

Down's Syndrome Association

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New research confirms the benefits to the hospitality sector of employing disabled people.

COMMUNITY FUND

Introduction

Recent research by Bora Kim, Anyu Liu, and Erin Chao Ling "Effects of disability employment on guest perceptions and behavioral intentions in the hotel sector" published in the International Journal of Hospitality Management (January 2025), provides evidence of the significant benefits of inclusive hiring practices in the hospitality sector.

The research demonstrates how employing disabled people can have a positive impact on both guest perceptions and behaviours. Its research reveals that when guests interact with disabled employees, this encounter translates into positive behavioural intentions, such as recommending the hotel to others and choosing to stay there again.

Many consumers today choose to spend money with businesses that align with their personal values, including fairness, equality, and social justice.

When guests see that a hotel is providing meaningful employment opportunities to disabled people, they feel good about supporting a business that is contributing positively to society. This emotional connection can significantly enhance the guest experience and foster long-term loyalty.











Research

As part of the research, participants were asked to imagine that they were on a domestic trip and had entered the lobby of the hotel they had booked. Some were shown a mock-up picture of the hotel reception without any disabled employees; others were shown pictures with a disabled employee. After reviewing the image for at least 10 seconds, they were asked to answer relevant questions relating to their values, their views of the hotel, and whether they would be likely to book or rebook a stay there.

Key Findings

The study highlights that guests perceive hotels that employ disabled people as more socially responsible. This perception enhances the hotel's image, leading to increased trust and loyalty among customers. Guests are more likely to trust and support hotels that demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility through inclusive hiring practices.

Furthermore, when guests see that a hotel is committed to inclusivity and diversity, they are more likely to support the business, recommend it to others, and return for future stays. This positive word of mouth and repurchase intention are critical drivers of business success in the hospitality sector.

Another important finding of the study is that the positive effects of employing disabled people are consistent across different hotel types, including different sizes, star ratings and whether the hotel is part of a chain or independently owned. This means that the benefits of inclusive hiring practices are not limited to luxury hotels or well-known brands; they can be realized by any hotel committed to inclusive employment practices.

The research shows that guests appreciate and support hotels that demonstrate a genuine commitment to diversity and inclusion, regardless of the hotel's size or brand recognition.

By adopting inclusive employment practices, hospitality businesses can differentiate themselves in a crowded market, attract socially conscious travellers, and build a more loyal customer base.

Conclusion



The research by Kim, Liu, and Ling provides compelling evidence that employing disabled people is a win-win for both hospitality businesses and society. Employing disabled people is not just about meeting legal requirements or ticking a box; it's about creating a genuinely inclusive workplace that values diversity.

By enhancing corporate image and reputation, increasing customer loyalty and advocacy, addressing labour shortages, and complying with legal and ethical standards, inclusive hiring practices can drive business success and contribute to broader societal goals.

As more companies recognise the value of diversity and inclusion, the hospitality industry can lead the way in creating a more equitable and inclusive world.

Reference:

Science Direct