

## HIRING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AS A CSR STRATEGY IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

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According to corporate social responsibility (CSR), firms should conduct activities focusing not only on the self-interest of the firm but also on benefiting society. Drawing on the CSR approach, this study investigates the barriers to employment for people with physical disabilities (PWPDs) in the Hong Kong (HK) tourism industry. Forty-seven human resources (HR) managers, directors, and members of the HK Hotel Association were interviewed. The main barriers to employing PWPDs include firms' lack of intent to employ people with disabilities (PWDs), the physical layout of organizations, the lack of an HR management model related to PWDs, and the lack of communication between industry and related nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) related to PWPDs.

**Key words: Employing people with disabilities; People with physical disabilities (PWPDs); People with disabilities (PWDs); Social responsibility; Barriers**

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### Introduction

It is reasonable to expect that every employer is driven by self-interest to make money; therefore, a company's main goal is to maximize its financial outcome or profit to its own benefit (Cropanzano et al., 2001). However, in the contemporary business environment, which emphasizes organizational social responsibility and impression management, firms should take a more holistic view

beyond self-interest, focusing also on nonfinancial outcomes such as the long-term benefit to the community, society, and the public. In line with this, corporate social responsibility (CSR) involves the activities carried out by companies that not only fulfill self-interest but also take people with physical disabilities (PWPDs) into account. This differentiation strategy, which focuses on social responsibility and fairness, is thought to be more attractive for both internal (i.e., employees) and

external (i.e., consumers) members, as employing people with disabilities (PWDs) can establish a positive impression of CSR in the public (Kalargyrou, 2014; Kalargyrou et al., 2018; Kalargyrou et al., 2020; Kalargyrou & Volis, 2014; Lindsay et al., 2018; Markel & Barclay, 2009).

To gain a sustainable competitive advantage, companies utilize both market and nonmarket strategies (Baron, 1995; Frynas et al., 2017). In the market model, businesses try to minimize the cost per unit and to differentiate their products and services to be more attractive to consumers (Parnell, 2018). Additionally, firms may face opportunities or threats from the external environment, including governments, communities, industry actors, employees, and customers. To capture opportunities or overcome threats, businesses develop and implement nonmarket strategies related to their ethical, legal, economic, and philanthropic responsibilities (Funk & Hirschman, 2017). These nonmarket strategies include CSR practices and building strong relationships with business partners, politicians, and rivals to maximize effectiveness regarding the dynamics of the market (Mellahi et al., 2016; Parnell, 2017). Consequently, the business, management, and marketing literature offer discussions concerning whether firms should employ PWDs as a CSR practice or nonmarket strategy.

Previous studies (e.g., Kalargyrou, 2014; Kalargyrou et al., 2018; Kalargyrou & Volis, 2014; Kuo & Kalargyrou, 2014; Lindsay et al., 2019; Moore et al., 2018) mainly focused on employing PWDs from the perspective of employers, customers, and coworkers. However, few studies have focused on CSR as it relates to the employment of PWDs. Particularly in the tourism industry, firms are encouraged to employ PWDs as a differentiation strategy, concentrating on social fairness. Companies engaging in CSR present equal and just employment opportunities that may encourage several nonfinancial outcomes (Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2012; Graffam et al., 2002; Johnson & Greening, 1999; Siperstein et al., 2006), such as improved management practices, product quality, operational efficiencies, attractiveness to investors, and demographic diversity (e.g., employees with disabilities). Other studies (e.g., Gröschl, 2005, 2007; Kaye et al., 2011) offer advice concerning the incentive packages policymakers should develop to encourage firms to employ more PWDs.

The challenges related to employing PWDs or, specifically, PWPDs, have not been fully resolved and may not be resolved in the near future because of persistent stereotypes and general assumptions about PWPDs' capacity for work (regardless of the disability type), coworker and management reluctance, and the acceptance level of customers. Previous studies, primarily conducted in developed countries such as the UK and US, identified solutions relevant for Western companies, societies, and governments (Lindsay et al., 2018). However, there is limited research addressing the benefits and challenges of employing PWDs in the Eastern context (Kalargyrou et al., 2020). Both academic scholars and industry practitioners find exploring the potential challenges and barriers that hinder the employment of PWDs in the industry to be crucial. CSR provides a rich area for PWDs' development and creates important connections between a macro view—from the perspective of organizational decision-makers—and a microview—from the perspective of individual employees and customers.

To resolve the abovementioned issues, and to better apply the CSR approach to integrate PWDs into the labor force, facilitate community inclusion, and protect their civil rights, exploratory studies identifying endogenous industry-focused and disability-focused solutions relevant to Eastern societies are needed. Accordingly, the present study aims to address the employment barriers that exist for PWPDs in the Hong Kong (HK) full-service hotels as one of strong stakeholder in the tourism industry.

## Literature Review

### *Definition and Impact of Disability*

*Disability* is a multifaceted, dynamic, complex, and contested concept as it relates to individuals, organizations, and societies. Two main perspectives define disability: medical and social. Based on the medical perspective, *disability* is “a long- or short-term reduction in a person's activity resulting from an acute or chronic condition” (Mont, 2004, p. 5). The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) defines a person with a disability as someone who (1) has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more “major life activities,” (2) has a record of such impairment, or (3)

is regarded as having such impairment (Office of Disability Employment Policy, 2009). However, Anatsioui and Kauffman (2013) provided a social model of disability by emphasizing the dichotomy between impairment and disability. According to the social perspective, *disability* can be defined as “the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers” (Barnes, 1991, p. 2).

The World Report on Disability (World Health Organization, 2011) suggested a balanced approach that gives appropriate weight to different aspects of disability, as disability should be viewed as neither purely medical nor purely social; PWDs often experience social problems arising from their health conditions. Definitions of *disability* in the workforce vary by country. For example, Australia defines *disability* as scoring 20 points on impairment tables and experiencing a 15-hr/week work incapacity; in Italy, *disability* is defined as a 66.6% work capacity reduction; in Spain, it is defined as a 33% work capacity reduction in one’s usual occupation; and in the UK, *disability* is defined as experiencing limitations in everyday activities relevant to work (Förster, 2007).

PWDs are a diverse population. According to the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF), approved by the World Health Assembly, there are three dimensions of disability, including body structure and function (and impairment thereof), activity (and activity restrictions), and participation (and participation restrictions). ICF classifies disabilities under eight subgroups: mobility and physical impairments, spinal cord disability, head injuries—brain disability, vision disability, hearing disability, cognitive or learning disabilities, psychological disorders, and invisible disabilities (World Health Organization, 2001).

As this study focuses on the HK tourism industry, the researchers accept the definition established by Special Topics Report No. 62 of the Census and Statistics Department of HK (2014). According to this report, the nine subgroups of disabilities include the following: 1) restriction in body movement, 2) seeing difficulty, 3) hearing difficulty, 4) speech difficulty, 5) mental illness/mood disorder, 6) autism, 7) specific learning difficulties, 8) attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and 9)

intellectual disability. This classification indicates that the special needs of and accommodations for specific groups of PWDs differ regarding employment. Consequently, some employers may be willing to employ certain groups of PWDs but not others. Human resources (HR) policies must consider the match between the jobs and the competencies of the various groups of PWDs rather than just focusing on PWDs as a homogeneous group. To address the specific solutions regarding hiring PWDs and specific forms of discrimination that may occur, especially within the tourism industry, this study focuses on PWPDs (i.e., those who experience restriction in body movement), as identified in Special Topics Report No. 62:

Persons with disabilities include those with restriction of or those who lacked ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. “Persons with restriction in body movement” were defined as those who had perceived themselves as having long-term mobility difficulties with extremities/body or using specialized aids/tools for extremities/body movement.

#### *Research on PWPDs in the Tourism Industry*

Several studies (e.g., Jasper & Waldhart, 2013; Kalargyrou et al., 2018; Kalargyrou et al., 2020) have focused on the employment of PWDs in the tourism industry. These studies investigated the benefits and concerns related to the employment of PWDs from the perspective of employers, customers, and coworkers. Several studies show that, in the tourism industry, the employment of PWDs positively impacts individual performance (Ingamells et al., 1991), as they adapt well, have low absenteeism and turnover, and interact well with coworkers (see Chi & Qu, 2003; Kalargyrou, 2014). However, a few studies (Gröschl, 2004, 2005, 2007; Jasper & Waldhart, 2013; Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2015; Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2012; Kalargyrou & Volis, 2014) indicated concerns or challenges related to the employment of PWDs in the US and Canada (Huang & Chen, 2015). These challenges involve accommodation costs; the need to modify the workplace; the nature of the work schedule; the quality of service; fears regarding potentially limited communication; the interaction between

employees with and without disabilities; concerns regarding a lack of education; unfamiliarity with disabilities; PWDs needing excessive training and constant monitoring; PWDs lacking multitasking skills; PWDs having mobility challenges; physical attractiveness concerns; increased healthcare coverage costs; transportation issues; and supervisors' uncertainty about disciplining, evaluating, and managing employees with disabilities.

The existing studies related to the employment of PWDs focused on practices in developed countries rather than on specific disability-focused, industry-focused, or HR-focused practices (Gröschl, 2013; Kalargyrou et al., 2020). As such, further studies should address these issues from the perspectives of employers in the tourism industries of developing countries. The current study examines businesses in the HK hotel industry as a crucial component of the tourism industry. The main reasons for selecting HK as the context of this study include the community's social and cultural complexity, its strategic position in Southeast Asia, its economic and administrative integration efforts, its intensely competitive business environment, and the changes in its organizations' structures. HK is one of the most popular destinations in the world, serving approximately 60 million tourists annually. Two of the most common industry sectors employing PWDs are the HK financing, insurance, real estate, professional, and business services sector, and the retail, accommodation, and food services sector. Although HK labor laws cover discrimination issues for PWDs, there is no legally binding quota system policy regarding PWDs' employment in private companies. Therefore, hotel companies in HK provide an ideal sample concerning issues related to the barriers that exist to the employment of PWDs, particularly concerning the implications for companies and public policies for policymakers.

#### *CSR and PWDs*

The employment issues related to PWDs are associated with CSR. Only recently has the field of CSR, particularly relating to the employment of PWDs, gained popularity (Serenko & Bontis, 2009). *CSR* refers to "context-specific organizational actions and policies that take into account stakeholders' expectations and the triple bottom

line of economic, social, and environmental performance" (Aguins, 2011, p. 855). In other words, CSR involves the activities carried out by a company that enhance the social good and go beyond both the benefit of the organization and what the government policy requires, instead directly contributing to minority groups (e.g., PWDs), local communities, and the larger society. From an uncertainty management perspective (van den Bos, 2001), employees generally lack information about whether or not to trust their employers; thus, they do not always know whether they are being treated fairly or whether they are exploited by employers. When CSR is initiated by an organization (e.g., the organization hires a PWD in the workplace), such an act is an indicator of trustworthiness and that employees are being treated fairly by the firm, according to how fairly the firm treats PWDs. This CSR action can also help strengthen mutual trust and social exchange relationships between employees and employers and further improve organizational performance (Rupp, 2011).

From a moral and ethical perspective, when firms include PWD programs, customers and the general public tend to see them as responsible organizations, which ultimately increases firms' employment attractiveness with good brand image, positive brand management, customer satisfaction and commitment to the company, and favorable firm identification and return intention (Kalargyrou, 2014; Kalargyrou & Volis, 2014; Serenko & Bontis, 2009).

In Western society, research shows that 92% of customers feel more favorable towards firms that employ PWDs and are more willing to visit a socially responsible firm, and 87% report that they prefer to work with businesses that employ PWDs (Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2012; Kalargyrou et al., 2018) rather than those that do not have a PWD program in place. In HK, only a few companies, including Happy Veggies, UBS, Disney, and JW Marriott, currently utilize CSR and include PWDs. However, these examples do show that inclusive business models can grow diversity while also building stronger social responsibility and loyalty by providing opportunities for PWDs (Gu, 2015). However, these cases further show that there are opportunities for improvement in successfully employing PWDs in the HK tourism industry. Thus, more research is needed to gain a deeper

understanding, formulate strategies, and make policies for employing PWPDs that explores how organizational programs involving CSR mature over time. In addition, the evolution of instrumental development from different stakeholders' perspectives for engaging in CSR in the tourism industry is important, to pave the way for long-term success and impress management. The current study comes at a time when employers are increasingly involved in CSR in organizations; as such, we aim to fill this research gap and strive to examine the potential challenges and barriers related to the employment of PWDs in the Eastern hotel and tourism industry.

## Methodology

### *Research Setting*

A qualitative research design was employed for the present study to gain deeper understanding of the employment of PWPDs. The researchers planned to conduct in-depth interviews with HR directors, managers, and supervisors from 134 hotels. The sample hotels were all part of the Hong Kong Hotels Association. This study employed purposive sampling, wherein a group of people was intentionally sampled that could best inform the study about the problem under examination (Creswell, 2007). The sample included both hotels that hire PWPDs and hotels that do not hire PWPDs. The researchers considered the hotels from these associations because larger companies were more likely to proactively (i.e., going beyond the requirements of the law) recruit PWDs when compared to smaller companies (Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2012).

A semistructured questionnaire containing two sections was developed. The first section included questions specifically for hotels that employ PWPDs or hotels that do not employ PWPDs. If the hotel completing the questionnaire did employ PWPDs, the following questions (Kalargyrou, 2014, pp. 143–144) were asked (with a definition of PWPDs given as those with a restriction in body movement and those who perceive themselves as having long-term mobility difficulties with extremities/body or using specialized aids/tools for extremities/body movement; those with a restriction in body movement can be people in wheelchairs or people missing one arm from the shoulder down):

- Describe the benefits of proactively employing PWPDs (i.e., going beyond the Selective Placement Division of the Labor Department of the Government of HK SAR).
- Describe the barriers, challenges, and costs of proactively employing PWPDs.
- Suggest how you could overcome the above-mentioned challenges of proactively employing PWPDs.
- Please describe the best practices of your disability inclusion initiative.
- In what positions do you employ PWPDs, and what is the skillset required?

If hotels did not employ PWPDs, the following questions were asked with the same definition of PWPDs being given:

- Currently, how many PWDs you hire?
- Describe what type employment strategies or PWDs you use?
- You do not hire PWPDs, what type of PWDs have you hired, and what are they role in the hotel?
- Is the employment of PWDs a part of your hotel's strategy or of your CSR practices?
- Describe why you have not hired PWPDs so far.
- How can your company attract and integrate more PWPDs and PWDs in the tourism industry (e.g., hotels and restaurants)? Could this model be adapted in the front (e.g., front desk) as much as in the back of the house (e.g., kitchen)? Can you suggest specific jobs for specific types of disabilities?

The second part of the questionnaire measured managers' demographic characteristics, such as their age, gender, education, and years of experience, and hotel characteristics, such as the number of employees in their departments.

### *Data Collection*

The interviews were conducted in either English or Cantonese, depending on the language the interviewees felt most confident speaking. The interviews were conducted by a research assistant able to speak and translate both English and Cantonese, who is trained in managing in-depth interviews and the literature related to PWDs. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in English. The ideal sample size in a qualitative study is between 15 and

Table 1  
Profile of Respondents

Hotel Code	Gender	Age Group	Formal Education	Current Position	Managerial Experience (Years)	Experience in the Present Organization (Years)	Received Training Related to Diverse Workforce Management Related to Disabilities	Hotel's Stars
1	Male	26-35	Undergraduate degree	Human Resources Officer	Less than 1 year	4-7 years	No	5
2	Female	36-45	Master or/and Ph.D.	Human Resources Manager	4-7 years	Less than 1 year	No	4
3	Female	26-35	Undergraduate degree	Human Resources Manager	8-10 years	Less than 1 year	No	5
4	Female	46-55	Trade or technical school	Human Resources Manager	More than 10 years	4-7 years	No	4
5	Female	36-45	Trade or technical school	Human Resources Manager	4-7 years	1-3 years	Yes	4
6	Female	46-55	High school diploma	Senior Human Resources Officer	8-10 years	More than 10 years	No	4
7	Female	26-35	Undergraduate degree	Assistant Human Resources Manager	4-7 years	1-3 years	No	4
8	Female	26-35	Undergraduate degree	Human Resources Officer	Less than 1 year	1-3 years	No	3
9	Male	36-45	Undergraduate degree	Human Resources Manager	8-10 years	More than 10 years	No	3
10	Female	26-35	High school diploma	Personnel Officer	1-3 years	4-7 years	No	3
11	Female	36-45	Trade or technical school	Personnel Manager	8-10 years	4-7 years	No	4
12	Female	(unwilling to disclose)	(unwilling to disclose)	Administration Officer	4-7 years	More than 10 years	No	3
13	Male	46-55	Undergraduate degree	Human Resources Manager	More than 10 years	1-3 years	No	3
14	Female	36-45	Trade or technical school	Human Resources Manager	More than 10 years	Less than 1 year	Yes	3
15	Female	36-45	Undergraduate degree	Human Resources Manager	More than 10 years	1-3 years	Yes	5
16	Male	25 or younger	Undergraduate degree	Human Resources Coordinator	1-3 years	1-3 years	No	5
17	Female	26-35	Undergraduate degree	Assistant Human Resources Manager	1-3 years	Less than 1 year	No	4
18	Female	36-45	Undergraduate degree	Assistant Human Resources Manager	4-7 years	1-3 years	Yes	4
19	Female	(unwilling to disclose)	Trade or technical school	Assistant Talent & Culture Manager	1-3 years	Less than 1 year	No	4
20	Male	26-35	Master or/and Ph.D.	Assistant Manager (Recruitment)	1-3 years	1-3 years	No	5
21	Female	(unwilling to disclose)	Undergraduate degree	Human Resources Officer	4-7 years	4-7 years	No	4
22	Female	26-35	Trade or technical school	Assistant Human Resources Officer	Less than 1 year	1-3 years	No	4

(continued)

Table 1 (Continued)

Hotel Code	Gender	Age Group	Formal Education	Current Position	Managerial Experience (Years)	Experience in the Present Organization (Years)	Received Training Related to Diverse Workforce Management Related to Disabilities	Hotel's Stars
23	Female	26-35	Undergraduate degree	Senior People Development Officer	1-3 years	1-3 years	Yes	5
24	Male	26-35	Undergraduate degree	Human Resources Officer	1-3 years	1-3 years	No	4
25	Female	26-35	Undergraduate degree	Talent & Culture Manager	4-7 years	Less than 1 year	No	4
26	Female	36-45	Undergraduate degree	Human Resources Manager	More than 10 years	More than 10 years	No	3
27	Female	46-55	Undergraduate degree	Assistant Director of Human Resources	More than 10 years	More than 10 years	No	4
28	Female	36-45	Trade or technical school	Assistant Human Resources Manager	More than 10 years	More than 10 years	No	5
29	Male	26-35	Undergraduate degree	Human Resources Officer	1-3 years	Less than 1 year	No	4
30	Female	46-55	Undergraduate degree	Human Resources Manager	More than 10 years	More than 10 years	No	3
31	Female	(unwilling to disclose)	High school diploma	Human Resources Manager	More than 10 years	Less than 1 year	No	4
32	Male	26-35	Undergraduate degree	Assistant Human Resources Officer	Less than 1 year	Less than 1 year	No	4
33	Male	26-35	Undergraduate degree	Human Resources and Training Manager	8-10 years	Less than 1 year	No	3
34	Male	26-35	Undergraduate degree	Assistant Human Resources Manager	4-7 years	1-3 years	No	5
35	Female	36-45	High school diploma	Administration Officer	Less than 1 year	4-7 years	No	3
36	Female	26-35	Undergraduate degree	Senior Human Resources Officer	Less than 1 year	4-7 years	No	4
37	Female	25 or younger	Undergraduate degree	Human Resources Assistant	Less than 1 year	Less than 1 year	No	5
38	Female	25 or younger	Undergraduate degree	Assistant Human Resources Officer	Less than 1 year	Less than 1 year	No	5
39	Female	26-35	Master or/and Ph.D.	Assistant Human Resources Manager	1-3 years	4-7 years	Yes	4
40	Female	25 or younger	Undergraduate degree	Human Resources Officer	4-7 years	1-3 years	No	3
41	Female	(unwilling to disclose)	(unwilling to disclose)	Assistant Human Resources Manager	(unwilling to disclose)	(unwilling to disclose)	No	4
42	Male	26-35	Undergraduate degree	Human Resources Manager	4-7 years	Less than 1 year	Yes	5
43	Female	36-45	Postgraduate/Professional	Assist Director of Human Capital	8-10 years	Less than 1 year	No	5
44	Female	26-35	Undergraduate degree	Assistant Human Resources Manager	1-3 years	1-3 years	No	5
45	Female	36-45	Master or/and Ph.D.	Administrative Director	More than 10 years	More than 10 years	No	4
46	Male	46-55	Trade or technical school	Director of Human Resources	More than 10 years	More than 10 years	No	4
47	Female	36-45	Trade or technical school	Director of Human Resources	More than 10 years	4-7 years	No	4

40 people (Gröschl, 2005; Huang & Chen, 2015). Thus, all the hotels were contacted. Eighty-seven hotels were not surveyed because they declined to participate in the study either verbally or by email, they refused to transfer the call to responsible staff, or the researchers received no results after repeated calls. While 46 hotels agreed to be surveyed by phone, only one hotel was surveyed using a face-to-face interview. The first interview was conducted on August 15, 2018, and the final interview was conducted on November 17, 2018. Interviews usually lasted between 15 and 30 min. The interviews took a shorter time than expected, as most hotels did not proactively employ PWDs. Table 1 presents the profiles of the respondents and their hotels.

### *Analysis*

After the interviews, a bilingual researcher trained in the process transcribed the interviews. Then one of the authors, who had previous experience conducting in-depth interviews, used the interview questions to develop categories and clusters via an Excel Spreadsheet, as applied by Gröschl (2005). The author coded interviews' notes by searching the concepts to hiring PWD themes. The identified themes were further refined and finalized by the researchers based on reading, recoding, and revising the interview notes. Consequently, the inductively orientated data analysis approach (Miles et al., 2013) was utilized in this study. The qualitative data were manually analyzed, although many software tools offer options to analyze the qualitative data. The main reason for this was that the authors' experience and immersion in the data management process brought advantages for an interpretative approach rather than a mechanical analysis conducted by software tools (Gröschl, 2005) in the exploratory study. In addition to this another reason was that the responses of participants were not long, which generated complex situations.

### *Findings*

#### *Current Employment of PWDs in HK's Hotels*

At the time of the investigation, only 12 of the 47 hotels employed PWDs (see Table 2). Six hotels employed five or more PWDs; however, the rest

of the hotels employed only one or two PWDs. Additionally, only two hotels had a quota system in place concerning the employment of PWDs. The six hotels (1, 2, 20, 27, 37, and 38) that proactively employed PWDs are private hotels established before 2000 (one hotel is owned by a firm in another country). Four are five-star hotels and two are four-star hotels. These differences did not generate statistically significant differences related to PWDs' and PWPDs' employment in hotels. These numbers indicate that the employment rate of PWDs in HK hotels is relatively very low, as was also seen in 14 hotels in Canada (Gröschl, 2005). The lack of quota systems in most hotels shows that the hotels had no intent to seek to employ PWDs.

#### *Employment Strategies of the Hotels Concerning PWDs*

To identify the hotels' employment strategies concerning PWDs, researchers asked them how employment initiatives for hiring PWDs were started. All the respondents indicated that they had no specified employment strategies concerning PWDs. In other words, the first step toward employment did not come from the hotels, except for a few hotels that collaborated with special disability schools or NGOs. For example, Hotel 23 stated, "We just started a trial program with Hong Kong Down Syndrome Association to let the persons with Down Syndrome work in the hotel for two months." Hotel 2 stated, "We are in contact with the NGOs. We have cooperated with IDEAL [the Intellectually Disabled Education and Advocacy League] to provide job opportunities to people with Down Syndrome."

In some cases, NGOs approached hotels or referred PWDs for hotel employment, as indicated by Hotel 20's statement, "An organization concerned about persons with hearing and speech disabilities approached us." In many cases, PWDs or their relatives approached the hotels concerning regular recruitment posts. Hotel 5 stated, "We had hired a person with hearing disabilities in the past for dishwashing. Her mother saw the vacancy advertisement and called the hotel for details." Hotel 22 stated, "We hired a person with hearing impairment in the past. He applied to the post of dishwashing by himself."



Table 2  
Current Employment of People With Disabilities (PWDs) in Hong Kong's Hotels

Hotel Code	No. of Employees in the Hotel	No. of PWDs in the Hotel	Quota (as Percentage) to Employ PWDs
1	769	6	—
2	370	7	1–2
3	75	—	—
4	130	1	—
5	110	—	—
6	135	—	—
7	80	—	—
8	90	—	—
9	80	—	—
10	150	—	—
11	80	—	—
12	70	—	—
13	70	—	—
14	40	—	—
15	70	1	—
16	>500	—	—
17	69	—	—
18	53	—	—
19	200	—	—
20	900	5	—
21	72	—	—
22	120	—	—
23	250	—	—
24	118	1	—
25	120	—	—
26	65	—	—
27	347	12	—
28	>100	1	—
29	100	—	—
30	23	—	—
31	120	—	—
32	160	—	—
33	120	—	—
34	400	—	—
35	30	—	—
36	168	—	—
37	500	8	—
38	428	10	—
39	244	2	3–5
40	64	—	—
41	120	—	—
42	185	—	—
43	374	2	—
44	1000	—	—
45	150	—	—
46	260	—	—
47	200	—	—

#### *Job and Disability Types in PWDs Employment*

According to the findings, none of the participating hotels employed PWDs. The hotels employed PWDs, including those with hearing or speech, amblyopia or visual, and mental or intellectual disabilities. These employees usually worked in the

steward department and were rarely employed in the administration department. PWDs in the hotel environment generally do not interact with customers; however, one good example of PWDs encountering customers was indicated in a statement by Hotel 36's: "We hired a person with visual

impairment (one of his eyes) in the past. He worked in the Front Office.”

*PWDs’ Employment as a Part of Hotels’ Strategies or CSR Practices*

Employment of PWDs can be seen as a part of CSR practices. Hence, we asked the participants whether the employment of PWDs was a part of their hotel’s strategy or of their CSR practices. Although a few hotels indicated that the employment of PWDs was a part of their CSR practices, the employment of PWDs, specifically, was not. For example, Hotel 1 stated the following:

Our purpose is to guide every aspect of our business, from how we care for our people, communities, and planet, to how we source products and protect human rights. We are committed to enriching the communities we call home and protecting the planet for future generations.

Many of the hotels indicated that it was not a part of CSR practices due to limited workforce availability or because it is against an equal opportunities policy. Hotel 15 stated, “No. Because it is fair,” whereas Hotel 4 stated, “No. If a person is capable for the job, we do not mind if he/she is PWDs or not.”

*PWPDs’ Employment Barriers in Hotels*

The hotel work environment or the layout of hotel facilities for PWDs was raised as one of the key barriers to employing PWDs in HK hotels. As Hotel 8 explained, “No equipment specified for the PWDs and the limitation of working environment are the major reasons. Our hotel space is not enough.” The nature of the work in the tourism industry was identified as another barrier, as some determined it is not appropriate for PWDs. Hotel 23 stated, “The mode of operation of a hotel is labor intensive and requires physical work. The work type is not suitable for PWDs.” Other barriers identified by several HR managers included there being no applications from PWDs, no suitable or qualified candidates, no specified previous or current search for PWDs, no platform on which to connect with PWDs, PWDs requiring a longer training time, a lack of

training provided for staff members, and no suitable positions for PWDs.

*HR Managers’ Recommendations for Increasing PWDs’ Employment in the Tourism Industry*

We asked participants how their hotels attract and integrate more PWDs in the tourism industry (e.g., hotels and restaurants), whether this model could be adapted in the front (e.g., front desk) as much as the in the back of the house, and whether they could suggest specific jobs for specific types of disabilities to create practical solutions for the employment of PWDs. Hotel 25 raised a very important issue related to changing the culture for the employment of PWDs in the tourism industry, explaining, “Change of culture is important. Our staff members are not comfortable working with PWDs. PWDs are also concerned about the views of the others. If they work together, more communication is required.”

Other recommendations identified by the managers included collaborating with NGOs connected with PWDs; amending some of the public facilities and the working stations in the hotels for PWDs; educating current employees, supervisors, and managers on how to work well with PWDs; posting job vacancies in the Labor Department or related NGOs connected with PWDs; providing full-time staff benefits, or boss or top management support; and organizing related talks or seminars.

Several HR managers indicated that some front-of-house jobs might be suitable for both PWDs and other PWDs. However, many respondents recommended jobs for PWDs in the back of the house. In terms of back-of-house positions, respondents usually indicated that kitchen and steward work are more suitable for PWDs; in addition, the HR, sales, and financial and marketing departments were considered suitable for PWDs. The tourism industry, particularly hotels, in HK faces a shortage in the workforce. One respondent indicated that his/her hotel is not suitable for PWDs. The hotel has difficulties hiring employees in general, as it is located on an outlying island. Thus, employees of the hotel must be able to multitask. For example, one employee might work in purchasing, but he/she might also be responsible for administrative work when necessary. Hotels must realize that having a

PWD employment model may help minimize the employee shortage in the industry.

#### Discussion and Conclusions

PWDs' employment can be seen as a part of CSR practices, giving the hotel two advantages as used by many companies. Potentially, employing PWDs could be used as revenue-generating strategy, if customers are willing to pay more for this type of CSR practice. Additionally, firms could use PWDs' employment as a brand-building strategy. Many customers might be more willing to visit hotels employing PWDs compared with those that do not. Consequently, many hotels as part of the tourism industry might fail to benefit from the potential advantages of PWDs' employment. Therefore, this study investigated the barriers to employment for PWPDS in the HK tourism industry. Overall, this study makes several contributions. First, theoretically, the CSR approach suggests that firms should move beyond self-interest to also concentrate on benefiting external communities and societies (Rupp, 2011). In doing so, we conducted in-depth interviews with 47 managers, directors, and members of the HK Hotel Association about employing PWPDS. Results found that the main barriers are hotels' lack of intention to employ PWPDS, the physical layout of the firms not being appropriate for PWPDS, and the lack of a management plan or insufficient communication between relevant bodies. This study extends the existing literature from Western to Eastern employers, which until now have been given limited attention concerning the employment of PWPDS in the tourism industry.

Second, despite significant implications for the tourism industry, the current research on PWPDS' employment in the hotel context remains limited. Given that firms are increasingly involved in CSR as an instrument with which to raise peoples' overall impression of the organization and become regarded as moral and ethical firms by the general public, the present study has integrated the CSR approach—and the related literature on PWPDS in the tourism industry in general—to respond to the interests and concerns of different employers. The study also investigated several barriers to PWPDS' employment and, finally, offered several important suggestions and future actions for firms interested

in employing PWPDS to the benefit of society, the community, and the industry.

Last, drawing on a CSR view, this is the first study to explore PWPDS' employment in the tourism industry in HK. This study contributes to the existing literature by unveiling the challenges and barriers that many employers are currently facing relating to the employment of PWPDS. CSR is one of theoretical implications that advances our understanding of existing challenges relating to employment of PWPDS in the industry, but more theoretical development is needed to flesh out these barriers, such as examining the differential effects of fairness dimensions, including procedural, relational, and distribution justice towards PWPDS, along with empirical verification.

The present study evaluated the barriers to employing PWDs, specifically PWPDS, in the HK hotel industry as a very important component of the tourism industry. This study did not find any HR best practices regarding the employment of PWPDS in the industry. Hotels' lack of intent to employ PWDs, evidenced by not making PWDs' employment part of their CSR practices, is one significant barrier. Corporate commitment to PWDs' employment is not sufficient in the industry. It appears that hotels in HK do not prioritize or engage in proactively employing PWDs, as has been seen in the other regions (Gröschl, 2005) and industries (Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2015). The second barrier to employment is the lack of accommodations for PWPDS as workers related to the hotels' physical layout (Huang & Chen, 2015; Kaye et al., 2011). Hotels seem unwilling to invest in adapting their physical layout to encourage the employment of PWPDS or PWDs. The third barrier is that hotels do not have HR management models for PWDs in place, including hiring, recruitment, retaining, training, and retirement practices integrated into HR management policies. The lack of a HR model, which may contribute to building stronger communication and relationships between employees with and without disabilities (Gröschl, 2007), may hinder the development of PWDs' employment in hotels. HR employees are not sufficiently trained in understanding how to deal with PWPDS.

The fourth barrier is the lack of communication between hotels and related NGOs and government agencies. There is no communication between

hotels and NGOs related to PWPDs. To establish successful employment strategies for PWDs and PWPDs, the partnership between hotels and any related organization plays a critical role (Kaye et al., 2011; Kirakosyan, 2016). The final barrier occurs when PWPDs fail to apply for vacant positions in the hotels. This is an important problem for society and policymakers. Further studies should address why PWPDs do not apply for the positions or are unable to determine what positions to apply for.

### Practical Implications

#### *Recommendations for Hotels and Other Tourism Firms*

One of the main barriers to PWPDs' employment is a general lack of awareness or reliance on stereotypes regarding the capabilities of PWPDs in the hotel and tourism industry workforce. Consequently, this study offers recommendations for possible actions at the strategic and tactical levels. At the strategic level, the top managers, as key decision makers, should provide strong commitment and support to employing PWPDs and PWDs. To show their intent to employ PWPDs and PWDs, managers must develop a PWDs-specific strategy or policy, addressing 1) a climate of justice (i.e., treating people with dignity and respect or being fair), and 2) CSR practices, establishing a quota (of at least 1% of total employment) for employing PWDs. This strategic commitment to developing an HR management model for the employment of PWDs should be integrated with existing HR management practices. However, to implement these policies, managers must create a just and supporting corporate culture between employees with and without disabilities to increase effective communication among them.

At the tactical level, hotels should expend more effort in taking the initiative to build partnerships with PWDs-related organizations, enhance channels for posting vacancies, get involved with disability-related job activities/fairs, contact career centers at colleges and universities when vacancies arise, and provide internship and mentoring programs for youth with disabilities. They should work with related organizations to eliminate stereotypes and address the fears current employees

have about working with PWDs. To do this, HR managers should provide employers and other managers with learning opportunities and information about the capabilities and performance of PWDs to increase their confidence in hiring them; reduce stereotypes by providing training to current employees, making them feel comfortable being around PWDs; and conduct workshops to help promote and educate individuals in schools or universities (i.e., to educate possible future employees as early as possible).

#### *Recommendations for Policymakers*

Policymakers play a crucial role in the building and maintenance of societies. They should consider developing industry-specific employment policies to minimize financial burdens and lawsuits related to equal employment opportunities. Policymakers should find ways to work with companies in relation to the employment of PWPDs and PWDs. Thus, policymakers should take the initiative to build and lead partnerships between industry-specific and disability-specific programs to increase company awareness regarding PWPDs- and PWDs-related organizations. Additionally, policymakers should strongly consider establishing and leading public awareness campaigns or programs to eliminate stereotypes and fears in society regarding living and working with PWDs. A method by which to accomplish this is to start educating individuals in schools or universities to create awareness of PWDs, as studies (see Hunt & Hunt, 2004) have found that, when students take a class that educates them about PWDs (e.g., learning about disability etiquette, employment statistics, and different types of disabilities), they tend to accept and perpetuate stereotypes less. For example, integrating children with disabilities in "normal" schools may help to increase awareness and interaction between students with and without disabilities. At the university level, a course related to working with PWDs should be provided, so students feel they can work alongside PWDs.

#### *Recommendations for PWPDs-Related NGOs*

The hotels emphasized a lack of applications to vacant positions from PWPDs. This shows that

organizations related to PWPDS are not well organized in helping or encouraging PWPDS in finding work. PWPDS-related NGOs should build systematic and continuous partnerships with hotels by developing guidelines for PWPDS' employment in hotels to minimize stereotypes and the fears of hoteliers related to employing PWPDS.

#### *Recommendations for Local Communities*

To be successful or gain sustainable competitive advantages, firms should have responsibilities within the local communities in which they operate their businesses. In many cases, firms ignore the local communities in their CSR practices. However, local communities may be able to influence firms by recommending hotels that employ PWDs to others. Local communities should promote hotels employing PWDs and encourage PWDs to apply to posted hotel vacancies.

#### *Recommendations for Employment Agencies*

Hotels work with employment agencies to find the employees they need. In these cases, employment agencies may help to promote the employment of PWDs by increasing awareness about PWDs' employment to hotels and by sharing best practices regarding PWPDS' employment with hotels.

#### Limitations and Future Research

This is one of the first studies on the employment of PWPDS in the tourism industry in Eastern society HK; it has several limitations and suggests several directions for future research. First, the study's sample involved hotels that are members of the HK Hotel Association. Future studies can include the workplace social value when facing the PWDs or PWPDS as well as consider the smaller or more upscale hotels or other tourism firms that are interested in the employment of PWPDS. Second, the researchers considered a single region in HK and used a qualitative design only. Empirical data using a quantitative survey combined with a qualitative study to collect data from different stakeholders, such as how customers' perceptions are when serving by PWDs, employees, employers, and government bodies, are also recommended in

future studies. Third, this study focused on PWPDS in the tourism industry. Future studies may replicate the current study by considering PWPDS in other industries in Asia, such as service, retail, and tourism organizations. Fourth, this study addressed the barriers and challenges of PWPDS' employment. In the future, other types of disabilities, such as visual impairment and hearing impairment, can be studied. According to the CSR approach, employers and relevant bodies should concentrate on different types of disabilities or minority groups that require the public to pay attention to and improve their economic conditions. Finally, this study identified the existing barriers to the employment of PWPDS. Future studies can identify the challenges related to other management practices, such as training and retaining PWPDS, how PWPDS work with others, and the performance evaluation of PWPDS.

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