Retailers’ perceptions of the Americans with Disabilities Act: suggestions for low-cost, high-impact accommodations for disabled shoppers

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Journal of Consumer Marketing
ISSN: 0736-3761
Publication date: 1 April 1998

Abstract
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ushered in an era of puzzling, sometimes confounding regulations for retailers. While the mandated changes were welcomed by disability advocate groups and by consumers at large, retailers have been uneven in their implementation and enactment of the ADA’s actual requirements. The present research reports on a study in which a cross-section of retailers were interviewed concerning their understanding and their actions following the ADA’s implementation. The study examined anticipated differences among retail awareness of and compliance with the ADA at the local versus the regional or national levels. It was expected and found that national and regional chains have a corporate policy enforced by local management, while locally-owned retailers interpret and develop their own reactions to the ADA. The level of formality, level of accommodation, and amount of investment differ by available resources of each retailer and the ability to effectively manipulate shopping access. Our findings suggest that retailers can choose to implement low-cost, high impact accommodations which involve simple readjustments of their existing policies. A critical look at problems and solutions suggests that a no-surprise, high-respect environment can be achieved with minimal expense to retailers.

Keywords
Corporate policy | Disabled people | Legal matters | Market segmentation | Retailing | Shops

Citation

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