

# The presence of disability in Isabel Díaz Ayuso's *Instagram* posts

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How to cite this article:

**Djordjevic, Dragana.** (2026). "The presence of disability in Isabel Díaz Ayuso's Instagram posts". *Infonomy*, 4(2) e26005.

<https://doi.org/10.3145/infonomy.26.005>

Received: 13-01-2026

Approved: 27-03-2026



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## Abstract

Disability affects nearly one-fifth of the global population. Nevertheless, social exclusion remains a central challenge for people with disabilities in their pursuit of equality and full societal participation. Social media play an important role in promoting the social inclusion of people with disabilities, and political actors can function as influencers who build credibility and authenticity while engaging with this population. This article presents a systematic assessment of the visibility of people with disabilities in the *Instagram* posts of Spanish politician and President of the Autonomous Community of Madrid, Isabel Díaz Ayuso. A mixed-methods approach was employed to analyze textual, visual, and audiovisual content related to disability. The results identified multiple forms of the politician's engagement such as raising awareness and promoting visibility of people with disabilities, supporting institutions that facilitate their participation, attending public and social events related to disability, and using these interactions for personal promotion and electoral image-building.

## Keywords

Disability; Social inclusion; Visibility; Social media; Social networks; *Instagram*; Hashtag activism; Politicians; Campaigns; Spain; Isabel Diaz Ayuso.



## Financing

This research received no external funding.

## 1. Introduction

Media digitalization has influenced all segments of society, including minority groups such as people with disabilities (**Cahyadi; Setiawan, 2020**). Social media platforms, in particular, have been shown to have a positive impact on people with disabilities by promoting social inclusion (**McMillen; Alter, 2017**), supporting the development of social identity and self-esteem, and facilitating friendship formation and enjoyment (**Caton; Chapman, 2016; Cahyadi; Setiawan, 2020**). Moreover, social media have contributed to changes in the representation of disabled people by enabling them to exercise at least partial control over their public image, thereby influencing how non-disabled audiences perceive disability (**Struck-Peregończyk; Leonowicz-Bukała, 2023**). These transformations have prompted growing recognition of the importance of integrating disability studies into media and social science research. Nevertheless, despite increasing scholarly interest, disability remains a relatively neglected area of inquiry, particularly within mainstream political science (**Heffernan, 2024**).

Social media platforms have been shown to have a positive impact on people with disabilities by promoting social inclusion

Taking these dynamics into account, the present study responds to the need to apply theoretical frameworks from disability studies, especially those concerning visibility and representation, to empirical analyses within the field of political communication. Specifically, it seeks to examine how disability-related narratives are articulated in digital environments, focusing on the social media platform *Instagram* as a key space where political actors construct meaning, visibility, and engagement.

Within this context, the article examines the ways and motivations through which Isabel Díaz Ayuso, the Spanish right-wing female politician with the largest number of followers on *Instagram*, gives visibility to people with disabilities in her textual, visual, and audiovisual posts. In addition, it analyzes the effects of this communicative activity on her followers' responses, as expressed through textual interaction and emotional engagement in the form of comments and "likes."

The general objective of this study is to contribute to scholarly research on the strategies through which politicians address the visibility of people with disabilities, thereby advancing disability studies applied to political communication in digital environments. More specifically, the study aims to identify how political actors incorporate disability-related content into their *Instagram* communication and to assess the influence of such content on levels of audience engagement. To achieve this aim, the study pursues the following specific objectives: (1) to analyze how one of Spain's most popular female politicians promotes the visibility of people with disabilities in her *Instagram* posts; (2) to examine the narratives communicated through such content; (3) to explore the politician's presence and positioning in connection with the individuals depicted in visual and audiovisual material; and (4) to investigate the potential existence

of online awareness-raising dynamics related to disability through hypertextual practices such as mentions and hashtags.

Accordingly, this study examines whether Isabel Díaz Ayuso, as President of the Autonomous Community of Madrid, uses *Instagram* content related to people with disabilities primarily to promote visibility and support for this social group, or whether such content functions as a rhetorical strategy in the construction of her political ethos. The research adopts a mixed quantitative-qualitative approach, based on the interpretation of statistical data (**Gutiérrez; Delgado**, 1997). The analysis covers the period from 7 January 2020, marking the beginning of Pedro Sánchez's second presidential term, to 23 July 2023, corresponding to the conclusion of his first term. This temporal delimitation also provides a useful framework for future research on other political actors or alternative periods relevant to the study of digital political communication.

The article is structured as follows: The first section presents the essential elements of the study and reviews the literature on disability representation in digital environments, the role of disability in political science, and political communication on social media, before introducing the theoretical framework. The next section outlines the research methodology, after which the case study results are presented. The article concludes with a discussion of the findings and their implications, and ends with the references.

## 2. Literature review

The literature review addresses several key areas. To provide the context for this study, we drew on scholarship concerning the presence of disability in digital environments, alongside research on digital political content analysis, textual, visual, and audiovisual rhetoric, and hypertextuality in relation to digital activism.

A striking feature of the literature is the relative absence of research on disability within political science (**Heffernan**, 2024). Most studies, particularly those grounded in American political behavior, focus on people with disabilities as political actors or analyze the effects of policy and legislation on their lives (**Heffernan**, 2024). Despite calls for decades to integrate disability politics and policy into mainstream political science research, the continued marginalization of disability within the field remains deeply concerning (**Heffernan**, 2024).

Beyond political participation, disability scholarship provides important insights into how the mediated public sphere shapes cultural attitudes and behaviors (**Stones**, 2017). This literature emphasizes the central role of images in influencing whether individuals are stigmatized or socially accepted (**Coleman-Brown**, 2010; **Garland-Thomson**, 2010; **Stones**, 2017). Building on this perspective, we drew on research examining the textual and visual rhetoric of images on *Instagram* (**Djordjevic**, 2025; **Acosta**, 2018; **Klinger; Svensson**, 2015; **Larsson**, 2017; **Ekman; Widholm**, 2017; **López-Aguirre et al.**, 2021, among others).

Finally, to establish a connection between political content on social networking sites and disability, we examined scholarship on social movement rhetoric and digital social activism (**Mann**, 2018).

### 3. Theoretical framework

#### 3.1. Disability

Throughout history, disability has been understood as a natural aspect of the human condition (**Scheer; Groce**, 1988), while simultaneously remaining a recurring target of exclusion, prejudice, and discriminatory attitudes (**Johnson**, 2006; **Cork et al.**, 2016). The framing of disability as a form of social “otherness” has often been interconnected with political dynamics, whereby societies have justified and legalized exclusionary practices against people with disabilities by appealing prevailing public opinion or collective consent. Such practices have historically resulted in policies of sterilization, institutionalization, and deportation (**Campbell**, 2009; **Hahn**, 1988; **Jaeger; Bowman**, 2005; **Hirschmann; Linker**, 2015; **Cork et al.**, 2016).

Disability affects nearly one-fifth of the global population (**Cork et al.**, 2016). Nevertheless, social exclusion remains one of the central challenges faced by people with disabilities in their pursuit of equality and full participation in society (**Jaeger**, 2012, 2013; **Jaeger; Bowman**, 2005; **Cork et al.**, 2016). Individuals with disabilities are frequently confronted by public response patterns characterized by discomfort, awkwardness, false concern, pity, sympathy, sentimentality, indifference, hostility, or relief at not having a disability (**Stiker**, 1999). Collectively, these reactions reinforce and emphasize the perceived otherness of disability (**Cork et al.**, 2020).

Definitions of disability vary depending on disciplines and contexts. Disability is commonly understood as a social system in which individuals with impairments, whether physical, mental, cognitive, developmental, or intellectual, experience discrimination and stigma (**Oliver**, 1983, 2013; **Evans**, 2022).

The visibility of people with disabilities constitutes a central argument for recognition and rights, including demands to participate fully in public life, to be considered in education and employment policies, to be represented in accessible spaces, and to be treated with equity (**Johnson; Kennedy**, 2020). Visibility has long been emphasized within social movements because increased visibility is both a strategy for achieving and an indicator of growing political influence (**Phelan**, 2003; **Johnson; Kennedy**, 2020).

The politics of visibility operates on the idea that recognition and audibility are often essential for individuals or groups to gain greater social, political, cultural, or economic legitimacy, power, authority, or access to resources (**Brouwer**, 1998). Within this framework, visibility, rhetorical agency, and political action are understood as closely interlinked (**Johnson; Kennedy**, 2020).

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Scholars have conducted numerous rhetorical investigations into the interrelation of disability and visibility. Some studies focus on cultural visibility, examining how disability is represented and circulated in media and other forms of public discourse. Others address epistemological visibility, considering disability in terms of what is known or remains unknown. Research on political visibility explores how disability, or disabled individuals, function as subjects or objects of political action, while work on sensory visibility investigates the perception of physical or mental disability through the senses. In recent years, the disclosure of disability has emerged as a particularly productive area of inquiry for rhetoricians.

Disability is closely associated with social change in contemporary contexts (**Mann**, 2018) and has become a central political issue. Given the importance of images in today's highly mediated political environment, historical evidence demonstrates the persistent influence of visual representations in political campaigns (**Stones**, 2017). Within this framework, the disabled body carries its own ethos, functioning as a symbolic site for negotiating socio-cultural values (**Stones**, 2017).

### 3.2. Social movement rhetoric

The origins of social movement research have traditionally conceptualized social "movements" as objective phenomena (**Mann**, 2018), reflecting a perspective that resists redefining movements in ways that incorporate the opportunities offered by new media (**Mann**, 2018). Early scholarship, including **Haiman** (1967) and **Scott and Smith** (1969), emphasized public disagreement and the so-called "rhetoric of the streets" as a necessary response when conventional democratic channels proved inadequate. Although this focus on physical protest in public spaces was historically significant, it offers a limited framework for understanding social movements in contemporary contexts. **Gregg** (1971) advanced this discussion by proposing that social movements also facilitate the development of participants' sense of identity and their connection with others through processes of "self-persuasion" and the recognition of opponents. This perspective remains particularly relevant today, as it illuminates how online spaces can similarly support shared identities among participants, thereby contributing to the formation and cohesion of modern social movements.

Social movements often involve physical actions, such as marching or displaying signs, which may not always be accessible to individuals with disabilities. Assuming that all forms of protest are equally accessible can marginalize some participants and contribute to their exclusion (**McRuer**, 2006). By framing social movements in terms of ideological and cultural transformation, rather than exclusively physical participation, scholars can develop a more inclusive understanding of activism. **McGee's** (1980) work provides valuable insights for addressing both the conceptual challenges of defining "movement" and the integration of disability within movement studies (**Mann**, 2018).

**McGee** (1980) further argued that social movements are not objective phenomena but products of human awareness. This perspective enables the examination of digital forms of expression and alternative strategies of engagement, which may be considered constitutive elements of contemporary social movements.

The analysis of new media activism and disability is supported by **Alper** (2015) and **Ellicessor** (2016), who have documented emerging forms of disability activism and emphasized the potential for advocating the specific needs of disabled individuals and their caregivers (**Mann**, 2018). At the same time, critical examinations of online rhetoric and digital activism have emphasized challenges that contemporary scholarship must consider. **Dean** (2005) argues that digital communicative capitalism idealizes technology, promoting a fantasy of political change; **Warnick** (2007) raises concerns regarding fragmented media and the prevalence of “authorless” digital communication; and **Stein** (2009) contends that social movements have generally struggled to leverage hashtags and online activism effectively. This position was reinforced by **Hill** (2013) and **Hooghe, Marien, and Oser** (2015) (**Mann**, 2018).

### 3.3. Online social movement

Scholars of new media have increasingly examined “online social movements” as creating new opportunities for activism, including the use of platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, which may have concrete impacts on governmental policy (**Harlow**, 2011). Twitter, in particular, has emerged as a central site of social media activism, in part due to its average of over 330 million active users per month (**Mann**, 2018). Despite the growing importance of these platforms, scholars remain divided regarding the limitations of online activism, particularly in relation to the legitimacy and effectiveness of digital movements in the absence of embodied, in-person participation (**Earl**, 2015).

The nature of social media has motivated scholars to consider whether the activities of influencers with disabilities might be understood as a form of digital activism. According to the European Economic and Social Committee, the most common forms of digital activism include searching for information online, creating websites that provide information and documentation, publishing electronic materials, establishing virtual communities, distributing bulk emails, creating online spaces and forums for debate, planning and coordinating activities, forming strategic alliances, promoting associations, and offering support or calls to participate in ongoing collective initiatives (**Struck-Peregończyk; Leonowicz-Bukała**, 2023).

Hashtag activism, in particular, should be recognized as a significant force within disability social movements (**Mann**, 2018). **Yang** (2016) argues that hashtag campaigns contribute to the development of narrative potential and collective identity by generating new discourses within social contexts (**Mann**, 2018). Moreover, hashtag activism can play a creative role, producing collective understandings that form a social movement independently, rather than simply acting as a supportive tool for other movements. These observations indicate the need for further research to theorize online social movement activism and to examine the ways in which disability shapes and defines such movements (**Mann**, 2018).

### 3.4. Social media influencers and disability

Social media have become a crucial space for advocacy, providing many small or unrepresented groups and individuals with platforms to express their experiences, challenge dominant stereotypes, and promote social change (Ellis; Goggin, 2015; Johansen, 2024; Trevisan & Farinosi (2024). Social media function as important tools for the social inclusion of people with disabilities, enabling them to communicate their concerns, interests and collective identities. Social networking sites offer users with disabilities a range of free and easy-to use communication tools (Struck-Peregończyk; Leonowicz-Bukała 2023) that facilitate processes of self-organization and self-help (Verdegem, 2011; Rains, 2018). By creating conditions for association, collaboration, and content-sharing, these platforms promote forms of digital participation and civic engagement (Santoso, 2019). Moreover, social media enable the dissemination of disabled people's perspectives, narratives, and opinions and allow them to assume the role of content creators rather than remaining passive media consumers (Tucker et al., 2017; Struck-Peregończyk; Leonowicz-Bukała, 2023). Through direct contact and unrestricted content publication, people with disabilities gain control over their public image and visibility (Struck-Peregończyk; Leonowicz-Bukała, 2023).

Through direct contact and unrestricted content publication, people with disabilities gain control over their public image and visibility

Platforms such as *Instagram* and *TikTok* host a large volume of audiovisual content featuring disabled individuals participating in humorous activities, sharing witty comments, or presenting themselves in ways that emphasize their personality and everyday experiences (Johansen, 2025). Images and videos of this kind are particularly effective in capturing audience attention within the competitive communicative environment of social media (Johansen, 2025). In this context, parents of children with disabilities, disabled teenagers and young adults, as well as organizations, associations, and foundations, increasingly act as social media influencers who mobilize their online presence to support social and political causes, without commercial intent or dependence on sponsored content (Johansen, 2025).

### 3.5. Disability in social media political communication: *Instagram*

Social media platforms have become increasingly attractive to politicians for a variety of reasons, including their capacity to personalize their relationships with voters and to enable greater control over the public perception of political actors and their images (Balmas et al., 2014; Filimonov et al., 2016; Grusell; Nord, 2020; Djordjevic, 2025). Visual imagery plays a central role in linking political representation to broader cultural aesthetics and values and contributes to the construction of political ethos (Stones, 2017).

Social media platforms have become increasingly attractive to politicians due to their capacity to personalize their relationships with voters and to enable greater control over public perception

The concept of "political image" refers to a symbolic construct that synthesizes positive attributes with easily recognizable and memorable visual and verbal

messages that political candidates intentionally communicate to voters (**Djordjevic**, 2025). These messages are consequently interpreted by audiences, who draw conclusions and develop forms of identification with the candidate (**Strachan; Kendall**, 2004, p. 134). Politicians generally construct their public image by emphasizing widely accepted political values, which contribute to improving their social legitimacy and public standing. Such values function to justify political positions, legitimize claims to authority, and encourage acceptance among supporters who identify with these principles and express this alignment through electoral support.

Political communicative practices contribute to the creation of a positive communicative climate that facilitates relationship-building and enhances deliberative engagement (**Parry-Giles; Parry-Giles**, 2002; **Scammell**, 2015; **Street**, 2004; **Stones**, 2017). Political actors have adapted their image-building strategies to emphasize aspects of a candidate's background, personality, and appearance in order to influence public responses to their persona and maintain greater control over audience perceptions (**Schill**, 2012). Politicians skilled in strategic communication have increasingly refined their capacity to deliver concise and impactful statements, as well as brief visual content or video clips in which candidates are visually present while remaining silent, facilitating the transmission of strategic messages (**Stones**, 2017).

Campaign practices frequently involve symbolic performances, such as holding infants, engaging in charitable activities, or participating in everyday social rituals, to project approachability, moral character, and a willingness to engage with ordinary citizens. Such strategies expand opportunities to identify, select, and prioritize political content in accordance with the voters' individual interests or complaints (**Trevisan**, 2018). Understood as the rhetorical cultivation of shared bonds, interests, and values, identification constitutes a central objective for both political candidates and advocates for disability rights. Whether oriented toward electoral support or broader sociocultural recognition, persuasion depends on the effective establishment of such identification (**Burke**, 1950; **Stones**, 2017).

Political image is generally considered as a powerful instrument for reaching and potentially mobilizing groups that have generally been marginalized within democratic politics, including people with disabilities (**Trevisan**, 2018). The important number of voters with disabilities indicates that political engagement with this group of voters may be strategically advantageous, particularly in close elections where a small number of votes can influence general results (**Trevisan**, 2019). Although people with disabilities (or, in some cases, wounded veterans, children, and similar groups) often occupy a secondary or irrelevant role in these interactions, the candidate's photographic presence alongside them communicates to the public that the candidate is inclusive and attentive to the full diversity of their electorate (**Chasmar**, 2015; **Stones**, 2017). For **Sontag** (1977), photos constitute a primary means through which both politicians and people with disabilities can establish a connection with strangers they are unlikely to encounter face-to-face (**Stones**, 2017). Consequently, understanding representations of disability, as well as understanding political communication, requires attention to the sociocultural context in which such representations are produced and interpreted (**Houck; Kiewe**, 2003; **Stones**, 2017).

The strategy of involving people with disabilities into the political context echoes situational theory of publics (**Grunig**, 1997), which asserts that organizations have an interest in identifying and communicating with people who have a stake in certain issues or processes, bringing them awareness, and ultimately activating them to the organization's advantage. Although the disability community is a very diverse group, several shared interests and experiences create a distinct cultural identity that characterizes voters with disabilities as a political body (**Guldvik; Lesjø**, 2014) and potentially facilitates its activation as an election public (**Sha**, 2006; **Trevisan**, 2019).

For political candidates, *Instagram* has become an increasingly relevant communication medium. Like most social media platforms, it allows users to publish visual and audiovisual content accompanied by textual or symbolic messages that can be commented on by other users. *Instagram* differs from other social media not only because young people predominate among its main users (**Anderson**, 2016), but also because photographs offer greater appeal compared to text, due to its logic of "image first, text later" (**Ekman; Widholm**, 2017, p. 18).

*Instagram* incorporates hypertextuality through the use of hashtags or social tags (#), whose function is to classify messages by topic and facilitate their search on the platform. The platform also allows users to direct messages to other users and establish connections through the use of mentions (@). Published content is emotionally evaluated through likes or "hearts." A specific place among *Instagram* creators is occupied by influencers, who become opinion leaders for certain audiences that usually share common interests (**Ozgen; Mahmoudian**, 2021). As **Crystal Abidin** (2016) notes, influencers gather large communities around them, for whom they become trusted sources of information. Depending on community size, marketing professionals distinguish between micro-influencers (1,000–100,000 followers), macro-influencers (more than 100,000 followers), and mega-influencers (more than one million followers) (**Żyłowska**, 2022; **Struck-Peregończyk; Leonowicz-Bukała**, 2023).

Political actors can be seen as another subtype of influencers who, instead of aiming for commercial gains, build credibility and authenticity while engaging their audiences to promote political opinions and social causes. The concept of political influencers covers a wide range of practices, and such actors can play constructive roles in society by increasing political interest (**Riedl et al.**, 2023). Politicians engage in political and social debates and perform advocacy related to issues such as disability rights and representation (**Hill**, 2023; **Södergren; Vallström**, 2023), both at a general level and at a more concrete level through processes of network-building, inspiration, and support (**Kjær**, 2022; **Neag et al.**, 2024; **Johansen**, 2025).

#### 4. Method

For the purposes of this study, a mixed quantitative–qualitative methodology was employed (**Gutiérrez; Delgado**, 1997), focusing on the analysis of a corpus comprising approximately 23 posts related to disability published on Isabel Díaz Ayuso's *Instagram* profile. The unit of analysis was the *Instagram* post, including both the visual content (image or video) and its accompanying caption. Data were collected using the Inset application, with stories and duplicate posts excluded. The database was manually constructed through the systematic recording of metadata, including post text,

date of publication, number of likes, and number of comments, within a spreadsheet. One post was recorded without accompanying text. The corpus was extracted on a single date to avoid variations in interaction metrics.

The period of analysis extends from 7 January 2020 to 23 July 2023, matching with Pedro Sánchez's second term as President of the Government of Spain. This interval was chosen because it corresponds to the period during which the politician demonstrated the highest level of content production on *Instagram* (Djordjevic, 2025).

The methodological design was convergent parallel, such that qualitative analyses (linguistic-discursive, visual and audiovisual narrative, and semiotic) and quantitative analyses (hypertextual and interactive) were conducted independently and subsequently integrated in order to obtain a comprehensive interpretation of the content.

The examination of the combination of political communication, information, and disability, was focused on the two key areas: the content considerations communicated in the politician's post related to disability and the linguistic engagement with it through hipertextuality. Based on the analytical framework of persuasive narrative in digital environments (López-Aguirre *et al.*, 2021; Djordjevic, 2025), this study conducted a linguistic-semantic analysis of the posts related to disability disseminated by the political leader. The study included a linguistic analysis of hashtags and social mentions regarding disability. Hypertextual features were analyzed using the online platform Voyant Tools.

On the other hand, the consideration of interactivity and follower engagement enabled an assessment of the persuasive effectiveness of the content disseminated on this platform by the political figure under study. In order to evaluate 'the immersion of followers' (Irala-Hortal, 2014) and their engagement with the published content, the number of comments and 'likes' relative to the number of followers was used as an indicator of both interaction and commitment (Gómez *et al.*, 2021; Djordjevic, 2025).

## 5. Results

The results indicated that people with disabilities appeared in 6.1% of the total posts published by Isabel Díaz Ayuso on *Instagram*. Within the disability-related content, 65.22% consisted of images, while 34.78% included audiovisual material. Only 4.35% of these posts lacked accompanying textual messages or captions.

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The primary theme of 39.13% of the disability-related content focused exclusively on Díaz Ayuso's support for the disabled community and the institutions representing them, highlighting her participation in social and sporting events to promote their work, enhance visibility, and raise public awareness. In this context, a total of 8.7% of disability-related posts were devoted to promoting and supporting the content of disabled influencers, while simultaneously emphasizing the rights of disabled individuals to independence, education, and employment opportunities. In 26.09% of posts featuring people with disabilities, the emphasis was on the promotion of health centres and

hospitals in the Community of Madrid, as well as expressions of personal and professional admiration for the healthcare professionals working there, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than on the visibility of disabled people themselves. In this context, hospitalized individuals, potentially temporarily disabled, were depicted in wheelchairs in both visual and audio visual content.

On the other hand, 34.78% of posts including people with disabilities were thematically linked to Díaz Ayuso's electoral campaign and related political activities, including support for general election candidates and professional presidential events. This category also encompassed professional visits to a range of institutions and venues, as well as interactions with professionals and citizens. In addition, it included less formal events, such as concerts organized by the Community of Madrid, during which the politician was photographed in the presence of individuals using wheelchairs.

Regardless of the context or the visual narrative of images and audio visual content related to disability, Díaz Ayuso was depicted in direct, close, and familiar interaction with disabled individuals in 73.91% of posts. In 17.39% of posts featuring disabled individuals, the politician was not present, while in 8.7% of images, she appeared alone, despite the post being dedicated to an event promoting the visibility of disabled people in which she participated.

With regard to the hypertextuality employed in disability-related posts, Díaz Ayuso used a total of 81 hashtags, 16.05% of which were directly related to disability (e.g., #discapacidad, #integración, #dependencia), referred to sports events organized by the Community of Madrid to raise awareness (e.g., #carreraspopulares, #carrerasolidariarealmadrid, #carrerasaludmental), or promoted venues where products made by people with disabilities could be purchased (e.g., #fundamarketverano, #fundamarket).

Out of a total of 19 social mentions, 36.84% were directed toward institutions, primarily foundations, supporting and providing opportunities for individuals with intellectual and physical disabilities (e.g., @fundacion.realmadrid, @femaddi, @fundacionmanantial, @fundacionalapar, @gruposocialonce, @once.es). In one post, a direct reference was made to an official spokesperson of the foundation *Fundación Cadete* (@nacho\_el\_guay).

The results showed a relatively low level of emotional and textual engagement from followers in posts addressing disability (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of posts with the percentage of followers' emotional engagement

Number of posts	Percentage of followers who reacted emotionally
4,4% (N=1)	7,4%
47,8% (N=11)	<5%
47,8 % (N=11)	<1%

Although the post with the highest levels of textual and emotional engagement concerned the politician's participation in a running event organized by the *Fundación Real Madrid*, which supports children and young people with special needs and emphasizes solidarity as its primary objective, the presence of individuals with disabilities was not visually represented.

## 6. Discussion and conclusions

The analysis of Isabel Díaz Ayuso's social media posts revealed the presence of people with disabilities in a substantial number of publications. Three primary modes of disability representation were identified. The first prominent theme highlights the politician's efforts to promote disability awareness, visibility, and social inclusion. In particular, Díaz Ayuso consistently expressed support for disability-related institutions and individuals and actively participated in collaborative and solidarity-oriented events. It is argued that these actions, combined with the familiar and approachable manner in which she engaged with people with disabilities in her posts, constitute meaningful examples of social change and invite scholarly consideration of emerging forms of online social "movements." Through visual representations of the politician participating in sporting and public events alongside people with disabilities, these posts encouraged individual engagement in solidarity initiatives and sought to mobilize broader societal change toward improved accessibility and inclusion (Mann, 2018).

On the other hand, the inclusion of people with disabilities in her electoral campaign, as well as during official visits to healthcare facilities and cultural and leisure events organized by the community under her administration, reflects the strategic use of rhetorical psycho-emotional techniques in political image-building processes (Djordjevic, 2025). Through these appearances, the politician demonstrated commitment and proximity to both children and adults with disabilities, emphasizing civil engagement, humanitarian action, friendship, and mutual support as core personal values. These elements functioned as powerful tools for strengthening interpersonal relationships with citizens and voters (Djordjevic, 2025). Collectively, such actions contributed to the humanization of her public profile, presenting her as open to diversity and reinforcing perceptions of effective and empathetic leadership (Djordjevic, 2025).

Díaz Ayuso's symbolic participation in public events functioned as powerful tools for strengthening interpersonal relationships with citizens and voters

Considering the limited use of hypertextual elements in the posts, along with the low levels of textual and emotional engagement expressed by followers, no evidence of collective identity formation was identified; therefore, Díaz Ayuso's activity cannot be classified as hashtag activism (Sudirman et al., 2024).

Following this detailed examination of *Instagram* posts featuring people with disabilities, it can be concluded that Isabel Díaz Ayuso presents herself as open to inclusion and social change. This is reflected in her symbolic participation in public initiatives, such as literally "running" through the streets to show support and encouraging others to do the same. However, these posts largely lack substantive political arguments or concrete policy proposals addressing disability-related issues.

Although her followers displayed a certain degree of indifference toward posts in which people with disabilities appeared, content depicting Díaz Ayuso's participation in this solidarity-oriented running event, as well as images in which she appeared alone rather than alongside disability groups, generated higher levels of emotional engagement and textual interaction. Posts featuring people with disabilities during her electoral campaign were also received positively, even though, they appear to have been strategically employed to reinforce her political image, personal appeal, and public awareness rather than to advance explicit policy commitments.

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