sales conversion has not been optimal. This is primarily influenced by price competition and quality factors in the saturated Indonesian fashion market. Therefore, Layak Indonesia needs to maintain its inclusive values while improving product quality and establishing a competitive pricing strategy. These steps are crucial to ensure business continuity. Further research is recommended to conduct a quantitative study. This will help causally measure the impact of inclusive branding on Layak Indonesia's customer loyalty and sales conversion amidst the identified Say-Do Gap. This is crucial for providing empirical data on how to effectively balance a strong social mission with competitive business performance.

### **Acknowledgment**

Ade Indriani Siagian thanks Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Jakarta for the institutional support that enabled the completion of this manuscript. Naurah Lisnarini and Maudy Rizkiana thank Universitas Padjadjaran for providing the academic environment and research resources necessary for the development of this manuscript. The authors express their sincere appreciation to Layak Indonesia for granting access to data and insights essential to the study Empowering Persons with disabilities in the Fashion Industry: A Case Study of Layak Indonesia's Inclusive Branding Strategy. The author declares that there is no conflict of interest related to the research, preparation, or publication of this manuscript. The authors also thank all individuals who provided constructive feedback during discussions and manuscript preparation. This project received support from internal academic activities within the respective institutions, and the authors are grateful to everyone who assisted directly or indirectly in completing this manuscript.

### **References**

Afriliees, M. H., Naili, Y. T., & Lina, A. A. (2025). Regulatory and policy analysis of employment and health protections in Indonesia's creative economy. *BIO Web of Conferences*. [https://www.bio-conferences.org/articles/bioconf/abs/2025/03/bioconf\\_ichbs2025\\_01018/bioconf\\_ichbs2025\\_01018.html](https://www.bio-conferences.org/articles/bioconf/abs/2025/03/bioconf_ichbs2025_01018/bioconf_ichbs2025_01018.html)

Alam, M. K. (2021). A systematic qualitative case study: questions, data collection, NVivo analysis and saturation. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/qrom-09-2019-1825>

Anisa, E. (2025). Inclusive Branding and Visual Communication for Disability-Led MSMEs: Strategies for Social Empowerment and Market Competitiveness. *Fast in Humanities*. <https://fast-humanities.com/fh/article/view/5>

Basana, B., & Sidabutar, Y. F. D. (2025). Optimization of Playgrounds as a Learning Media for Children in Batam Kota District. *Journal La Sociale*.

<https://newinera.com/index.php/JournalLaSociale/article/view/2018>

Bourke, J., & Dillon, B. (2018). The diversity and inclusion revolution: Eight powerful truths. In *Deloitte Review*.

Das, A. S., Bonny, F. A., Mohosin, A. B., Rashid, S. F., & Hasan, M. (2021). Co-exploring the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the livelihood of persons with disabilities in Bangladesh. In *Disability Studies Quarterly*. <https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v41i3.8377>

Debusscher, P. (2025). Towards a feminist-decolonial epistemic justice? Evaluating EU equality policies through an intersectional lens. *Journal of Gender Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2025.2589284>

Deng, F., Tuo, M., Chen, S., & Zhang, Z. (2024). Born for marketing? The effects of virtual versus human influencers on brand endorsement effectiveness: The role of advertising recognition. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0969698924002005>

Foster, J., & Pettinicchio, D. (2022). A model who looks like me: Communicating and consuming representations of disability. *Journal of Consumer Culture*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14695405211022074>

Goddard, K. S., Kurth, N. K., Hall, J. P., Koon, L. M., & Dentleegrand, K. R. (2024). Strategic insights from a Delphi study: enhancing employment for multiply marginalized people with disabilities. In *Frontiers Rehabil. Sci.* frontiersin.org. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fresc.2024.1443302>

Goethals, T., Mortelmans, D., Bulck, H. Van den, & Van Hove, G. (2022). I am not your metaphor: frames and counter-frames in the representation of disability. *Disability & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2020.1836478>

Halim, A. (2021). Persamaan Hak bagi Penyandang Disabilitas untuk Mendapatkan Pekerjaan Dilihat dari Undang-Undang Nomor 8 Tahun 2016 Tentang Penyandang Disabilitas. *FENOMENA*. <https://unars.ac.id/ojs/index.php/fenomena/article/view/1468>

Hall, S. (2003). *The Work of Representation, Representation : Cultural Representation And Signifying Practices*. Sage Publication.

Hancock, D. R., Algozzine, B., & Lim, J. H. (2021). *Doing case study research: A practical guide for beginning researchers*. books.google.com.

Hwang, S. K., & Roulstone, A. (2022). Enterprising? Disabled? The status and potential for disabled people's microenterprise in South Korea. *Research Handbook on Disability*. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781789905649.00018>

Ijomah, T. I., Idemudia, C., Eyo-Udo, N. L., & Anjorin, K. (2024). The role of big data analytics in customer relationship management: Strategies for improving customer engagement and retention. In *World Journal of Advanced Science and Technology*. <https://doi.org/10.53346/wjast.2024.6.1.0038>

Kim, Y. (2024). Quantitative criticalism for social justice and equity-oriented communication research. *Human Communication Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hcr/hqad048>

Kramer, E., Dibley, T., & Tsaputra, A. (2024). Choosing from the citizens' toolbox: disability activists as political candidates in Indonesia's 2019 general elections. *Disability & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2022.2060800>

Kramer, M. R., & Porter, M. (2011). *Creating shared value*. environz.wordpress.com. <https://environz.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/creating-shared-value->

[porter-and-kramer-harvard-business-review-article.pdf](#)

Machmud, A., & Noer, M. K. (2025). Analisis Inbound Marketing Umkm Dalam Meningkatkan Brand Awareness: Studi Strategy Branding Pada Sablon Rainbow Creative Sangatta Kutai Timur. *Cerdika: Jurnal Ilmiah Indonesia*, 5(9). <https://doi.org/10.59141/cerdika.v5i9.2891>

Malli, M. A., Double, O., Triantafyllopoulou, P., & Murphy, M. (2025). When laughing at disablism meets barriers: the complex reality of disabled comedians in stand-up comedy. *Disability & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2025.2579088>

Miller, E. M., Porter, J. E., & Barbegal, M. S. (2023). Simplifying Qualitative Case Study Research Methodology: A Step-By-Step Guide Using a Palliative Care Example. *Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2023.6478>

Mokodompit, E. A., & Fardiansyah, H. (2023). Social Media Influencer Implementation On Consumer Purchase Interest. *Jurnal Ekonomi*. <https://ejournal.seaninstitute.or.id/index.php/Ekonomi/article/view/1301>

Panarese, P., Grasso, M. M., & Solinas, C. (2025). Algorithmic bias, fairness, and inclusivity: a multilevel framework for justice-oriented AI. *AI & SOCIETY*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-025-02451-2>

Qureshi, I., Bhatt, B., & Shaikh, S. (2025). Empowering marginalized communities: A framework for social inclusion. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*. <https://aisel.aisnet.org/jais/vol26/iss4/1/>

Santoso, A. B., Nurhadi, A., & Jani, M. H. B. G. (2025). Empowering Persons with Disabilities through Inclusive Productive Zakat Models: Insights from Indonesian Local Cases. *Media Pemikiran Dan Dakwah Pembangunan*. <https://journal.uin-suka.ac.id/dakwah/JPMI/article/view/2927>

Setyowati, R. M., Watie, E. D. S., & Saptyono, A. (2020). Representation of Disability Achievements in Television Talk Show Programs. In *Jurnal The Messenger*. journals.usm.ac.id. <https://journals.usm.ac.id/index.php/the-messenger/article/view/1587>

Shuman, A., & Caldeira, O. (2024). Folklore, disability, and plain language: The problem of consent. *Journal of American Folklore*. <https://scholarlypublishingcollective.org/uip/jaf/article/137/545/308/389068>

Södergren, J., & Vallström, N. (2024). Disability in influencer marketing: a complex model of disability representation. *Influencer Marketing*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257x.2022.2144418>

Toorn, G. van. (2024). Inclusion interrupted: Lessons from the making of a digital assistant by and for people with disability. In *Government Information Quarterly*. Elsevier. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0740624X23001004>

Venkatesan, K., Amirdaa, H., & Casmier, R. B. (2025). The Role of Brand Image and Customer Experience on Purchase Intention in the Salon Industry: Reassessing the Impact of Social Media Marketing. In *Cureus Journals*. cureusjournals.com. <https://doi.org/10.7759/s44404-025-03759-4>

Verbytska, A., Lysenko, I., Babachenko, L., & Kraskivska. (2023). Inclusive social marketing: Representation and diversity in brand campaigns. In *Marketing and Branding Research*. api.eurokd.com. <https://api.eurokd.com/Uploads/Article/904/mbr.2023.10.01.04.pdf>