

PERSPECTIVES OF HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY EMPLOYEES ON SERVING TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

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Abstract:

A frequently overlooked portion of the leisure travel market is travel by people with disabilities. While regulations implemented world-wide over the past three decades have improved physical access and moved us toward a more inclusive society, organizational culture, including attitudes and training of hospitality industry employees continue to be identified as barriers. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perspective of industry employees who work in direct service positions related to their experience serving travelers with disabilities. Using a mixed methods approach, participants were asked to describe challenges encountered serving travelers with disabilities, training received, and attitudes toward this market sector. Four salient themes emerged: 1) lack of adequate training; 2) limited interaction; 3) lack of resources; and 4) fear. Results suggest that additional training for direct service employees may be one avenue to affect change. Specific focus on the areas of communication, access, inclusive approaches, assistive technology, and policy/regulation is recommended.

Keywords: disability, hospitality, human capital, training, inclusive society