



The partnership between Degree and Decentraland aims to promote diversity in the metaverse | Photo source Degree

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A METAVERSE MARATHON PROMOTES ONLINE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

 ADVERTISING & MARKETING

The campaign is part of a brand's campaign to bring the benefits of physical activity to everyone

Spotted: Called the Degree Metathon, and billed as the world's first marathon held in the metaverse, an online race has raised awareness of the need for digital inclusivity. Highlighting the potential of the metaverse to truly reflect the citizens of the world today, deodorant company Degree partnered with Decentraland to improve the range of avatars available and map a running route that worked for wheelchair users.

Held at the end of April 2022, the metathon was headlined by paralympic sprinter Blake Leeper and recording artist Fat Joe. The race was held in a Decentraland metaverse space, and participants had the option to choose from a range of adaptive wearables for their avatars, including running blades and a wheelchair, to more accurately emulate their true physical experience of taking part in a marathon.

The Metathon is part of Degree's five-year Breaking Limits youth sports support programme, and the teams behind the Metathon plan to continue the work to increase the visibility of online diversity. Two goals are to expand the range of available avatars and provide additional accessibility options such as audio description.

From a platform that analyses the diversity of media content, to a zine for women surfers, innovators are working to create positive portrayals of minority groups in popular culture. The Metathon brings this cause into the emerging space of the metaverse.

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Takeaway:

The metaverse is an emerging space, and there is an opportunity to ensure that the virtual world reflects the diversity of its real counterpart from the outset. Campaigns like the Metathon help to raise awareness, but there also needs to be structural change within the industry. For example, only **24 per cent of video game developers are women**. Increasing diversity among those that are building the metaverse will be crucial if it is to be a truly inclusive space.