

Beyond “Diversity”: Employment of Persons with Disabilities as a Sustainable Strategy

Jayant Nasa

Indian Institute of Management Udaipur

Arti Srivastava

Indian Institute of Management Udaipur

Prakash Satyavageeswaran

Indian Institute of Management Udaipur

Sundar Bharadwaj

Terry College of Business, University of Georgia

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Abstract

Despite increased opportunities for persons with disabilities (PWDs), their employment remains a challenge. Many firms seem to hire PWDs only under CSR initiatives or as tokens for “diversity.” With such motivations, the employment of PWDs cannot be a sustainable business practice. In this research, we study strategic/marketing implications of employing PWDs in the service sector, thus complementing the services marketing literature that has only looked at PWDs as customers. We conduct qualitative interviews to examine how having PWDs as employees impacts customers, other employees, and the organization. We find that employing PWDs has many advantages. Not only are PWDs more focused and sincere than the “normal” employees, but they have much lower attrition rates too. Having them, particularly in customer-facing roles, enhances customer engagement and improves the corporate image. We also discuss the constraining factors that prevent PWDs’ complete integration into the organization.

Keywords: *Employment strategy; Persons with disabilities; Customer engagement*

Track: Services Marketing