

Reframing disability? Channel 4 and Paralympic broadcasting

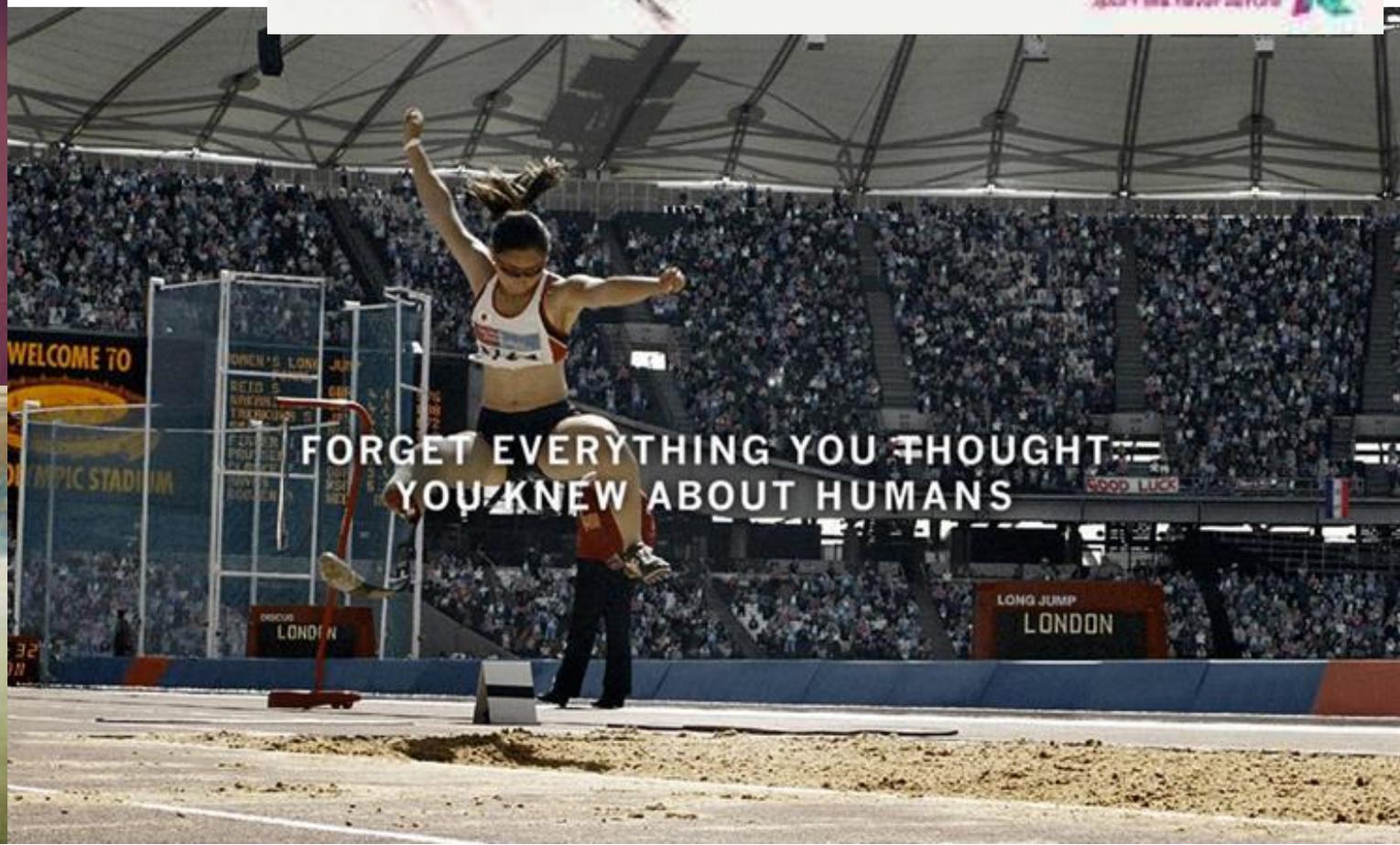


*official broadcaster of the
London 2012 Paralympic Games*



MEET THE SUPERHUMANS

THE PARALYMPIC GAMES ON 4

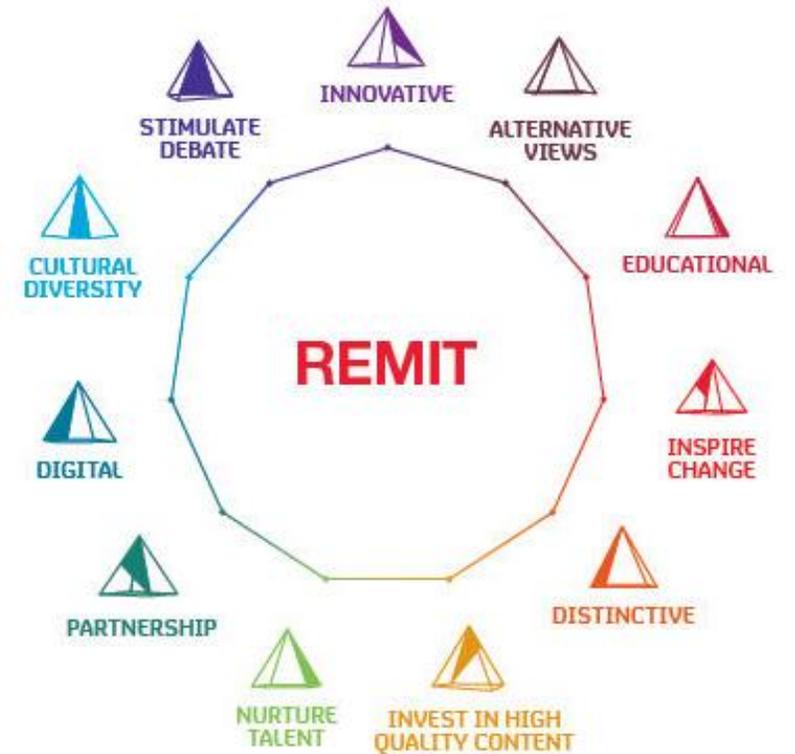




<http://pasccal.com>

*“Channel 4 has a remit which is set out in law and Channel 4’s job is to challenge the status quo, **to give a voice to people who don’t always get heard, to take risks, to inspire change** and obviously we do that commercially and **that’s the difference between us and the BBC.** We have to fund that so we have programmes that are very commercial ... but the Paralympics in a way this is the best example of us doing something that is entertaining but also makes a **broader bigger point about society...**”*

...”because that’s what Channel 4 is here to do, its part of our DNA” [Senior Executive]



A bold new marketing strategy for 2012...

*“2012 was about kind of **placing the sport as an equal to the Olympics** framing it and showing it in a way that had never been shown before. So making the marketing feel like something that Nike would do for other sports... **spend lots of money, lots of posters, lots of TV ads, this is a big deal, shoot it with a gritty style** and all of that. But the ingredient that obviously made it different and we confronted head on the **stories of the athletes** ...that was controversial and quite a lot of people disagreed but our view was for people to connect to it....*

*“...Paralympic sport is unique in that it has this **unique set of stories about people**... you had to shake things up and **be quite confrontational** and be quite in your face but authentic” [Executive producer]*



*“We did a documentary that we put on air called ‘**Inside Incredible Athletes**’ and it was the first time we probably showed what Channel 4’s approach might be to Paralympic sport...”*

...it goes against the grain of how people see disabled athletes before then” [Marketing officer]

...and a superhuman narrative...

*“The idea of athletes being super human emerged , and actually initially the whole development we had came out of **X Men**. So X Men is an unusual piece of **mainstream populist entertainment where disabled people are heroes and it’ a fantastic insight X Men because some impairment produces a strength in another part of who you are** and we wrote some scripts about that and actually we were talking to a film director who had made one of the X Men films about making it”*

*“if you’re an amputee you’re an amputee so **let’s see your stump**, if you’ve been in some terrible accident or some terrible war zone and you’ve got terrible scarring, **this is not a tea party let’s see it**” [Commissioning editor]*



...that paved the way for Rio 2016

*“2012 was all about let’s sell a major sporting event and then by the way the outcome of that will be changing attitudes to disability, with the marketing of 2016 we were like let’s start with changing attitudes to disability and by the way the outcome of that will be a successful sports event. Hence why we decided that we wanted to do something in the marketing that wasn’t just about sport so the advert that we made, the **yes I can advert**, didn’t just feature athletes it featured disabled people doing extraordinary things in all walks of life. That was quite a step change which we never would have been able to do before 2012. I think it gave us a licence to say there’s a bigger prize here which is about using the platform of the Paralympics to really make people think differently about the potential of disabled people in all walks of life...” [Communications manager]*

THE
SUPER-
HUMAN
BAND



YES
I
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Some talking points

- How much of the disabled body do we want to see?
- To what extent does the superhuman narrative act as a form of (dis)empowerment?
- How much can an elite sporting event challenge everyday perceptions and expectations of disabled people?

Thanks for listening



Keep up to date with the project at www.pasccal.com @pasccalproject
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