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RECEIVING SERVICE FROM A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY: STEREOTYPES, PERCEPTIONS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND THE OPPORTUNITY FOR INCREASED CORPORATE REPUTATION

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Whereas advocates point to benefits of employing people with disabilities for organizations, employers' concern over negative customer reactions is still a barrier to the employment of people with disabilities in service occupations. We contribute to this discussion and the management literature on disability by examining the effects of receiving service from employees with a hearing disability and employees who use a wheelchair on corporate reputation. Based on signaling theory, stereotypes, and valuation-by-association logic, we argue and find in a multistudy, multimethod approach that employing people with disabilities can be perceived as corporate social responsibility and leads to better corporate reputation. A field study with 317 customers of a large international supermarket chain in Lithuania demonstrates higher ratings of corporate reputation for customers receiving service from an employee with a hearing disability than for customers receiving service from an employee without disabilities. In an online experiment using a Solomon four-group design, we utilize video vignettes to test our model with corporate social responsibility perceptions as a mediator. Together, our findings show that managers' concerns about how biased customers might respond to service employees with disabilities are likely unfounded and highlight—in addition to an ethical case for inclusion—the potential for organizations to benefit from employing of people with disabilities, as it leads to favorable reputation effects for organizations.

Almost one billion people worldwide have a "disability," an "umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations, or participation restrictions" and, according to projections of the World Health Organization (2011: 3), "almost everyone will be temporarily or permanently impaired at some point in life."[1] People with disabilities constitute the most disadvantaged and a growing social group suffering from social and economic inequality worldwide (United Nations, 2019; World Health Organization, 2020). They are underrepresented in the labor market (Colella & Bruyère, 2011), experience pay discrimination (Gunderson & Lee, 2016), and are more likely to involuntarily lose their job (Mitra & Kruse, 2016).

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[1] We conduct our studies in Lithuania, where the Law on the Social Integration of the Disabled defines disability as "the condition of an individual, as established by competent institutions, which due to a congenital or acquired physical or mental defect, totally or partially incapacitates the individual from taking care of his private or social life, from enjoying his rights and from fulfilling his duties" (Lithuanian Parliament, 1991: sec. 2, art. 3).

Unemployment is associated with social exclusion and worse health outcomes (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005). Low employment numbers of people with disabilities also have negative implications for organizations and societies. Organizations limit their candidate pool by ignoring people with disabilities, since they represent a significant part of the population and could be a source of talent to buffer labor shortages in Western countries due to aging societies and shrinking workforces (Lengnick-Hall, Gaunt, & Kulkarni, 2008). For societies, low employment numbers of people with disabilities are challenging, since it leads to high costs for social security systems (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2010).

A number of reasons contribute to low employment numbers of people with disabilities. In addition to employment discrimination (Ren, Paetzold, & Colella, 2008) and issues related to work processes, such as costs for accommodations (Baldridge & Swift, 2013), potential lawsuits related to accommodations and layoffs (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008), and increased time investments of supervisors and coworkers (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016), companies are concerned about their public image (Kaye, Jans, & Jones, 2011). A United States Department of Labor report (Domzal, Houtenville, & Sharma, 2008) showed that 34.3% of company decision-makers in a multi-industry sample were concerned about negative customer attitudes toward people with disabilities. This number is higher than for attitudes of coworkers (29.1%) and supervisors (20.3%). Organizations may expect low performance from people with disabilities, which, in turn, may result in a bad reputation and loss of customers. This concern is likely underrepresented due to social desirability and even more prevalent in the customer-facing service industry, and organizational decision-makers may use negative customer stereotypes to justify exclusionary hiring practices.

Interestingly, existing work also suggests just the opposite. Public institutions (European Commission, 2001a) and scholars (Kendall & Karns, 2018; Markel & Barclay, 2009) have asserted that recruiting socially excluded individuals represents corporate social responsibility (CSR) that can be good for an organization's image (Lengnick-Hall, 2007). While most of these claims are theoretical in nature, Siperstein, Romano, Mohler, and Parker (2006) found, in a nationally representative sample, that "hiring people with disabilities" ranks third in a favorability rating of activities by socially responsible companies.

In this paper, we address these conflicting views of employers who are concerned about biased customer stereotypes and optimistic public institutions and researchers by examining "customer-based corporate reputation," which is defined as "the customer's overall evaluation of a firm based on his or her reactions to the firm's goods, services, communication activities, interactions with the firm and/or its representatives or constituencies (such as employees, management, or other customers) and/or known corporate activities" (Walsh & Beatty, 2007: 129). We investigate whether corporate reputation differs depending on whether customers receive service from employees with or without disabilities, and find support for the optimistic view. To do so, we conduct a field study of customers of a supermarket chain in Lithuania where some cashier positions are staffed by people with hearing disabilities, a disability that affects more than 15% of the world's adult population (World Health Organization, 2013). We then conduct an experimental study in a Solomon four-group design (Solomon, 1949) utilizing video vignettes of a supermarket checkout process with employees with hearing disabilities and employees using a wheelchair to maximize internal validity and provide a full model test.

Though management scholars have devoted increasing attention to the employment of people with disabilities (e.g., Baldridge & Swift, 2013; Baumgärtner, Dwertmann, Boehm, & Bruch, 2015; Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016; Kulkarni & Lengnick-Hall, 2014; Nelissen, Hülsheger, van Ruitenbeek, & Zijlstra), empirical research on organizational outcomes of their employment, and especially impact on customers, is still scant (Colella & Bruyère, 2011; Dwertmann, 2016). With the present study, we aim to contribute to this literature in three ways. First, we show the relevance of employing people with disabilities for organizations by connecting literature on disabilities to literature on customer satisfaction. We draw from signaling theory (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011; Spence, 1973) to argue that organizations do not only do the right thing but also benefit from employing people with disabilities, because, if customers are aware of and experience such employment, it signals CSR, which affects corporate reputation. "CSR" is well established in the literature and refers to discretionary organizational responsibility for its impact on society (McWilliams, Siegel, & Wright, 2006). Since employment of people with disabilities benefits these individuals (e.g., through increased economic stability, meaning, etc.) and society (e.g., through lower social security costs), it can be

perceived as a specific CSR initiative (Markel & Barclay, 2009). As such, it should lead to better corporate reputation, which has been linked to important organizational benefits such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, trust, and favorable word of mouth (Walsh & Beatty, 2007; Walsh, Mitchell, Jackson, & Beatty, 2009). We establish the link between receiving service from a person with a disability (i.e., hearing disability)[2] and corporate reputation in a natural setting with high external validity in our field Study 1. Emphasizing internal validity in our experimental Study 2, we replicate this link, extend generalizability of our findings by including employees using a wheelchair as an additional experimental condition, and directly test CSR as the theoretical mechanism. In short, to our knowledge, we are the first to utilize complementary methods to show a specific pathway that can link employment of people with disabilities with better corporate reputation.

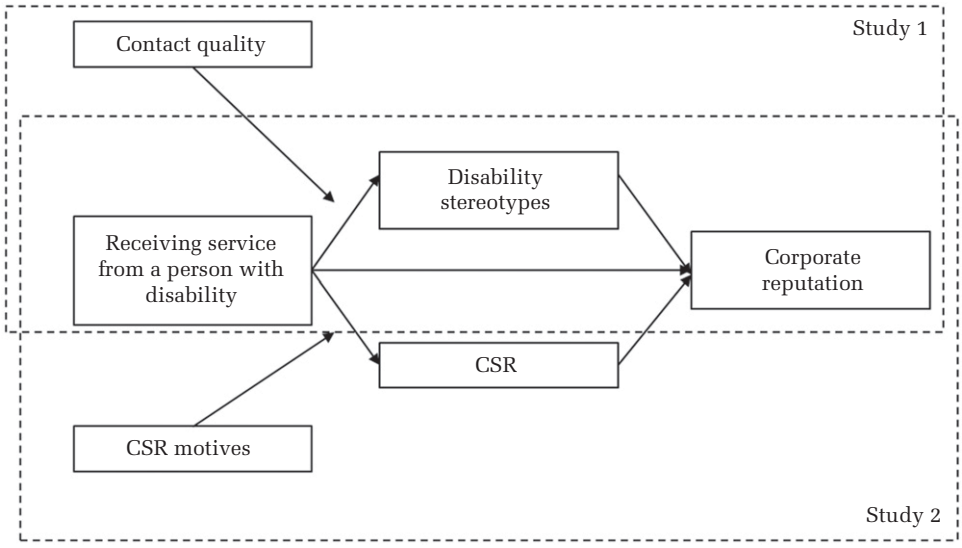
Second, we investigate whether employment of people with disabilities also benefits individuals in the form of more positive stereotypes. Public polls approve hiring and employing people with disabilities (Burge, Ouellette-Kuntz, & Lysaght, 2007; Siperstein et al., 2006) and some policies aimed at changing perceptions involve direct contact with people with disabilities (Fisher & Purcal, 2017). Yet, empirical research on this is scarce. We draw from general stereotype logic (Allport, 1954; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Hilton & Hippel, 1996) to test in field Study 1 whether customers' universal competence and warmth stereotypes mediate the link between service interactions with employees with (hearing) disabilities and corporate reputation. We argue and find that it is stereotype-disconfirming information about competence that serves as a mediator. In experimental Study 2, we further refine our understanding of these effects with a more specific stereotype measure. We create and utilize video vignettes of a supermarket checkout process with either a cashier with a hearing disability, a cashier using a wheelchair, or a cashier with no disability, and use disability–job fit stereotypes (Colella, DeNisi, & Varma, 1998; Colella & Varma, 1999) to account for different types of disabilities and the specific job (i.e., cashier). In line with our Study 1 finding on the importance of stereotype-disconfirming information, we argue that particularly poor fit stereotypes drive stronger stereotype improvements after receiving service from a person with a disability. Results with this more specific stereotype measure are in line with Study 1 and allow us to generalize predictions of outcomes for other disabilities based on disability–job fit stereotypes.

Finally, this study contributes to stigma-by-association literature. Disabilities are stigmatized, eliciting tainted and discounted perceptions of the person (Goffman, 1963; McLaughlin, Bell, & Stringer, 2004). Yet, stigma is not limited to the stigmatized individual but can also lead to stigma-by-association effects for others (targets) who are perceived to be associated with it (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016; Kulik, Bainbridge, & Cregan, 2008). While negative effects for targets are likely, actual outcomes depend on multiple factors. For example, positive contact (in our case, service) between the observer and stigmatized individual can improve stereotypes (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) and thus cause deeper cognitive processing and less automatic stigma by association. Kulik et al. (2008) even predicted valuation by association when descriptive characteristics of a target are inconsistent with those of the stigmatized individual. Yet, this idea remains to be tested empirically. In our studies, customers have or observe positive contact with employees with disabilities (cashiers with a hearing disability, cashiers who use a wheelchair) during checkout, an employment context that generally triggers negative stereotypes and stigma (Colella & Varma, 1999; Ren et al., 2008). Results show that the positive contact and thus stereotype-disconfirming experience leads to more positive stereotypes (perceived competence and disability–job fit) for people who are deaf. Field Study 1 supports valuation-by-association logic, where association with a stigmatized source can lead to positive outcomes for a target (i.e., organization) in the form of better corporate reputation. To our knowledge, we are the first to show such valuation by association empirically and extend theory offered by Kulik et al. (2008) to the organizational level.

In sum, we focus on customer service interactions with employees with disabilities and show that their employment is seen as CSR, which improves corporate reputation. We identify CSR motives as moderators of this link and test if positive contact with people with disabilities relates to stereotypes toward them (see Figure 1).

[2] The employees in Study 1 meet the definition of "deaf" (National Association of the Deaf, 2020), and, in Study 2, we ask for disability–job fit stereotypes for employees who are deaf (since this is equivalent to prior literature and stereotypes could differ for "deaf" and "hard of hearing"). We use person-first language in this paper but are aware of differing preferences in the disability community (Wong, 2019).

FIGURE 1
Conceptual Model



Notes: In Study 1, we capture disability stereotypes with the universal dimensions of warmth and competence (Fiske et al., 2002). In Study 2, we focus specifically on disability–job fit stereotypes (Colella et al., 1998; Colella & Varma, 1999) to account for the type of disability and the specific job. Given our retail context, contact quality is operationalized as service satisfaction. CSR motives capture sincere and egoistic motives.

DISABILITY AS A CONSTRUCT

Disability is a complex construct that incorporates a plethora of conditions, encompassing physical, mental, sensory, learning, neurological, and other differences (World Health Organization, 2011). Even within these categories, substantial variability exists. An in-depth discussion of all construct details is beyond the scope of this paper and we refer readers to comprehensive accounts (Dwertmann, 2016; Hedlund, 2009; Santuzzi, Waltz, Finkelstein, & Rupp, 2014). Here, we highlight two critical aspects that underlie our theoretical arguments. First, disability and stigma literature has often differentiated between visible and invisible disabilities (Roberson, Ryan, & Ragins, 2017; Santuzzi et al., 2014). We include invisible (cashiers with a hearing disability, in Studies 1 and 2) and visible (cashiers who use a wheelchair, in Study 2) disabilities in our studies. However, all cashiers with a hearing disability in our studies wear a badge on their uniform that states "I cannot hear" and many customers would likely notice the disability through interaction during the checkout process. Thus, customers are made aware of the disability and this awareness likely drives our results.

Second, some disabilities evoke stronger stereotypes than others (Stone & Colella, 1996), and context factors such as the job in question influence stereotypes (e.g., someone who is deaf or hard of hearing is seen as a poor fit with jobs that require regular verbal interactions, such as cashier, but not necessarily others, such as programmer or coder, or accountant). In Study 1, we draw from the stereotype content model (Fiske et al., 2002) that finds that stereotypes can be captured by the universal warmth and competence dimensions and that people with disabilities are generally perceived as higher on warmth and lower on competence than the population. This allows us to connect the disability with the broader stereotype literature. In Study 2, we account for the specific type of disability and the job in question by drawing from more specific disability–job fit stereotype literature (Colella et al., 1998; Colella & Varma, 1999). This allows us to predict the specific effects that receiving service from a person with a disability has on stereotypes, CSR, and corporate reputation.

STUDY 1: THEORETICAL OVERVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Effect of Receiving Service from a Person with a Disability on CSR and Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation influences an organization's relationship with its stakeholders and leads to important outcomes such as economic gains (Boyd, Bergh, & Ketchen, 2010; Rindova, Williamson,

Petkova, & Sever, 2005), employee and customer attraction and retention (Jensen & Roy, 2008; Makarius & Stevens, 2019), and attainment of competitive advantage (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). Different stakeholders may have different expectations and perceptions of an organization. Given its significance in our retail setting, we focus on customer-based corporate reputation (we also refer to this as corporate reputation or reputation throughout the paper).

We draw from signaling theory, which focuses on situations of information asymmetry between two parties (Spence, 1973), to build our arguments. Information asymmetry is present between customers and organizations because, when making purchase decisions, customers typically have limited information about organizational values, intentions, and so forth. Thus, organizations use various signals (e.g., advertising, product labels, certifications) to communicate quality and good intentions (Connelly et al., 2011), and CSR signals organizational concern for social well-being, not just financial gains (Connelly et al., 2011). Customers form impressions of an organization based on such signals that serve as a foundation for collective assessments of corporate reputation (Highhouse, Brooks, & Gregarus, 2009).

We argue here that employing people with disabilities will be considered CSR.[3] Specifically, despite variability across disabilities, people with disabilities are stereotypically seen as inferior, helpless, and incompetent by society (Stone & Colella, 1996). They are often wrongly assumed to be more absent from work and less performant than people without disabilities (Ren et al., 2008; Unger, 2002). For example, when asked how well individuals who are deaf could perform cashier jobs (i.e., the jobs in our studies), respondents rated them 73.98 on a scale where 100 represented an average person without disabilities (Colella & Varma, 1999). Because of these low expectations, in line with signaling theory, we argue that customers will interpret employment of people with disabilities, which they experience through receiving service from a person with a disability, as a costly social act and thus a CSR initiative (Bird & Smith, 2005; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008; Markel & Barclay, 2009). That is, employing people with disabilities may be seen as a signal that the organization is more inclusive and might be more responsive to societal concerns.

CSR initiatives have to meet two preconditions to be appreciated and rewarded by customers. First, they need to be credible (Eberle, Berens, & Li, 2013) and proactively communicated, since few customers will search for such information in annual reports or on websites. In-store experiences with frontline employees, such as receiving service from them, have been shown as one effective means of CSR communication (Edinger-Schons, Lengler-Graiff, Scheidler, & Wieseke, 2018). Second, CSR initiatives need to be attributed to sincere motives. Customers approve value-driven and other-oriented CSR initiatives but disregard (Ellen, Webb, & Mohr, 2006) or even boycott (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, & Hill, 2006) self-oriented, egoistic initiatives. We argue that employing people with disabilities signals positive intentions and values (Connelly et al., 2011; Spence, 1973) and that receiving service from a person with a disability fulfills both conditions.[4] Many disabilities are salient (i.e., visible or detectable through interaction), and, if people with a disability work in customer-facing jobs, their employment is proactively presented to customers in a trustworthy, firsthand way. Staffing employees with disabilities in frontline jobs also signals honesty and credibility, since organizations risk negative, stereotype-based reactions. Thus, receiving service from a person with a disability can be seen as a proactive and credible communication, and, since such employees face negative competence stereotypes (Fiske et al., 2002; Louvet, 2007), average customers should interpret their employment as sincere and not egoistic.

Siperstein et al. (2006) provided initial empirical support for this notion. They listed "hiring people with disabilities" as one characteristic when asking 803 randomly selected adults from a Gallup Organization poll in the United States about activities by socially responsible companies. It ranked third in favorability.[5] Thus, we argue that receiving service from a person with a disability serves

[3] We test the effect of receiving service from a person with a disability on CSR in Study 2 (Hypothesis 4), and also whether CSR mediates the link between receiving service from a person with a disability and corporate reputation (Hypothesis 6). See, too, Table 4 for an overview of the connection between the hypotheses from both studies.

[4] We test these arguments in Study 2 (Hypotheses 5a and b) and measure customer perceptions of sincere and egoistic motives.

[5] "Offer health insurance to all its workers" ranked first and "help protect the environment" second. "Donate money to disaster relief," "Stop doing business with countries known to treat their people badly," and "Support a cause you care about" all ranked below hiring people with disabilities.

as a credible CSR signal, which in turn betters corporate reputation.

Hypothesis 1. Receiving service from a person with a disability is positively related to corporate reputation.

The Role of Contact Quality for the Link between Receiving Service from a Person with a Disability and Disability Stereotypes

"Stereotypes," defined as socially shared sets of beliefs about traits and behaviors of members of a social group (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995), help individuals simplify complex information and interpret or predict behavior of an outgroup member when no other information is available (Nario-Redmond, 2010). Stereotypes may ascribe members of a social group with positive and negative traits. While people with disabilities are stereotyped as gentlehearted, nonegoistical, and even saintlike, they are also stereotyped as low performing and more absent, dependent, and helpless (e.g., Bruyère, Erickson, & VanLooy, 2004; Ren et al., 2008; Unger, 2002). These negative stereotypes are a major barrier for integrating people with disabilities into the workforce (Kulkarni & Lengnick-Hall, 2014; Ren et al., 2008). The extent to which these specific stereotypes are present is reflected by the universal *warmth* and *competence* dimensions (Fiske et al., 2002). Assessments of warmth and competence are influenced by:

> Appraisals of the (a) potential harm or benefit of the target group's goals and (b) degree to which the group can effectively enact those goals. Groups viewed as competitors are stereotyped as lacking warmth, whereas groups viewed as cooperative are stereotyped as warm; groups viewed as high status are stereotyped as competent, whereas groups viewed as low status are not. (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007: 632)

People with disabilities are seldom seen as competitors because of low status and performance expectations (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016; Stone & Colella, 1996), and, in line with more specific disability stereotypes, they are viewed as warmer (i.e., capturing gentlehearted, nonegoistical, and saintlike) but less competent (i.e., low performing, more absent, dependent, and helpless) than people without disabilities (Fiske et al., 2002; Louvet, 2007). Competence stereotypes are particularly negative in a work context (Rohmer & Louvet, 2018).

Stereotypes can change through contact with group members (Hilton & Hippel, 1996), as such contact can enhance knowledge, reduce anxiety, and raise empathy, which in turn reduces prejudice (Allport, 1954). Further, meta-analytic results show that exposure to a social target (e.g., receiving service from a person with a disability) generalizes to related, yet previously unknown, social targets (people with disabilities) (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, 2008). However, not all contact reduces prejudice (Donaldson, 1980; Stone & Colella, 1996). A central assumption in the literature is that quality of a contact plays a moderating role in facilitating beneficial outcomes (Dovidio, Love, Schellhaas, & Hewstone, 2017). Indeed, positive contact provides stereotype-disconfirming information that reduces negative perceptions of an outgroup, while negative, stereotype-confirming contact can even worsen prejudice (Hayward, Tropp, Hornsey, & Barlow, 2017).

We translate this logic to our context as follows, predicting that receiving positive service from a person with a disability counters negative competence stereotypes and further strengthens warmth stereotypes. First, since typical beliefs include that people with disabilities are unable to work a "normal" job due to low competence, seeing someone with a disability work a regular, nonsheltered[6] cashier job offers stereotype-disconfirming information (Donaldson, 1980). Particularly relevant to the present study, Colella and Varma (1999) showed that people who are deaf are seen as significantly less able to work as cashiers than people without disabilities. Thus, receiving service from a person with a disability should enhance competence stereotypes and this should generalize to other people with disabilities (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Second, the contact quality will affect the outcome. In our service context, service (transaction) satisfaction—that is, the customer's assessment of a specific service encounter—is quality (Bitner & Hubbert, 1994; Jones & Suh, 2000), and research shows that "soft" factors, such as assurance (e.g., politeness) and empathy (individualized attention), in addition to "hard" factors, such as tangibles (up-to-date equipment), reliability of service, and responsiveness (prompt service), influence customer satisfaction (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). In line with this, Surprenant and Solomon (1987) identified friendliness as a central factor for service encounters, and Chandon, Leo, and Philippe (1997) even concluded that perceived competence,

[6] Sheltered employment is typically an arrangement for people with disabilities in a self-contained work site. People without disabilities often work as supervisors. Such workplaces can be partly funded through government subsidies.

listening, and dedication play a bigger role in evaluation of service encounters than effectiveness of the service. These factors map onto perceptions of competence and warmth. Essentially, receiving high contact quality service (i.e., service satisfaction) from a person with a disability indicates employee competence and warmth, and this information should translate into more positive stereotypes about people with disabilities (Rhodes, Halberstadt, & Brajkovich, 2001; Stone & Colella, 1996).

Hypothesis 2a. Receiving service from a person with a disability is related to more positive competence stereotypes toward people with disabilities when contact quality is higher but not when it is lower.

Hypothesis 2b. Receiving service from a person with a disability is related to more positive warmth stereotypes toward people with disabilities when contact quality is higher but not when it is lower.

The Salience of Competence-Based Information

While we predict interactive effects between receiving service from a person with a disability and contact quality on both disability stereotypes, we expect stronger differences for competence than warmth. First, stereotype-disconfirming service is more likely to influence beliefs than stereotype-confirming service (Stone & Colella, 1996). Since stereotypes toward people with disabilities ascribe high warmth and low competence (Fiske et al., 2002; Louvet, 2007) and people who are deaf are seen as a poor fit for cashier jobs (Colella & Varma, 1999), average customers will expect low performance (Unger, 2002). Positive contact through a satisfactory service experience thus creates a large discrepancy between expectation and reality for competence that will be salient to customers (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016; Rousseau, 1995). Second, since people with disabilities are stereotyped as warmer, positive contact is more in line with expectations. Thus, positive contact or satisfactory service involves competence stereotype-disconfirming information that is salient as well as warmth stereotype-matching information that is less salient. Accordingly, warmth stereotypes should not be altered by positive service encounters to the same extent as competence stereotypes, comparable to a ceiling effect (Lyons et al., 2018).

Hypothesis 2c. The interaction effect between receiving service from a person with a disability and contact quality is stronger for competence than for warmth.

Disability Stereotypes as a Mediator

Kulik et al.'s (2008) stigma-by-association model suggested that negative stereotypes of a stigma source can extend to people who associate with it (i.e., spillover of ascribed, negative characteristics; Goffman, 1963). However, spillover should extend to positive characteristics as well. Kilduff and Krackhardt (1994), for example, showed that the perception of having a prominent friend in an organization boosted an individual's reputation for being a high performer. In addition, Kulik et al.'s (2008: 225) model focused on the individual level, "the smallest set of relationships underlying stigma by association: the employee, the stigma source, and a coworker." Yet, they called for research to examine spillover beyond this triad, and there is good reason to do so. Particularly relevant for this study, Cowart and Brady (2014) showed that customers evaluate a company more negatively if a service employee is obese, a potential type of disability. Thus, we argue that Kulik et al.'s (2008) model should extend to (a) positive characteristics and (b) the organizational level.

In line with signaling theory, for customers who typically have limited knowledge, frontline service workers are primary organizational representatives (Folkes & Patrick, 2003), and research shows that positive and negative evaluations of them extend to customer perceptions of organizations (Cowart & Brady, 2014; Helm, 2007). Corporate reputation captures assessments of an organization's competence and warmth among others and thus maps onto employee stereotypes (Aaker, Vohs, & Mogilner, 2010). Positive reputation is associated with competence (e.g., value creation, high-quality offerings, and good investment opportunities [Devine & Halpern, 2001]) and warmth (e.g., treating customers and employees fairly and repairing relationships if errors are made [Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004]). Accordingly, corporate reputation likely will be affected by employee stereotypes. A meta-analysis (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005) provided support for this by showing that perceptions of recruiter personableness and trustworthiness (warmth) and competence and informativeness (competence) predict applicant job–organization attraction and job acceptance intentions, which are correlates of corporate reputation.

Importantly though, based on Kulik et al.'s (2008) stigma-by-association model, we argue that contact with negatively stereotyped employees is an opportunity to improve reputation. The model assumes

that an observer (customer) identifies an association between a stigma source (employee with disability) and a target (organization), which leads to a negative initial impression. However, at this point, customers can engage either in impression confirmation, leading to stigma by association, or in deeper cognitive processing. It is reasonable to assume that many customers would not be motivated to engage in deeper cognitive processing during an everyday experience such as a trip to the supermarket; thus, we may expect impression confirmation and stigma spillover to the organization. However, there are multiple cognitive "speed bumps" that can encourage deeper cognitive processing (Kulik et al., 2008: 220). One of them—"stigma magnitude," or the negativity of stereotypes—is particularly relevant to this study, since we argue that receiving service from a person with a disability will improve stereotypes when contact quality is high. In essence, we predict that stereotype-disconfirming information during a satisfactory service encounter will improve disability stereotypes (competence and warmth) and thus lead to deeper cognitive processing. We specifically predict causal reasoning to occur because organizations have control over whom they hire and employ, indicating that the relationship has diagnostic content (Kulik et al., 2008) for the customer.

Causal reasoning accounts for the link between the employee, as the stigma source, and the organization, as the target, and generates a reason for the customer to make the connection (Kunda, Miller, & Claire, 1990). Such causal reasoning can result in either controlled stigma by association or valuation by association, depending on whether the customer sees the organization and the employee with disability as sharing common attributes (i.e., descriptive consistency). In our situation, despite the fact that satisfactory service should improve disability stereotypes, it is unlikely that negative stereotypes are fully eliminated. Because of this, we predict that especially receiving service from a person with a disability leads to better corporate reputation; their employment is interpreted as a conscientious act by a reputable company. Based on these arguments, we predict that the link between receiving service from a person with a disability and corporate reputation will be mediated by competence and warmth stereotypes.

Hypothesis 3. The interaction effect between receiving service from a person with a disability and contact quality on corporate reputation is mediated by (a) competence stereotypes and (b) warmth stereotypes.

STUDY 1: METHODS

We conducted our studies in Lithuania, where the employment gap between people with and without disabilities is among the highest in Europe (Jones, 2016), and 44% of people with disabilities are at risk of or face poverty and social exclusion (Eurostat, 2016). Since few findings from this context have been published, we here provide brief background information for the interpretation of our findings. During the Soviet occupation (1945–1990), people with disabilities received modest financial support but also were stigmatized as "invalids." Most adults were unemployed and placed in designated remote residential institutions, and children were sent to specialized boarding schools. As a result, people with disabilities were largely segregated and invisible in public, which led to negative stereotypes such as their limited capacity for labor market participation (Phillips, 2014).

Since Lithuania regained independence in 1990, efforts have been made to improve social inclusion, including ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and passing of laws facilitating their labor market participation. Despite these efforts, people with disabilities largely remain stigmatized as personas non grata in most spheres of life (Zalkauskaite, 2012). The old term "invalid" is still widely used, and people with disabilities often disregard themselves and do not seek employment (Bučiūnienė & Kazlauskaitė, 2010).

Design and Sample

The data for this study were collected in cooperation with one supermarket chain in Lithuania, a subsidiary of an international retail chain. The subsidiary has about 60 supermarkets and over 3,000 employees. People with disabilities account for roughly 2% of subsidiary employees and have been employed in stores throughout the country since 2007. People with hearing disabilities often work as cashiers. Given our field setting, we could not randomly assign customers to cashiers with and without disabilities. Instead, we asked participants how they chose their checkout lane. The majority indicated they chose by chance (41.3%) or based on the shortest queue (47.5%). A minority (10.9%) wanted to be served by a specific cashier, and 0.3% did not respond. Since choosing a lane based on cashier could have related to our independent variable, we tested our model without these participants. Results did not significantly change (see the robustness check

in the online supplement).[7] Given the small percentage of customers choosing a cashier and these results, we do not assume that self-selection biased results. Still, we include two dummies reflecting the three selection groups as controls in all analyses.

An interviewer asked customers during two random hours a day (morning, evening, weekend, etc., to ensure representation of different customers) for four weeks to fill out a self-administered customer satisfaction survey. Customer surveys after checkout are commonly used in retail settings (Gomez, McLaughlin, & Wittink, 2004), and they were distributed in six stores in two major cities. Cashiers with a hearing disability were identifiable via interaction and a badge on their uniform that said, "I cannot hear." During data collection, 100% of them wore the badges, and 169 (53%) participants checked out with them. We compared the disability and nondisability groups to rule out alternative explanations and found no differences in age ($t = -1.77$, n.s.), contact frequency with people with disabilities (family, friends, etc.; $t = -1.33$, n.s.), number of purchases per month ($t = -0.39$, n.s.), or frequency of receiving service from a person with a disability elsewhere ($t = -0.23$, n.s.). The groups were comparable in terms of health, gender, education, and work experience with people with disabilities. The majority of cashiers were women and the gender distribution did not differ between comparison groups (see Table A1 in Appendix A).

We received 322 completed questionnaires and eliminated five respondents due to missing data on one of our focal variables, leaving 317 for our analyses. We did not find any differences between excluded respondents and the rest of the sample on any of our study or control variables. Average age was 42.23 years ($SD = 13.83$), 63% had a university degree, and 56% were female (see Table 1). Ten percent had a long-term health issue, 66.7% had no coworkers with disabilities, and more than half had little contact with individuals with disabilities in their private life (13% had no contact and 40% a few times a year or less; only 9% had daily contact). Our sample appears representative of the underlying population given that a European-wide population survey (European Commission, 2001b) found 10% of people had daily contact with people with disability.

We measured contact quality (i.e., service satisfaction), since it is associated with reputation (Walsh et al., 2009). Results did not differ between groups ($M = 6.63$, $SD = 0.75$ and $M = 6.53$, $SD = 0.93$ for disability and nondisability respectively; $t = 1.02$, $p = .307$), which speaks against a general social desirability bias, since cashiers with and without disabilities are rated equally.

Measures

If not indicated otherwise, all items were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). We arranged the measures to reduce social desirability and increase the naivety of respondents: customer loyalty, contact quality (i.e., service satisfaction), corporate reputation, stereotypes of people with disabilities (competence and warmth), and other control variables (described below). The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results supporting the distinctiveness of Study 1 variables are presented in Appendix B.

Disability stereotypes (competence and warmth). We used a total of nine items from Fiske et al. (2002) to measure competence (e.g., "As viewed by society, how competent are people with physical disabilities; e.g., hearing impairment?") and warmth ("As viewed by society, how sincere are people with physical disability; e.g., hearing impairment?") on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 *definitely not* to 7 *definitely yes*). Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .88 and .96, respectively.

Corporate reputation. We used Walsh and Beatty's (2007) 15-item customer-based corporate reputation scale to measure five reputation dimensions (number of items in parentheses): customer orientation (4), good employer (4), reliable and financially strong company (3), product and service quality (2), and social and environmental responsibility (2). A sample item is: "The company treats its customers in a fair manner." Based on CFA results (see Appendix B), we retained a more parsimonious second-order factor model treating corporate reputation as a single factor. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .94.

Contact quality. We asked customers "How satisfied are you with the cashier's service today?," with response options ranging from 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 7 (*very satisfied*). This measure of service satisfaction serves as the contact quality measure in our retail setting.

Control variables. We considered controls that theoretically could account for alternative explanations (Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016). First, we controlled for contact frequency, since it can affect stereotypes toward employment of people with disabilities

[7] All supplemental files can be accessed via the Open Science Framework: https://osf.io/k2dur/?view_only=00e4c483f7464e6eabef0a5261564ccb.

(Allport, 1954). We asked "How often do you have contact with people with disabilities (family, friends, etc.)?" with a 7-point response scale (0 = *never*, 1 = *a few times a year or less*, 2 = *once a month or less*, 3 = *a few times a month*, 4 = *once a week*, 5 = *a few times a week*, and 6 = *every day*). Second, because loyal customers should have a more positive view of a retail chain (Walsh et al., 2009), we included a proxy for loyalty indicating their approximate number of purchases per month. Third, we controlled for customer health (1 = *long-standing health problem*, 0 = *no health problem*), since it may affect stereotypes and attitudes toward people with disabilities (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016). In models without controls, our conclusions remained the same.

STUDY 1: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Analysis Strategy

We used independent samples *t*-tests to test our main effects and regression analyses with a dummy variable (receiving service from a cashier with a disability = 1 vs. without disability = 0) with bootstrapping procedures in the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) to test moderation and mediation effects. We mean-centered contact quality and probed interactions at one standard deviation below or above the mean up to the maximum scale values. Given our directional hypotheses, we report one-tailed hypotheses testing and 90% confidence intervals (CIs) for indirect effects (Cho & Abe, 2013).

Results

Descriptives and correlations of study variables are shown in Table 1. As predicted, receiving service from a person with a disability correlates positively with competence ($r = .23$, $p \leq .001$), warmth ($r = .16$, $p \leq .01$), and reputation ($r = .30$, $p \leq .001$). Competence and warmth correlate positively with reputation ($r = .34$, $p \leq .001$ and $r = .27$, $p \leq .001$, respectively).

In line with Hypothesis 1, receiving service from a person with a disability links to reputation ($M = 6.07$, $SD = 0.69$ and $M = 5.59$, $SD = 0.88$ for disability and nondisability groups, respectively; $t(283) = 5.35$, $p \leq .001$). Regression analysis (see Table 2) indicates that customers in the disability group hold more positive competence ($B = 0.60$; $t = 4.39$, $p \leq .001$) and warmth ($B = 0.28$; $t = 3.08$, $p \leq .001$) stereotypes than in the nondisability group. The interaction of receiving service from a person with a disability and contact quality is significant for competence ($B = 0.27$; $t = 1.64$, $p = .05$; $\Delta R^2 = .01$, $p = .05$) and warmth ($B = 0.26$; $t = 2.35$, $p = .01$; $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $p = .01$) stereotypes. For competence, the simple slope is steeper at high (max. value; $B = 0.71$; $t = 4.67$, $p \leq .001$) but still significant at low contact quality (-1 *SD*; $B = 0.38$; $t = 1.93$, $p = .03$). Thus,

TABLE 1
Study 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between Study Variables

	Variable	Mean	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Receiving service from a person with a disability	0.53	0.50	—										
2	Competence	5.62	1.29	.23***	**.88**									
3	Warmth	6.44	0.82	.16**	.58***	**.96**								
4	Corporate reputation	5.84	0.82	.30***	.34***	.27***	**.94**							
5	Gender (employee)	0.79	0.41	−.10	.06	.01	−.05	—						
6	Gender (customer)	0.56	0.50	.00	.04	.16**	.09	−.03	—					
7	Contacts with people with disabilities	2.13	1.84	−.06	.21***	.14*	.15**	.00	.09	—				
8	Customer health	0.10	0.30	−.03	−.06	.04	−.07	−.01	.06	.12*	—			
9	Customer loyalty	10.83	7.49	−.02	.17**	.01	.11*	−.17**	−.08	−.01	−.11*	—		
10	Customer age	42.23	13.83	.11*	.15**	.16**	.23***	.17**	.13*	.07	.18**	−.18**	—	
11	Customer education	0.63	0.48	−.05	−.07	−.09	−.03	−.10	−.04	−.09	−.04	−.07	.00	
12	Contact quality	6.59	0.84	.06	.16**	.12**	.38***	−.08	.05	.17**	.02	.01	.07	.07

Notes: $n = 317$ (listwise deletion). Receiving service from a person with a disability (1 = *disability group*, 0 = *nondisability group*), customer health (1 = *having a long-standing health problem*, 0 = *no health problems*), gender (1 = *female*, 0 = *male*), customer education (1 = *university degree*, 0 = *no university degree*). Reliability coefficients in bold.

* $p \leq .05$

** $p \leq .01$

*** $p \leq .001$, two-tailed

TABLE 2
Study 1: Regression Analyses Predicting Stereotypes and Corporate Reputation

	Competence stereotypes		Warmth stereotypes		Corporate reputation	
Independent variable	***B***	***t***	***B***	***t***	***B***	***t***
Constant	5.09	19.09***	6.10	34.096***	4.20	11.66***
Receiving service from a PWD	0.60	4.39***	0.28	3.08***	0.40	4.57***
Contact quality (CQ)	0.19	2.26*	0.12	2.06*		
Receiving service from a PWD × CQ	0.27	1.64*	0.26	2.35**		
Contact with PWDs	0.16	4.18***	0.06	2.52**	0.06	2.28**
Customer health	−0.23	−1.00	0.12	0.79	−0.16	−1.08
Customer loyalty	0.03	3.06***	0.00	0.29	0.01	1.47
Selected by chance	−0.26	−1.12	0.17	1.07	0.05	0.32
Selected because of the shortest queue	0.02	0.10	0.20	1.25	0.12	0.83
Competence stereotypes					0.11	2.61**
Warmth stereotypes					0.12	1.80*
R^2	**.17**		**.08**		**.20**	
F	7.95***		3.19***		9.33***	
ΔR^2	**.01**		**.02**			
ΔF	2.68*		5.53**			

Notes: n = 317 (listwise deletion). PWD = person with a disability. Receiving service from a PWD (1 = *disability group*, 0 = *nondisability group*), customer health (1 = *having a long-standing health problem*, 0 = *no health problems*). Selection by chance and Selection shortest queue are dummy variables reflecting participants' responses on how they chose their checkout lane (selecting a particular cashier was coded as 0 in both dummy variables). ΔR^2 stands for the change in R^2 due to adding the interaction term of Receiving service from a person with a disability and Contact quality into the equation.

* $p \leq .05$
** $p \leq .01$
*** $p \leq .001$, one-tailed

Hypothesis 2a is partly supported. Service from a cashier with disabilities links to more positive competence stereotypes toward people with disabilities, but, contrary to expectations, this is even the case when contact quality is lower (but note that contact quality is generally high in our sample). In support of Hypothesis 2b, the simple slope for warmth is positive and significant at high (max. value; $B = 0.39$; $t = 3.81$, $p \leq .001$) but not at low contact quality (−1 *SD*; $B = 0.07$; $t = 0.51$, $p = .31$; see Figure 2). A comparison of the interaction effects between receiving service from a person with a disability and contact quality on competence and warmth revealed that the effect was significantly stronger on competence ($B = 0.60$, $t = 4.39$, $p \leq .001$) than on warmth ($B = 0.28$, $t = 3.08$, $p \leq .001$; contrast $B = 0.32$, $F(1, 309) = 7.75$, $p = .01$). Thus, Hypothesis 2c is supported.

We tested Hypotheses 3a and 3b (moderated mediation via competence and warmth) using regression analyses with bootstrapping in the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018). The indirect effect via competence is significant (.06; 90% CI [0.009, 0.112]; see Table 3) whereas the indirect effect via warmth is not (.03; 90% CI [−0.002, 0.069]). The positive indirect effect via competence is stronger at high (.08; 90% CI [0.021, 0.151]) than at low contact quality (.04; 90% CI [0.004, 0.097]), as the index of moderated mediation is significant (.03; 90% CI [0.002, 0.074]). Thus, Hypothesis 3a is supported. In contrast, the proposed positive link between contact quality and reputation is not mediated by warmth. Thus, Hypothesis 3b is not supported.

Discussion

The results of this field study partly support our theoretical model. Receiving service from a person

FIGURE 2
Study 1: Moderation Effect of Contact Quality on Warmth Stereotypes

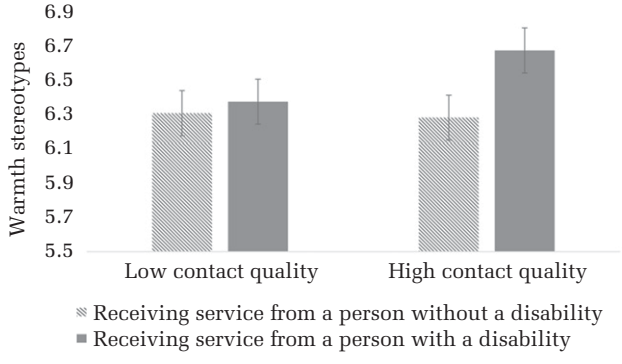


TABLE 3
Study 1: Bootstrapping Results: Conditional Indirect Effects of Receiving Service from a Person with a Disability on Corporate Reputation via Competence and Warmth Stereotypes

Indirect effects	Estimate	90% CI UL, LL[a]
Via competence stereotypes		
Indirect effect	0.06[b]	0.009, 0.112
Conditional indirect effects		
High contact quality (maximum value)	0.08[b]	0.021, 0.151
Low contact quality (−1 *SD*)	0.04[b]	0.004, 0.097
Via warmth stereotypes		
Indirect effect	0.03	−0.002, 0.069
Conditional indirect effects		
High contact quality (maximum value)	0.04	−0.002, 0.102
Low contact quality (−1 *SD*)	0.01	−0.024, 0.040
Total indirect effect	0.09[b]	0.042, 0.135

Notes: n = 317 (listwise deletion). Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap CI = 5,000.

[a] UL = upper limit, LL = lower limit.

[b] 90% CI does not include zero.

with a disability results in a better corporate reputation, and high contact quality is linked to more positive stereotypes toward people with disabilities, particularly competence. Competence stereotypes toward people with disabilities mediate the link between receiving service from a person with a disability and corporate reputation. Despite these contributions, the study has limitations. First, while we built theoretical arguments around CSR, we do not directly test it as a mechanism. Second, our data on cashiers with a hearing disability limit generalizability to other disabilities. Third, our assessment of disability stereotypes focuses on people with disabilities in general instead of a specific disability (hearing) and job (cashier). Finally, our field study is characterized by high external validity, but the natural setting did not allow us to randomly assign customers to conditions, collect pre- and post- data, control all potential confounds, and, thus, maximize internal validity. To address these concerns, we conducted a second study in which we (a) directly test CSR as a theoretical mechanism, (b) include cashiers who use a wheelchair as a second disability, (c) measure disability–job fit stereotypes specifically for deaf and paraplegic and cashier roles, and (d) utilize an experimental Solomon four-group design (Solomon, 1949). This design is immune to most threats to internal validity and, opposed to pre- and posttest control group and posttest only control group designs, allows us to assess the presence of pretest sensitization (Braver & Braver, 1988; Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

STUDY 2: THEORETICAL OVERVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

In Study 2, we retest and refine a number of our hypotheses from Study 1. Table 4 and Figure 1 provide an overview of the connections between both studies. In two studies, we test our prediction that receiving service from a person with a disability will increase corporate reputation through two different underlying mechanisms. Specifically, we investigate how receiving service from a person with a disability is related to higher corporate reputation (Hypothesis 1) through more favorable disability stereotypes (Hypotheses 2a, 2b, 3, and 9) but only if contact quality is high (Hypothesis 7), with the salience of information based on prevailing stereotype levels determining the magnitude of the effect (Hypotheses 2c and 8). Next, we explore how receiving service from a person with a disability is related to higher corporate reputation through enhanced CSR (Hypotheses 4 and 6) but only if customers attribute the employment of people with disabilities to sincere motives (Hypotheses 5a and 5b).

Receiving Service from a Person with a Disability as CSR

In Study 1 (Hypothesis 1), we argued that receiving service from a person with a disability can be perceived as CSR (Bird & Smith, 2005; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008; Markel & Barclay, 2009), but we did not directly test it. We provide the test in this study.

Hypothesis 4. Customers receiving service from a person with a disability will perceive the organization as higher on CSR.

CSR Motives as Moderators of the Service from a Person with a Disability–CSR Link

In Study 1 (Hypothesis 1), we argued that employment of people with disabilities would likely be perceived as a costly social act and thus CSR. We did so because people with disabilities face strong negative competence and performance stereotypes (Rohmer & Louvet, 2018) and are perceived as helpless and more likely to be absent from work (Ren et al., 2008; Stone & Colella, 1996). They may also require accommodations that are often incorrectly thought of as costly (Schartz, Hendricks, & Blanck, 2006). The more customers think this way, the higher the likelihood that they will perceive employment of people with disabilities, perceived by receiving service from a person with a disability, as a costly social act and thus sincerely motivated.

TABLE 4
Overview of the Hypotheses of Study 1 and Study 2

Theoretical predictions	Study 1	Study 2
• Receiving service from a PWD leads to better corporate reputation	*Hypothesis 1*: Receiving service from a PWD is positively related to corporate reputation.	*Hypothesis 4*: Customers receiving service from a PWD will perceive the organization as higher on CSR.
• CSR as a mediator	CSR as an underlying mechanism (not tested).	*Hypothesis 6*: CSR will mediate the link between receiving service from a PWD and corporate reputation.
• CSR motives as moderators of the receiving service from a PWD–CSR link		*Hypothesis 5a*: Sincere CSR motives will moderate the positive link between receiving service from a PWD and CSR such that it will be stronger when sincere motives are higher. *Hypothesis 5b*: Egoistic CSR motives will moderate the positive link between receiving service from a PWD and CSR such that it will be weaker when egoistic motives are higher.
• Receiving service from a PWD leads to better disability stereotypes • Contact quality as a moderator	*Hypothesis 2a*: Receiving service from a PWD is related to more positive competence stereotypes toward people with disabilities when contact quality is higher but not when it is lower. *Hypothesis 2b*: Receiving service from a PWD is related to more positive warmth stereotypes toward people with disabilities when contact quality is higher but not when it is lower.	*Hypothesis 7*: Receiving service from a PWD will lead to more positive disability–job fit stereotypes for people with the same disability.
• Initial stereotypes determine the salience and magnitude of difference in disability stereotypes	*Hypothesis 2c*: The interaction effect between receiving service from a PWD and contact quality is stronger for competence than for warmth.	*Hypothesis 8*: The positive effect of receiving service from a PWD on disability–job fit stereotypes for people with the same disability will be stronger for the disability, for which the service provides stronger stereotype-disconfirming information (i.e., stronger for deaf than paraplegic).
• Disability stereotypes as mediators of the receiving service from a PWD–corporate reputation link	*Hypothesis 3*: The interaction effect between receiving service from a PWD and contact quality on corporate reputation is mediated by (a) competence stereotypes and (b) warmth stereotypes.	*Hypothesis 9*: The positive effect between receiving service from a PWD and corporate reputation is mediated by disability–job fit stereotypes.

Notes: PWD = person with a disability, CSR = corporate social responsibility. The differences between Hypotheses 3 and 9 and between Hypotheses 2a and 2b and 7 are due to the fact that we keep contact quality constant in Study 2.

However, this does not have to be the case, and customer awareness of a CSR initiative may not necessarily lead to favorable perceptions of CSR. Instead, customers process available information to infer the CSR motives of the company for the initiative, and the result of this process will influence their reaction (Ellen et al., 2006). Two primary, though variably labeled, attributions are "sincere" and pro-social versus "egoistic" and self-serving motives (Foreh & Grier, 2003). Customers perceive organizations as socially responsible when they attribute CSR initiatives to the former whereas attribution to the latter will lead to negative evaluations (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Ellen et al., 2006). Following this logic, we test our assumptions from Study 1 (Hypothesis 1) and predict:

> *Hypothesis 5a. Sincere CSR motives will moderate the positive link between receiving service from a person with a disability and CSR such that it will be stronger when sincere motives are higher.*

As organizations increasingly engage in CSR communication and promotion, customers become more skeptical and doubtful of sincerity of motives (Foreh & Grier, 2003). It is possible that customers attribute ulterior motives, such as corporate image promotion, when they receive service from a person with a

disability. Some consumers may even assume that hiring people with disabilities is driven by financial interests, since some countries offer employment subsidies and tax incentives to increase employment numbers of people with disabilities. For customers who think this way and who interpret receiving service from a person with a disability as egoistically motivated, CSR should be lower (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Ellen et al., 2006).

Hypothesis 5b. Egoistic CSR motives will moderate the positive link between receiving service from a person with a disability and CSR such that it will be weaker when egoistic motives are higher.

CSR as the Mediator between Receiving Service from a Person with a Disability and Corporate Reputation

In line with Study 1 (Hypothesis 1), we predict that receiving service from a person with disability will improve corporate reputation. We argued that CSR is the theoretical mechanism that connects both, but, in Study 1, we were unable to test it. In Study 2, we provide this test.

Hypothesis 6. CSR will mediate the link between receiving service from a person with a disability and corporate reputation.

Effect of Receiving Service from a Person with a Disability on Disability Stereotypes

In Study 1 (Hypothesis 3a), we operationalized stereotypes as universal competence and warmth dimensions (Fiske et al., 2002), and we found that competence stereotypes of people with disabilities mediate the link between receiving service from a person with a disability and corporate reputation. We argued that this relationship is due to the fact that information is more salient and impactful if it disconfirms instead of confirms stereotypes and we focused on the broad group of people with disabilities. Since people with disabilities are stereotyped as higher on warmth than competence (Fiske et al., 2002), positive competence information is stereotype disconfirming and thus more salient. In this experimental study, we further investigate these effects and focus on specific disabilities.

Using competence and warmth as two universal stereotype dimensions in Study 1 allowed us to connect the disability and stereotype literatures, but disability is a multifaceted construct and specific stereotypes vary among disabilities (Dwertmann, 2016). In addition, the social model of disability emphasizes barriers in the environment (e.g., stairs) that cause impairments (e.g., inability to take stairs) to result in disabilities (Hedlund, 2009). As Colella and colleagues (Colella et al., 1998; Colella & Varma, 1999) highlighted, individuals hold stereotypes about what a person with a specific disability can do well and not as well. This impression is compared to what individuals know, or think they know, about requirements for specific jobs. Based on this, individuals hold specific disability–job fit stereotypes, and we use them to operationalize disability stereotypes in this study. People with visual impairments would, for example, be rated as a poor fit for jobs such as bus driver or pilot, while people with hearing impairments would be rated as a poor fit for jobs that require hearing or verbal interactions. What this means for the present study is that different disabilities are perceived as a better or worse fit for cashier jobs. Viewing successful interactions with cashiers with different disabilities thus will provide stereotype-disconfirming information to a greater or a lesser extent, and, the more stereotype-disconfirming the information is, the greater its salience as individuals judge capabilities of people with disabilities (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016).

We include cashiers with a hearing disability and cashiers who use a wheelchair in this study. In terms of disability–job fit stereotypes for cashier, Colella and Varma (1999) found, in a sample of U.S. college students, that people who are deaf were rated at 73.98 and people with paraplegia at 89.79 on a scale where 0 means that an average person with this disability cannot do the job and 100 means that they can do the job as well as an average person without disabilities. Thus, satisfactory service from a cashier with a hearing disability provides stronger stereotype-disconfirming information than the same service from a cashier who uses a wheelchair. This stronger stereotype-disconfirming information will be more salient (Donaldson, 1980; Rousseau, 1995), and we predict:

Hypothesis 7. Receiving service from a person with a disability will lead to more positive disability–job fit stereotypes for people with the same disability.

Hypothesis 8. The positive effect of receiving service from a person with a disability on disability–job fit stereotypes for people with the same disability will be stronger for the disability for which the service provides stronger stereotype-disconfirming information (i.e., stronger for deaf than paraplegic).

The Mediation Effect of Disability–Job Fit Stereotypes

In Hypothesis 3a of Study 1, we predicted that competence stereotypes mediate the link between receiving service from a person with a disability and corporate reputation. Since disability–job fit stereotypes are primary indicators of a person with a given disability to perform well in a specific job (Colella & Varma, 1999) and are thus competence assessments, we expect the same mediation effect here.

Hypothesis 9. The positive effect between receiving service from a person with a disability and corporate reputation is mediated by disability–job fit stereotypes.

STUDY 2: METHODS

Design and Sample

Participants. We collected data[8] through the commercial data collection provider Norstat (https://norstatgroup.com/methods/online-data-collection). The sample was balanced in terms of gender and age, and represented all Lithuanian regions. We received 720 completed questionnaires. Following common practice in management research employing online surveys (Shea & Hawn, 2019), we used attention checks to ensure participants' engagement in the study and to avoid careless responding (Meade & Craig, 2012). We excluded 33 respondents who failed either of our two attention checks included in the survey (the items were "If you are paying attention, please choose 2(4)"). Our final sample was further lowered by participants failing the manipulation check, and it varies for the individual analyses because we included all disability-related measures in the posttest to avoid social desirability effects from participants anticipating our hypotheses. Thus, our sample for tests of nondisability constructs is larger than our sample for tests with disability information as the dependent variable. Average age of respondents was 47.93 years (SD = 17.03), 66% had a university degree, and 49% were female. More than half had little contact with people with disabilities in their private life (7.2%, no contact; 46%, a few times a year or less; and 12% had daily contact), 27% had a long-standing health problem, and 45% had friends or family with disabilities. See Table A2 in Appendix A for a detailed description of all experimental groups.

[8] Preregistration available at the Open Science Framework: https://osf.io/rhj9t/?view_only=3e42279acd2349a1b57a6c5d67779167.

TABLE 5
Study 2: Design

Group	Intro	Pretest	Manipulation	Posttest
Group 1	Introductory vignette	O1	Hearing disability	O2
Group 2	Introductory vignette	O3	Control	O4
Group 3	Introductory vignette	—	Hearing disability	O5
Group 4	Introductory vignette	—	Control	O6
Group 5	Introductory vignette	O7	Using a wheelchair	O8
Group 6	Introductory vignette	—	Using a wheelchair	O9

Note: "O" stands for a measurement (pretest or posttest); "hearing disability" and "using a wheelchair" refer to the manipulation (i.e., experimental groups).

Design and procedure. We used an experimental Solomon four-group design with random assignment[9] to conditions (see Table 5; Solomon, 1949), which "deservedly has higher prestige" than any other experimental design, as it allows controlling for most threats to internal and external validity (Campbell & Stanley, 1963: 24). It has been successfully employed in many studies (Bateman, Sakano, & Fujita, 1992; DeTienne & Chandler, 2004; Probst, 2003; Whitman, Van Rooy, Viswesvaran, & Alonso, 2008), yet appears underutilized in management research. First, participants read an introductory vignette about "Supermarket," a fictitious grocery store chain (see online supplement). Next, Groups 1, 2, and 5 filled out a pretest survey including CSR and corporate reputation. Then, all respondents read the following instructions: "Imagine that you visit a Supermarket store for a small grocery purchase. You were able to find the basic products you needed. The following video represents your checkout." They then watched one of three randomly assigned video vignettes. Afterward, all groups completed a posttest survey including CSR, corporate reputation, and other measures. Finally, Groups 3, 4, and 6 completed the disability–job fit stereotypes measure. Because we manipulated hearing disability and using a wheelchair, there were six groups in total, with the two control groups being the same for all comparisons.

We created three checkout video vignettes from a customer perspective (see Figure 3 and online supplement). Video vignettes are elaborated descriptions of concrete situations and have been used successfully in

[9] Pretest scores of our focal variables did not differ between conditions, indicating a successful randomization.

FIGURE 3
Study 2: Screenshots of the Three Video Vignettes

Notes: Video vignettes depicting (a) a cashier with a hearing disability (indicated by a badge "I cannot hear"), (b) a cashier using a wheelchair (indicating paraplegia), and (c) a cashier without disabilities (control condition). All cashiers are sitting.

management research (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). Analogous to Study 1, one vignette depicted a cashier with a hearing disability who wore an "I cannot hear" badge (Groups 1 and 3 watched this version), one vignette depicted a cashier who used a wheelchair (Groups 5 and 6), and one vignette depicted a cashier without disability (Groups 2 and 4). The same supermarket chain in Lithuania—our research partner in Study 1—kindly allowed us to use a cashier desk in one of their stores during opening hours to record the vignettes. We hired a professional female cashier to act in all three vignettes and removed all signs to conceal the particular grocery store chain. All vignettes contained a checkout process with the same products that lasted 30 seconds. Thus, we kept all factors constant except disability. An experienced cashier of the grocery chain with a hearing disability and a shift manager consulted during recording to ensure that the actor's behavior and checkout process were realistic. We restricted study participation to devices with larger screens (no smartphones) to increase salience of our manipulation.

Measures

If not indicated otherwise, items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). We arranged the measures to reduce social desirability: CSR (pre- and posttest), corporate reputation (pre- and posttest), social desirability (posttest), feedback task (posttest), CSR motives (posttest), control variables (posttest), and disability–job fit stereotypes (posttest). As mentioned, we included all measures related to disability in the posttest survey to avoid any indication about study hypotheses and socially desirable responses. In addition, we followed Parker and Collins's (2010) approach and reminded respondents repeatedly to respond with how they actually think and feel and not how they think they should think and feel. CFA results supporting the distinctiveness of Study 2 variables are presented in Appendix B. All scale items used in Study 2 are available in the online supplement.

Corporate reputation. Participants completed the same customer-based reputation measure as in Study 1 (pretest $\alpha = .98$, posttest $\alpha = .98$) (Walsh & Beatty, 2007).

Disability stereotypes (disability–job fit). Similar to Colella and Varma (1999), we asked participants to indicate how well an average (a) person who is deaf or (b) person with paraplegia (requires a wheelchair for mobility) can perform a cashier job relative

to an average person without a disability. The scale ranged from 0 to 100, with 0 indicating they cannot perform the job and 100 meaning they can perform the job just as well as an average person without a disability.

CSR. We measured CSR using a three-item scale (Wagner, Lutz, & Weitz, 2009) (e.g., "Supermarket is a socially responsible company"; pretest $\alpha = .93$, posttest $\alpha = .96$).

CSR motives. We adapted two items from Vlachos, Tsamakos, Vrechopoulos, and Avramidis (2009) to measure egoistic motives—Supermarket hires people with disabilities because "they want to benefit from tax incentives" and "they are taking advantage of it to help their own business" ($r = .62$, $p \leq .001$)—and two from Yoon, Gürhan-Canli, and Schwarz (2006)—Supermarket hires people with disabilities because "they have genuine concerns for people with disabilities" and "they sincerely care about people with disabilities" ($r = .91$, $p \leq .001$)—to measure sincere motives.

Control variables. We used the 10-item scale (posttest $\alpha = .71$) by Strahan and Gerbasi (1972)[10] to control for social desirability. This scale has been extensively validated and used by many others (e.g., Patel, Messersmith, & Lepak, 2013). We also asked respondents whether the video vignette they watched was realistic (1 = *totally disagree* to 5 = *totally agree*) and controlled for pretest (see explanation below). Finally, we assessed age, gender, contact frequency with people with disabilities, health (all as in Study 1), and having a family member or friend with a disability, as well as past experience receiving service from someone with a disability. In models including only the methodological controls (i.e., pretest, realistic video vignette), our conclusions remained the same (see supplemental files).

STUDY 2: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Manipulation Check

We checked whether participants correctly described the cashier in their video ("had a hearing disability," "was using a wheelchair/paraplegic," "was blind," "was missing one arm," "none of these") and excluded 125 participants[11] who failed this check from further analyses, yielding a final sample size of $n = 562$ when accounting for removal based on attention and manipulation checks. A breakdown by experimental groups is available in Appendix A (Table A2).

Data Analysis Strategy

Following recommendations (Braver & Braver, 1988; Campbell & Stanley, 1963), we examined if there was a pretest sensitization effect (i.e., if manipulation only had an effect in groups with a pretest). We tested the interaction between manipulation (experimental vs. control) and pretesting (yes vs. no). The interaction was nonsignificant for all focal variables, indicating that sensitization did not affect our findings. However, there was a significant main effect of pretest (posttest scores were lower in all pretested groups). Thus, we controlled for pretest (*yes* = 1, *no* = 0) when testing effects of our manipulation.

We used regression analyses with two dummies for hearing disability and using a wheelchair while controlling for pretest (*yes* = 1, *no* = 0) with the full sample (Groups 1–6; $n = 562$). We used the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) with posttest only groups (Groups 3, 4, 6; $n = 272$) to test for mediation and moderated mediation and pairwise tests (hearing disability vs. control and using a wheelchair vs. control) to probe the interaction effects of experimental groups and CSR motives (Hayes & Montoya, 2017). We mean-centered CSR motives and probed interactions at one standard deviation below or above the mean. As in Study 1, we used one-tailed testing and 90% CIs for indirect effects, given our directional hypotheses (Cho & Abe, 2013).

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations of all variables are shown in Table 6 and in Appendix A (Table A3).

We find that participants in the hearing disability compared to control group report significantly higher CSR ($B = 0.50$, $t = 3.28$, $p \leq .001$) and disability–job fit stereotypes for deaf ($B = 25.94$, $t = 5.02$, $p \leq .001$). Participants in the using a wheelchair group also report significantly higher levels of CSR ($B = 0.30$, $t = 1.98$, $p = .02$) but not disability–job fit for paraplegic

[10] In addition to the social desirability main effect, we also tested the interaction between social desirability and the manipulation of our IV (i.e., whether our manipulations only have an effect if social desirability is high). Since the interaction effect was not significant, we did not include it in further analyses.

[11] These respondents did not differ from the rest of the sample on any of our study or control variables, except that the dropped respondents were older ($t = 4.14$, $p \leq .001$) and reported poorer health ($\chi^2 = 8.52$, $p = .01$).

TABLE 6
Study 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between Study Variables

	Variable	*N*	Mean	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1	Experience	562	0.61	0.49																		
2	Friends or family with disability	541	0.45	0.50	.02																	
3	Contact with PWDs	562	2.27	1.88	.07	.58**																
4	Health	519	0.27	0.44	−.07	.20**	.25**															
5	Gender	562	0.49	0.50	−.13**	.09*	.13**	−.07														
6	Age	562	47.93	17.03	−.10*	.14**	.10*	.25**	.17**													
7	Realistic	562	3.84	1.30	.10*	.03	.02	.00	.06	.01												
8	Social desirability	562	3.58	0.55	−.12**	.07	.09*	.04	.16**	.26**	.05	**.71**										
9	Education	562	4.25	1.16	.14**	−.04	−.03	−.11*	.10*	.13**	.04	.02										
10	CSR (pretest)	262	4.44	1.26	−.10	−.07	−.05	−.05	.15*	−.02	.19**	.21**	.00	**.93**								
11	CSR (posttest)	562	4.99	1.42	−.07	−.04	.01	−.05	.16**	−.10*	.14**	.07	.03	.72**	**.96**							
12	Disability–job fit (deaf)	300	58.94	38.00	.32**	−.05	−.08	−.18**	−.06	−.33**	.01	−.06	.17**		.19**							
13	Disability–job fit (paraplegic)	300	79.28	30.72	.19**	.00	.01	−.09	.04	−.30**	.02	−.04	.18**		.21**	.53**						
14	Corporate reputation (pretest)	262	4.62	1.07	−.10	−.03	.00	.00	.15*	.06	.23**	.26**	−.04	.79**	.71**			**.98**				
15	Corporate reputation (posttest)	562	4.96	1.14	−.09*	−.01	.04	.01	.17**	.02	.17**	.17**	−.03	.74**	.78**	.05	.05	.88**	**.98**			
16	Feedback task	562	6.44	15.57	.06	.05	.00	−.04	−.04	−.12**	−.01	−.02	.02	−0.04	.01	.08	.05	−.01	.00			
17	Sincere motives	562	5.00	1.55	−.03	−.01	.07	.00	.13**	.04	.13**	.20**	−.02	.47**	.55**	.02	.07	.49**	.58**	−.03	**.91**	
18	Egoistic motives	562	4.66	1.52	.02	.05	.04	.06	.00	.12**	.01	−.04	−.01	−.19**	−.17**	.02	−.03	−.18**	−.14**	.03	−.23**	**.62**

Notes: PWD = person with a disability, CSR = corporate social responsibility. Reliability coefficients in bold.
* $p \leq .05$
** $p \leq .01$
*** $p \leq .001$, two-tailed

TABLE 7
Study 2: Regression Analyses Predicting CSR and Stereotypes

	CSR		Disability–job fit stereotypes (deaf)		Disability–job fit stereotypes (paraplegic)	
Independent variable	***B***	***t***	***B***	***t***	***B***	***t***
Constant	4.05	8.65***	48.49	3.18***	92.88	6.83***
Service from a cashier with a hearing disability	0.50	3.28***	25.94	5.02***	−4.67	−1.01
Service from a cashier using a wheelchair	0.30	1.98*	−2.08	−0.42	−0.57	−0.13
Experience	−0.18	−1.44	17.45	4.15***	11.04	2.94**
Family member or friend with a disability	−0.22	−1.45	4.77	0.98	3.87	0.89
Contact with PWDs	0.05	1.14	−1.57	−1.19	−0.19	−0.16
Health	−0.02	−0.11	−5.25	−1.11	−0.94	−0.22
Gender	0.40	3.14***	2.61	0.62	7.23	1.92*
Age	−0.01	−3.10***	−0.75	−5.82***	−0.51	−4.46***
Realistic situation	0.16	3.31***	2.17	1.41	−0.68	−0.50
Social desirability	0.19	1.64*	6.42	1.70*	1.35	0.40
Pretest	−0.25	−2.07*				
R^2	**.09**		**.29**		**.13**	
F	4.52***		10.72***		3.85***	

Notes: CSR = corporate social responsibility, PWD = person with a disability. n = 508 (CSR), n = 272 (Disability–job fit stereotypes). Experience = experience in receiving service from someone with a disability (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*); Family member or friend with a disability (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*); Health (1 = *having a long-standing health problem*, 0 = *no health problems*); Gender (*female* = 1, *male* = 0); Pretest (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*).

* $p \leq .05$

** $p \leq .01$

*** $p \leq .001$, one-tailed

($B = -0.57$, $t = -0.13$, $p = .45$). These findings provide support for the positive effect on CSR, stated in Hypothesis 4, and partially support Hypothesis 7 because the disability–job fit stereotype result is only significant for the hearing disability condition (see Table 7).

We then compared the effect of service from a cashier with a hearing disability on disability–job fit stereotypes for deaf versus the effect of service from a cashier using a wheelchair on disability–job fit stereotypes for paraplegic. A test for equality of coefficients reveals a significant difference between coefficients ($\chi^2 = 20.56$, $df = 1$, $p \leq .001$). The effect is stronger for hearing disability, supporting Hypothesis 8.

Next, we tested whether the above effects depend on CSR motives. As shown in Table 8, there is a significant interaction between hearing disability condition and sincere motives ($B = 0.19$, $t = 1.66$, $p = .05$) and a significant interaction between the using a wheelchair condition and sincere motives ($B = 0.22$, $t = 2.06$, $p = .02$). We computed the effects of experimental conditions on CSR at low and high levels of sincere motives (see Figure 4, left). Hearing disability versus control has a significant positive effect on CSR when sincere motives are attributed as high ($B = 0.77$, $t = 3.00$, $p \leq .001$) but not when sincere motives are attributed as low ($B = 0.17$, $t = 0.67$, $p = .25$). Similarly, using a wheelchair versus control had a significant positive effect on CSR when sincere motives are attributed as high ($B = 0.86$, $t = 3.53$, $p \leq .001$) but not when sincere motives are attributed as low ($B = 0.18$, $t = 0.76$, $p = .22$). Overall, in support of Hypothesis 5a, we conclude that observing a cashier with a disability results in higher CSR when respondents infer sincere motives.

As shown in Table 8, there is a significant interaction between hearing disability condition and egoistic motives ($B = -0.33$, $t = -2.43$, $p = .01$) and a significant interaction between using a wheelchair condition and egoistic motives ($B = -0.24$, $t = -1.88$, $p = .03$). The effects of experimental groups on CSR are depicted in Figure 4 (right). Hearing disability versus control has a significant positive effect on CSR when egoistic motives are low ($B = 1.04$, $t = 3.37$, $p \leq .001$) but not when they are high ($B = 0.02$, $t = 0.07$, $p = .47$). Using a wheelchair versus control has a significant positive effect on CSR when egoistic motives are low ($B = 0.82$, $t = 2.89$, $p = .002$) but not when they are high ($B = 0.08$, $t = 0.27$, $p = .39$). Thus, in support of Hypothesis 5b, observing a cashier with a disability results in higher CSR when respondents attribute hiring these employees to lower egoistic motives.

TABLE 8
Study 2: Moderation Effect of Attributed Motives on CSR

	CSR (Model 1)		CSR (Model 2)	
Independent variable	***B***	***t***	***B***	***t***
Constant	5.70	10.55***	4.98	7.83***
Service from a cashier with a hearing disability	0.47	2.61**	0.53	2.47**
Service from a cashier using a wheelchair	0.52	3.00***	0.45	2.18*
Experience	−0.09	−0.63	−0.12	−0.68
Family member or friend with a disability	−0.08	−0.49	−0.21	−1.02
Contact with PWDs	0.04	0.85	0.10	1.79*
Health	0.05	0.31	−0.08	−0.41
Gender	0.10	0.67	0.30	1.70*
Age	−0.01	−2.48**	−0.01	−2.36**
Realistic situation	0.04	0.83	0.11	1.67*
Social desirability	−0.16	−1.18	−0.04	−0.26
Sincere motives	0.35	4.39***	—	—
Hearing disability × Sincere motives	0.19	1.66*	—	—
Using a wheelchair × Sincere motives	0.22	2.06*	—	—
Egoistic motives	—	—	0.12	1.29
Hearing disability × Egoistic motives	—	—	−0.33	−2.43**
Using a wheelchair × Egoistic motives	—	—	−0.24	−1.88*
R^2	**.37**		**.11**	
F	11.55***		2.48**	
ΔR^2	**.01**		**.02**	
ΔF	2.38*		3.26*	

Notes: CSR = corporate social responsibility, PWD = person with a disability. n = 272 (listwise deletion) because we used posttest only groups for these analyses. Experience = experience in receiving service from someone with a disability (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*); Family member or friend with a disability (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*); Health (1 = *having a long-standing health problem*, 0 = *no health problems*); Gender (*female* = 1, *male* = 0). ΔR^2 stands for the change in R^2 due to adding the interaction terms of service from a person with a disability and sincere (egoistic) motives into the equation.

* $p \leq .05$

** $p \leq .01$

*** $p \leq .001$, one-tailed

We constructed a parallel multiple mediation model using the posttest scores, in which two dummy variables (hearing disability vs. control and using a wheelchair vs. control) predicted corporate reputation through three parallel mediators (CSR, disability–job fit for deaf, and disability–job fit for paraplegic) to test our mediation effects. In support of Hypothesis 6, the indirect effect through CSR is significant both for hearing disability (.31, 90% CI [0.097, 0.543]) and using a wheelchair (.27, 90% CI [0.048, 0.494]) conditions

FIGURE 4
Study 2: Moderation Effect of CSR Motives on CSR

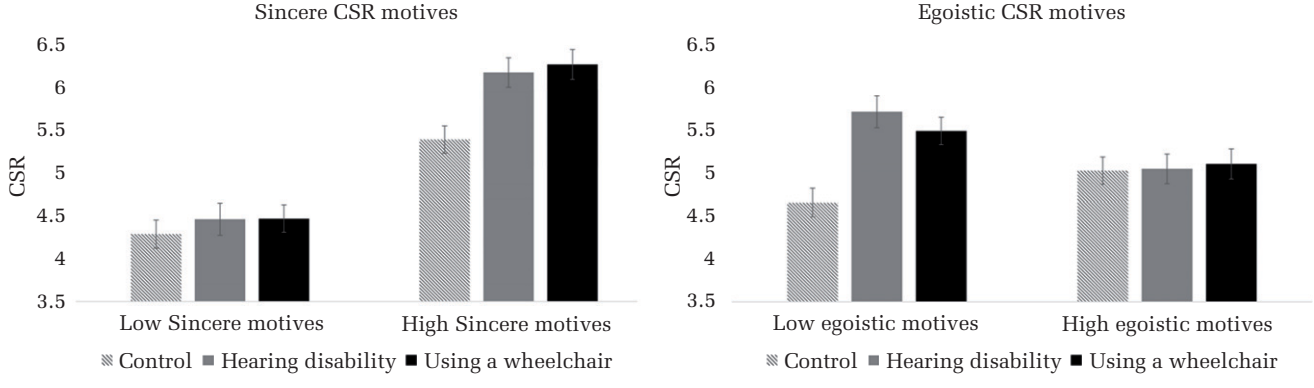


TABLE 9
Study 2: Bootstrapping Results: Indirect Effect of Service from an Employee with Disabilities on Corporate Reputation via CSR and Stereotypes

Indirect effects	Estimate	90% CI UL, LL[a]
Indirect effects for *hearing disability* condition		
CSR	0.31[b]	0.097, 0.543
Disability–job fit (deaf)	−0.05	−0.123, 0.021
Disability–job fit (paraplegic)	0.01	−0.011, 0.032
Indirect effects for *using a wheelchair* condition		
CSR	0.27[b]	0.048, 0.494
Disability–job fit (deaf)	0.00	−0.016, 0.028
Disability–job fit (paraplegic)	0.00	−0.017, 0.017

Notes: CSR = corporate social responsibility. $N = 272$ (listwise deletion). Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap CI = 5,000.

[a] UL = upper limit, LL = lower limit.

[b] 90% CI does not include zero.

(see Table 9). The indirect effects through disability–job fit stereotypes for deaf and for paraplegic are not significant. Thus, Hypothesis 9 is not supported.

Robustness checks. Customers should be motivated to help organizations that they perceive as higher on CSR and more reputable. We utilized this to create an unobtrusive, behavioral measure of helping similar to Shea and Hawn (2019) that should be less prone to social desirability. We asked participants to suggest checkout process improvements to help Supermarket (single, open-ended question) and counted the number of words as a measure of effort. If a response did not include any suggestions (e.g., "I don't know"), we coded it as 0. Participants in the hearing disability ($B = 5.11$, $t = 3.10$, $p \leq .001$) and using a wheelchair ($B = 3.21$, $t = 2.01$, $p = .02$) conditions used significantly more words than in the control condition, implying higher motivation to help Supermarket and deeper cognitive processing (Arnold, Umanath, Thio, Reilly, McDaniel, & Marsh, 2017; Shea & Hawn, 2019; Sirola & Pitesa, 2017).

Discussion

Overall, the results from Study 2 are in line with our findings from Study 1. Receiving service from an employee with disabilities results in better corporate reputation, and this effect is mediated by CSR. The positive effect on CSR is particularly strong when customers attribute employment of people with disabilities to sincere, nonegoistic motives. Finally, participants in the hearing disability condition report better disability–job fit stereotypes for people who are deaf in cashier jobs. However, this effect was not significant in the using a wheelchair condition, and stereotypes did not mediate the effect between service from a person with a disability and corporate reputation.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

With this paper, we seek to contribute to the discussion of whether employment of people with disabilities, a group that includes about a billion people worldwide (World Health Organization, 2020), can hurt an organization's reputation (Domzal et al., 2008; Kaye et al., 2011), or whether organizations can benefit through better corporate reputation (Markel & Barclay, 2009). The findings from our field and experimental studies indicate that the employment of people with disabilities is seen as a CSR activity, particularly when customers perceive the motives for employment are sincere and not egoistic. Customers who receive service from a person with a disability evaluate the organization as more reputable. We hope that these results alleviate some employer concerns for hiring people with disabilities and contribute to the reduction of social and economic inequality of this disadvantaged group.

Theoretical Contributions

Our field and experimental studies show that employment of people with disabilities can lead to positive organizational outcomes. This contribution is important especially with respect to resolving conflicting views of employers that identify negatively biased customer reactions as one important factor that prevents them from hiring people with disabilities (Domzal et al., 2008; Kaye et al., 2011) and public polls that view employment as CSR (Burge et al., 2007; Siperstein et al., 2006). The results from a Lithuanian supermarket chain go beyond such polls by showing that receiving service from a person with a disability relates to CSR and corporate reputation. Reputation, in turn, has been linked to important outcomes such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, trust, and word of mouth (Walsh & Beatty, 2007; Walsh et al., 2009). Therefore, our results show a specific pathway that can link employment of people with disabilities with beneficial corporate outcomes. Through the lens of signaling theory (Connelly et al., 2011), receiving service from a person with a disability may be interpreted as a signal to customers about the organization's adherence to socially responsible values (Lengnick-Hall, 2007;

Markel & Barclay, 2009). Our findings on the importance of CSR motives support this logic. As such, our results further support findings on favorable effects of employment of people with disabilities (Nelissen et al., 2016; Schur, Nishii, Adya, Kruse, Bruyère, & Blanck, 2014) and extend them by providing empirical evidence from a customer perspective. Based on our direct (experimental study) and indirect (field study) empirical evidence for the theoretical claims that the employment of people with disabilities can be seen as a CSR initiative (Kendall & Karns, 2018; Markel & Barclay, 2009), employers should not be concerned about negative customer reactions to employees with disabilities in service jobs. Instead, they can benefit from it—with a caveat: an important factor for such positive effects is customer perceptions of company motives for the employment of people with disabilities. Customers respond positively when motives are perceived as sincere and not egoistic. At the same time, we do not want to imply that business outcomes should be the only rationale for organizations to hire people with disabilities. We see our findings as complementary to ethical considerations.

Our field study results also indicate that positive contact with a person with a disability is linked to more positive stereotypes toward people with disabilities in general (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Stone & Colella, 1996). Customers who received high satisfaction service from a cashier with a hearing disability held more positive warmth and competence stereotypes toward people with disabilities. We extended this finding in our experimental study measuring disability–job fit stereotypes (Colella & Varma, 1999) and found comparable effects. People who are deaf were rated as a significantly better fit with cashier jobs after customers watched a video vignette of a checkout process with a cashier with a hearing disability. Contrary to our predictions, but in line with our arguments that stronger stereotype-disconfirming information is more powerful for changing stereotypes (Donaldson, 1980; Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016; Rousseau, 1995), we did not find a comparable effect for cashiers who use a wheelchair. While we can only speculate, the fact that we did not observe changes in this stereotypical fit might be due to the fact that real-life interactions with a cashier with a disability represent a stronger manipulation compared to video vignettes. In addition, people with paraplegia are seen as relatively better fits with cashier jobs (Colella & Varma, 1999). In line with this, we followed Colella and Varma's procedure in our Lithuanian sample and received values of 52.34 for deaf and 78.68 for paraplegic from participants in the control group. These results are comparable to Colella and Varma's (1999) results from the United States, in that the disability–job fit stereotype for deaf was rated about 20 points lower than for paraplegic. Thus, our arguments based on salience provide an explanation, and future research should follow up on our findings that the existence of stronger negative stereotypes may cause more positive effects if stereotype-disconfirming information is provided. Our results and the variety in disability also raise the question of whether positive interactions with employees with a specific disability generalize to better stereotypes toward all people with disabilities or just people with that specific disability (Richards & Hewstone, 2001). Our results from Study 1 indicate, in line with a general exposure effect (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), that stereotypes for the broader group of "physical disabilities" change. Still, we would expect stronger effects for people with the specific disability, and call for future research to further test this idea.

Finally, we contribute to the stigma-by-association literature (Goffman, 1963; Kulik et al., 2008). First, while Kulik et al. (2008) are convincing in predicting that valuation by association (in our case, better corporate reputation) is possible when a target is associated with a stigmatized individual (employee with a disability), we are unaware of empirical tests of this proposition. Both of our studies support this notion. Receiving service from a stigmatized person with a disability presents customers with stereotype-disconfirming information that appears to lead to deeper cognitive processing, instead of automatic stigma by association, and allows for positive outcomes to occur. This argument is supported by our Study 2 robustness check, which found that customers provide more feedback for organizations when they saw a cashier with a hearing disability and thus appear to engage in deeper cognitive processing (Arnold et al., 2017). Second, following Kulik et al.'s (2008) original intention, we extend the model beyond the described triad of employee, stigma source, and observer. In line with the more macro-based signaling theory (Connelly et al., 2011), our results show associating an organization with a stigma source (employee with disabilities) can lead to a valuation-by-association effect in the eyes of outsiders—namely, customers, who are an important stakeholder group. Thus, we provide primary empirical evidence for Kulik et al.'s (2008) predictions, extend the model beyond the initial within-organization triad, and connect it with signaling theory logic (Connelly et al., 2011).

Practical Implications

Our studies underline twofold outcomes of employing people with disabilities for society and for businesses. First, our results suggest that customers who receive satisfying service from employees with disabilities rate corporate reputation more positively. Such positive corporate reputation leads to the ability to attract better talent and investors, charge higher prices, and achieve greater financial success (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Roberts & Dowling, 2002). Given the evidence of our studies, managers should see employment of people with disabilities as an opportunity and not as a threat to customers. Employees with disabilities can become salient examples of a company's good intentions and a signal of CSR. Consistent with this interpretation, Walmart recently faced significant public backlash when it eliminated greeter positions that were often held by employees with disabilities (Selyukh, 2019). Based on our findings, we hope that organizations realize that they should hire people with disabilities due to moral and corporate reputation reasons, along with providing a positive working climate to support them (Dwertmann, Nishii, & van Knippenberg, 2016).

Second, we find that positive contact has beneficial effects for competence and disability–job fit stereotypes. Customers who have stereotype-disconfirming experiences seem to reflect on their stereotypes toward people with disabilities and on their perceptions of the organization's reputation. This highlights the need for companies to ensure a good fit between the skills of employees with disabilities and the demands of their jobs (Dwertmann & McAlpine, 2023), as well as the need to provide sufficient support and resources such as onboarding and training. It is especially encouraging that competence and disability–job fit stereotypes, which have been seen as one of the main obstacles to employment (e.g., Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008; Louvet, 2007), could be altered and lead to workplace inclusion. Employment would provide people with disabilities with regular social interactions, a sense of purpose, and financial resources to increase their social inclusion and reduce inequality.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Social desirability is a concern for disability research (Dwertmann, 2016). In our field study, we asked customers for their stereotypes of people with disabilities. This could have biased our results, since people with disabilities evoke paternalistic behavior and thus more favorable reactions. We counteracted this possibility in multiple ways. First, we approached customers in both groups for a customer satisfaction survey—a common business practice in retail settings (Gomez et al., 2004)—and asked disability stereotype questions at the end. Thus, particularly for our main outcome of corporate reputation, customers should not have been biased. If a positive bias had been present, it should have equally applied to the disability and nondisability groups. Second, we measured contact quality via service satisfaction and should see higher ratings for comparable performance in the disability group if social desirability would elicit a significant effect. Our partner organization indicated comparable performance for cashiers with and without disabilities and satisfaction did not differ between the two groups (i.e., customers did not rate people with disabilities more favorably, a finding that speaks against social desirability). We believe that our context could have influenced these results. Compared to Western countries, voicing negative opinions about people with disabilities is more socially acceptable in other parts of the world (Baldridge, Beatty, Boehm, Kulkarni, & Moore, 2018). This situation is likely due to the history of treatment and existing norms in the country (i.e., in our case, by the fact that people with disabilities were labeled as "invalids"). Thus, we believe that contexts like this, in which individuals might be less influenced by a norm to be kind (Colella & Bruyère, 2011), offer interesting settings for disability research that can result in less-biased results. The final indicator that speaks against social desirability as the explanation for our effects is that the results from our experimental study largely replicate the field study. In particular, in the experimental study, we include pre- and post-measures, use random assignments of participants to conditions, include a control group, statistically control for social desirability, and use unobtrusive measures to replicate central results. Thus, it is unlikely that social desirability caused our results.

As for the generalizability of our findings to other contexts, the strong stereotypes toward people with disabilities in Lithuania should have made it harder for us to find positive effects of service interactions. Thus, we would anticipate comparable or potentially more positive results in other national contexts. What is less clear is whether our results would apply to other industries. This remains an area for future research. Furthermore, in this paper, we focus on service situations in which customers are aware of the disability of an employee (because the disability is visible or is made visible). Although some may question whether our findings generalize to invisible

disabilities, our findings support that the key issue is whether customers are aware of the disability. Such awareness can arise either because the disability is visible (using a wheelchair in our Study 2) or because the disability is disclosed (for employees with a hearing disability via a badge in our studies; Ragins, 2008). The key theoretical difference between awareness and visibility is currently insufficiently represented in the literature and represents an important area for future research.

Due to the use of self-administered customer satisfaction surveys, we were not able to track the response rate during our field data collection. Yet, the research associates did not notice any particular trends in participation—except for age. We aimed to collect responses from equal numbers of respondents in different age groups. As initially expected, middle-aged customers were less willing to participate (e.g., they were often shopping with children and probably have busier worklives and less available time). Indeed, we oversampled middle-aged individuals (between 35 and 50 years old) to generate comparable amounts of participants from all age groups. We are not aware of theoretical arguments or empirical findings that suggest that this age group should have differing opinions of people with disabilities. In sum, we believe that middle-aged individuals chose to opt out from the survey more often due to alternative obligations and time constraints, but not because of reasons that would bias our results in either direction.

Moderation effects may be difficult to detect, especially in field research (McClelland & Judd, 1993). Post hoc power analyses using the software G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009) indicated that the power for our moderation hypotheses (Hypotheses 2a, 2b, 5a, and 5b) testing ranged from .84 (Hypothesis 2b) to .62 (for Hypothesis 2a), the latter being somewhat below recommendations (Cohen, 1992).

Finally, CSR and corporate reputation correlate between .71 and .79 (depending on whether it is pre- or posttest) in our Study 2. We conducted several CFAs to assess multiple measurement models and examine discriminant validity. The results revealed that our proposed factor model showed a better fit than several alternative models (including a model in which CSR and corporate reputation load on one factor; see Appendix B). This evidence supports the distinctiveness of both constructs. Still, due do the significant correlation between the constructs, we suggest future research to further investigate the mediation found in our model.

CONCLUSION

This paper advances disability research by investigating the effects of receiving service from a person with a disability on ratings of CSR and corporate reputation. Results show that customers who received service from a person with a disability report better corporate reputation and that this effect is driven by CSR perceptions. On the one hand, this finding is positive, because it shows beneficial effects of the employment of people with disabilities. On the other hand, our finding is sobering, because it shows that customers think of their employment as a social act and not one driven by business reasons. Negative stereotypes toward people with disabilities are pervasive, but, fortunately, our findings also indicate that positive contact with them in the workplace can influence these stereotypes. Thus, based on our theorizing and findings across a field study and an experimental study, it appears that organizations should see the employment of people with disabilities in customer-facing positions as an opportunity to communicate their good intentions to stakeholders, in addition to adhering to ethical guidelines and helping to overcome negative stereotypes associated with people with disabilities.

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APPENDIX A

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON COMPARISON GROUPS IN BOTH STUDIES

TABLE A1
Study 1: Demographics of Both Study Groups

	Disability[a]		Nondisability[b]	
Means for continuous variables	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Number of purchases a month	10.62	7.13	10.95	7.85
Freq. served by a person with a disability elsewhere	1.26	2.48	1.33	2.58
Contact with people with disabilities	2.01	1.81	2.28	1.91
Customer age	43.68	13.37	40.95	14.27
Proportions for categorical variables	**%**		**%**	
Having colleagues with disabilities	30.4		36.6	
Customer health	8.9		11.1	
Customer gender	56.8		56.2	
Employee gender	75.1		83.7	
Customer education	60.9		66.0	

Notes: $n = 317$. Disability = received service from a person with a disability, Nondisability = received service from a person without a disability. Having colleagues with disabilities (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*); Customer health (1 = *having a long-standing health problem*, 0 = *no health problems*); Gender (1 = *female*, 0 = *male*); Customer education (1 = *university degree*, 0 = *no university degree*).

[a] $n = 167$

[b] $n = 150$

TABLE A2
Study 2: Demographics across Experimental Groups

Groups	Experience %	Family or friends %	Contact with PWDs *M*	Contact with PWDs *SD*	Health %	Female %	Age *M*	Age *SD*	Realistic situation *M*	Realistic situation *SD*	Social desirability *M*	Social desirability *SD*	Education *M*	Education *SD*
Hearing disability condition														
Group 1, $n = 86$	0.65	0.39	2.31	2.02	0.22	0.44	46.09	16.06	3.43	1.42	3.48	0.53	4.33	1.08
Group 3, $n = 90$	0.69	0.47	2.31	1.75	0.27	0.49	51.19	19.14	3.23	1.51	3.57	0.61	4.27	1.13
Using a wheelchair condition														
Group 5, $n = 78$	0.63	0.54	1.90	1.50	0.19	0.51	45.26	15.82	3.85	1.17	3.55	0.49	4.38	1.10
Group 6, $n = 94$	0.50	0.46	2.23	1.94	0.29	0.59	46.01	16.69	3.84	1.45	3.67	0.56	4.18	1.21
Control condition														
Group 2, $n = 98$	0.58	0.43	2.31	1.97	0.30	0.49	50.12	17.45	4.20	0.96	3.60	0.57	4.21	1.22
Group 4, $n = 116$	0.62	0.41	2.43	1.98	0.30	0.42	48.26	16.37	4.30	0.93	3.57	0.52	4.17	1.20

Note: PWD = person with a disability. Experience = experience in receiving service from someone with a disability (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*); Family or friends = having a family member or friend with a disability (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*); Health = having a long-standing health problem (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*).

TABLE A3
Study 2: Means across Experimental Conditions on Focal Variables

		CSR beliefs		Disability–job fit (deaf)		Disability–job fit (paraplegic)		Corporate reputation		Feedback task	
Experimental conditions	***N***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***
Hearing disability condition	176	5.18[a]	1.38	78.18[a]	32.13	77.34[a]	32.28	5.11[a]	1.13	8.97[a]	18.96
Using a wheelchair condition	172	5.08[a]	1.46	50.57[b]	39.48	81.61[a]	28.43	4.92[ab]	1.20	7.06[a]	16.44
Control condition	214	4.75[b]	1.40	50.79[b]	36.82	78.90[a]	31.41	4.87[b]	1.10	3.85[b]	10.73

Notes: CSR = corporate social responsibility. Cell means were adjusted for the two methodological controls: realistic situation and pretest.

[a, b] Means with common superscripts within each column are not significantly different (two-tailed testing)

APPENDIX B

RESULTS OF CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSES

To assess the discriminant validity of the study variables, we conducted a CFA using Mplus Version 7.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2014). For Study 1, we compared a three-factor model (reputation, competence, and warmth) with a two-factor model (competence and warmth loading on one factor) and a one-factor model (all items loading on one factor). One item on competence-related stereotypes ("As viewed by society, how intelligent are people with disabilities?") was eliminated from further analysis due to a high cross-loading on the warmth factor. Results of the CFA revealed that the three-factor ($\chi^2 = 754.63$, $p \leq .001$, $df = 227$, CFI = 0.90, TLI = .89, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .05) yielded a better fit than the two-factor ($\chi^2 = 1096.35$, $p \leq .001$, $df = 229$, CFI = 0.83, TLI = .81, RMSEA = .11, SRMR = .08; $\Delta\chi^2 = 341.72$, $df = 2$, $p \leq .001$), or the one-factor model ($\chi^2 = 2699.87$, $p \leq .001$, $df = 230$, CFI = 0.53, TLI = .48, RMSEA = .19, SRMR = .16; $\Delta\chi^2 = 1945.24$, $df = 3$, $p \leq .001$).

For Study 2, we compared a four-factor model (egoistic motives, sincere motives, CSR, and corporate reputation) with a three-factor model (CSR and corporate reputation loading on one factor), and a one-factor model (all items loading on one factor). Results of the CFA revealed that the four-factor model ($\chi^2 = 1278.68$, $p \leq .001$, $df = 203$, CFI = 0.93, TLI = .92, RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .03) yielded a better fit than the three-factor ($\chi^2 = 2229.22$, $p \leq .001$, $df = 206$, CFI = 0.86, TLI = .85, RMSEA = .13, SRMR = .04; $\Delta\chi^2 = 950.54$, $df = 3$, $p \leq .001$) and one-factor model ($\chi^2 = 3288.29$, $p \leq .001$, $df = 209$, CFI = 0.79, TLI = .77, RMSEA = .16, SRMR = .06; $\Delta\chi^2 = 2009.61$, $df = 6$, $p \leq .001$). Overall, the CFA results support the distinctiveness of our study variables.