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■ Project Details

Location: New York, United States

Date: 2021

Client: Unilever

Typology: Product Design

An Inclusive Deodorant

A Case Study

One in four Americans has a disability, yet many products and experiences are not designed with this community in mind. Personal care products, for example deodorants, are inaccessible and yet they need to be used daily, if not multiple times a day. It is very important to rethink personal care products, like deodorants, to be inclusive of a broader audience, not only because of the practical need, but also because of how it boosts self confidence and positive self-image.

How might a deodorant be accessible in apprehension, acquisition and application to many people with temporary or permanent disabilities?

We teamed up with consumer goods company Unilever and creative agency Wunderman Thompson to rethink deodorant bottles to be inclusive of needs of people with visual or upper extremity impairments. The outcome became Degree Inclusive, a roll-on deodorant bottle co-designed with a diverse, international group of people living with disabilities.

“We need to understand the requirements of inclusion by exploring the behaviours of exclusion.”

ALBERTO GONZALES

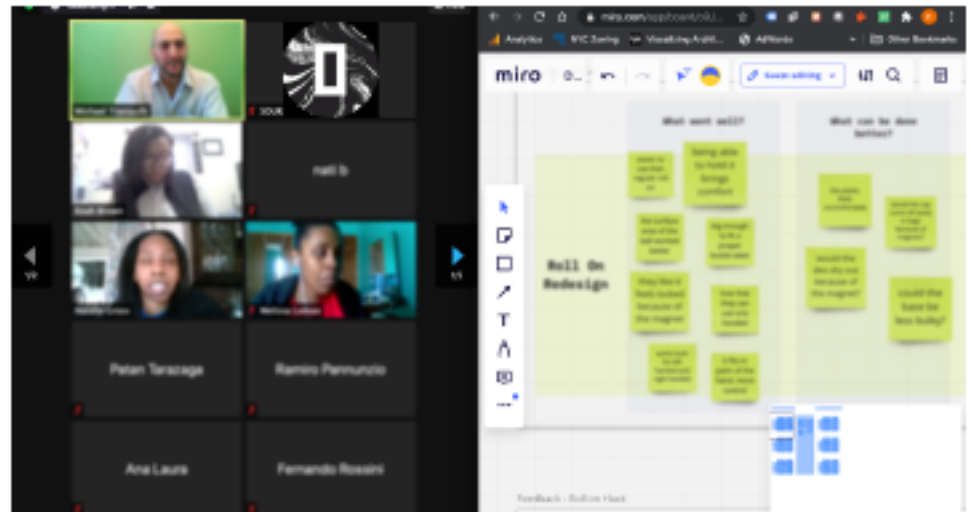
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The prototype integrates key features to make the product handling and application accessible:

- A hook cap to allow for flexibility in use.
- A wide gap in the bottom to allow (ap)prehension and eliminate the need of grip, and single or no-hand application of the deodorant.
- A water drop form to allow for easier grip.
- Use of magnets to close the cap for easy open/close and to provide auditory confirmation when closing
- Embossed logo and braille label for tactile perceptibility
- Larger roll on ball size to allow for quicker and easier application.

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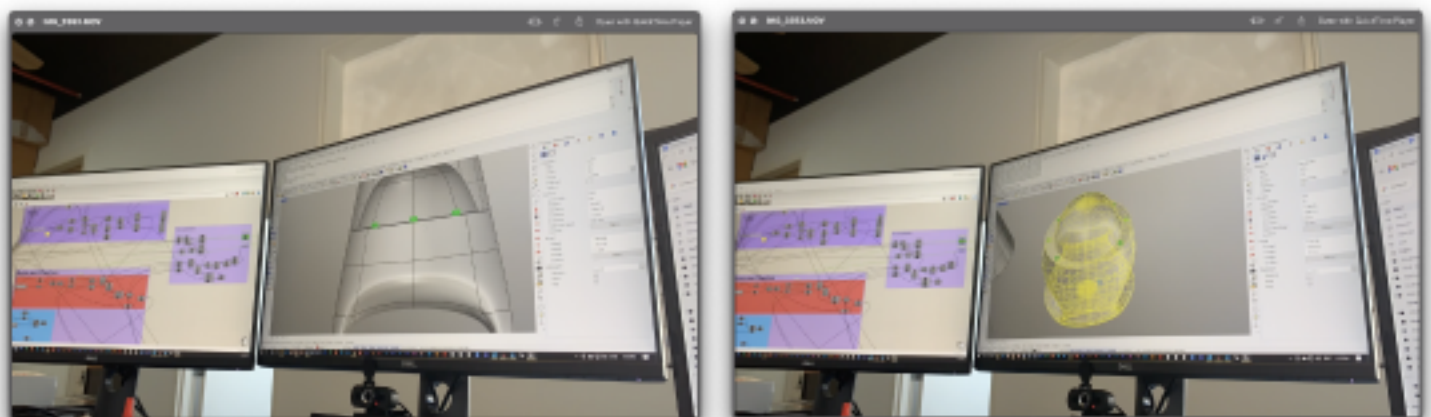
Co-ideation session with people with disabilities

How we did it?

Desk research - Secondary sources give us an understanding of what has been done in the past in terms of deodorant bottle designs, what questions have been asked and answered, and understanding the big gap in the market.

Expert Interviews - with occupational therapists, mental health counselors, inclusive designers

Generative Design - We have facilitated workshops with 8 participants living with various disabilities, to explore needs/wants, ideate design solutions and gather feedback on prototype iterations. The sessions were led by an occupational therapist to ensure deeper understanding on the reasons for the challenges in order to make accurate design decisions.



The design will be distributed to a group of 300 participants living with a disability, to gather further feedback on the first prototype. The feedback of this panel will inform the final design before commercial launch.

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I need this in my life!

I have progressive MS and I would love to try one!

I have a disability in my hands and wrists, and when I saw this I screamed with joy.

I'm a hand therapist at HSS and I would love to be able to show this to my patients.

Samples of initial response from the community.

Food for Thought

In the process of inclusive design, the main goal is to engage all stakeholders in the process. So when we have this melting pot of a diverse group of individuals with different interests, backgrounds, race, gender, culture and abilities, we also create an environment of mixed histories, traumas, stigmas, prejudice and bias. Listening, giving space to build good understanding of each other before even starting the design process is crucial. We should always come to the table (or Zoom) asking:

How might we recognize what is unknown to or misunderstood by us and build empathy towards another?

