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### Accessible Information required by the Independent Disabled Tourists: A Mini Review

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#### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Holidays gives all of us an excellent and unforgettable memories but holidays can turns out to be a nightmares of the some of them due to insufficient travel information and improper guidance. Lack of information leads to mistakes and disappointment which finally results in dissatisfaction. Comprehensive pre-travel information in the tour website will be useful for the tourists in the decision making process. Disabled tourists required much information of what is included and what is excluded in the tour packages which they are going to select, so that they will be aware of the facilities and services are provide in the tourist destinations. Detailed information will be provided a good first impression to the disabled tourists to participate in the tourism activities. **Objective:** Therefore, this paper aims to identify the most essential information needed by the disabled tourist when making journey decision so that they will be aware of the constraints they might face and to identify the main requirements of the accessible information in the travel websites. **Results:** Tour information can be presented in three types of format namely, printed, pictograms and accessible websites. The most essential information needed by the disabled tourists when making journey decision are self-assistance, help facilities, stop infrastructure, timetable and service announcement, physical accessibility of stops, physical accessibility of vehicles, lighting and surface. The main requirement of accessible information are the general requirements, website and brochures and pricing scale. Areas which need crucial attention are such as parking areas, signage, elevators, public telephones, public toilets, bathroom, accommodation facilities, transportation services, entrance, paths of access, dining and bars and pricing. **Conclusion:** Information plays a huge role in the decision making process which motivates the disabled tourists to choose their tour packages according to their likings and affordability. Most of the time, tourists with access needs are not even aware of the existence of the accessible facilities in the specific tourist destinations due to lack of source of information. A reliable information can save the disabled tourists from experiencing a nightmare and waste their precious time with uncomfortable situation. Success of travel agencies relying completely on the promotion strategies which need to be an eye-catching to the tourists to make selection on the tour packages. Accessibility is no more disabled community's issue but it is one of the profitable marketing tool.

#### INTRODUCTION

Targeted group for accessible tourism are those who are suffering from mobility impairment, visual impairment, hearing impairment, hidden impairment, cognitive impairment, speech impairment, disabled in

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general, elderly people and families with small children (European Commission, 2015). According to Burger (2011), the main advantage of the online information is the possibility to compare contents from different sites, the possibility of translations and the possibility of making modification instantly available.

Cueto (2007) said that ten percent of the world population are the people with disabilities. Category of the people with disabilities consists of people with intellectual disabilities, physical, sensory (hearing, vision and speech), psychiatric or mental illness. Women who are pregnant, people with permanent and temporary injuries, people with small children and people who suffer from obesity also categorized as disabled. People with disabilities are often marginalized from the social environment. They tend to be older, poorer, less educated and has fewer employment opportunities than those without disabilities. Sanmargaraja and Wee (2013) said that people with hidden disabilities and those are not able to understand local language might be needing the same accessible facilities like the people with disabilities.

All this while, fears regarding the environment especially in the developing countries and developed cities and the future well-being of the world's communities have become the most predominant. The major concepts of tourism sustainability include satisfying the needs of both visitors and local community as well as preserving and increasing the tourism attraction for the future as a section of a national economic resource. The connection between tourists, local community, businesses institutions, attractions and environment is very difficult, collaborative and symbolic. The main aim of quality tourism is to supply the tourists with 'good value for money'. Quality tourism product doesn't need to be expensive (Finkelstein, 2012).

According to Yu-Chun, and Ching-Fu (2011) that the way we spend our holidays is a significant sign in measuring our quality of life, this is due to travelling become one of the lifestyle nowadays. However, people with disabilities usually have had a significantly different travel experience from non-disabled tourists, this is because the information regarding the transportation is not comprehensive.

The main aim of The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) is not find the people who are out of the business, but it aims to assist all the citizens to experience the same facilities that others take for granted. Basically, many tourism business institutes are worry that the DDA requires them to invest more, when the reality is that DDA only requires to eliminate the existing constraints (British Tourist Authority, 2012). Therefore, this paper aims to identify the requirements of the accessible information required by the independent disabled tourists while planning their vacations so that they will be aware of the constraints they might face.

#### ***Information Required By The Independent Disabled Tourists:***

According to Aziz et al. (2011) tourism reflects a major domestic and international industry involving various businesses such as hotels, bed and breakfasts, travel agents, tourist attractions, restaurants and transport providers. These institutions are legal responsibility to make reasonable alterations and providing within the resources which are readily available. Research conducted by Cultural Sites and Tourism Development of European Strategies (2015) shows that the most important management tool is to control accessibility and mobility within a tourism destination for the purpose to regulate the flow of the tourists, lessen traffic congestion and pollution and fulfil the requirements of the tourists and the local residents.

Additional expenses for transport, insufficient of accessible budget hotels and the lack disability awareness among the travel agents resulting in holidays for become expensive than the non-disabled tourists. This research expose that many young adults with disabilities losing their opportunity to travel independently at the present. This research also shows the services provided are below the satisfactory level and the constraints faced by people with disabilities when planning a holiday. Travel experience for this group of people can be stressful, leads to anxiety and uncertainty and become unsatisfactory travel experience as well (Aziz et al., 2011).

#### ***The Purpose of the Information System:***

Centi et al. (2012) mentioned that the decision making process of each customer starts from the decision to go on a trip, hence the information system plays a huge role in decision making process. They will make an initial choice from the many travel agencies who offers a competitive tourism products in the market, based on their requirements and financial capability which motivates them to go on the trip.

The information system permits the description of the diverse components of the tourist package and it allows potential customers to make their decision to go for holidays, to have an initial idea regarding the facilities' features, to make decision on the best package that suits their requirements, to book an accessible tour packages and enjoy their holidays peacefully and comfortably. The Disabled tourist can gather information either directly from the Internet or indirectly from the travel agencies who have experienced in organizing accessible tours (Centi et al., 2012).

#### ***Steps in Providing Accessible Information:***

According to Westcott (2004) there are five (5) main steps in providing accessible information namely, completing the accessibility factsheet, submitting the completed accessibility factsheet to tourist information

offices, providing photographs of key features, obtain independent verification of accessibility information and participating in a national accessibility scheme. However, these steps may differ according to country's policies.

### Information Formats:

Based on the research conducted by Commission of the European Communities (2007); United Nations World Tourism Organization (2013), it is suggested that the preparation of comprehensive and reliable customer information about the accessibility of destinations and facilities should be a major element of any tourism business. Besides this the way the information is presented is much more important. Since the requirements from the tourists, particularly disabled and elderly tourists differs, therefore the information need to be provided in as many formats as possible. Information can be presented in the format such as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Format of printed information (Commission of the European Communities, 2007)

Format	Explanation	Examples
Printed	Information should be presented in accessible format by using a readable font and size, a good contrast between font and background colour.	Brochures, city guides, maps, information leaflets
Pictograms	This format can be very essential for those who can't read or understand the local languages.	Toilet signs, warning sign and others
Accessible Websites	On-line ticket sites are getting popular nowadays but this facilities is not fully accessible to the disabled tourists, therefore sensor system namely, provide touch screen and audible app.	Tour websites, booking sites

### Pre-Travel Information:

There are several types of essential information required by people with disabilities when planning for holidays, it could be categorized under eight subtitles, from details about staff assistance to details on infrastructure. Each of the eight (8) subtitles are listed in the Table 2 with examples. For the purpose of this table, the information requirements of different disability groups have been collected into one homogenous group, even though the different disabilities requires different needs (Atkins, 2006).

**Table 2:** Essential Information for the people with disabilities (Atkins, 2006)

Essential Information for People with Disabilities When Making Journey Decisions	
<b>Self-Assistance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>availability of staff assistance</li> <li>whether any staff assistance has disability training</li> <li>operator policy on driver assistance at bus stops</li> </ul>	<b>Help Facilities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presence of telephones/Help points</li> <li>contact details of specialist organizations dealing with people with disabilities travel</li> <li>contact details of accessible taxi companies</li> </ul>
<b>Stop Infrastructure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presence of shelters</li> <li>seating</li> <li>telephones</li> <li>toilets (accessible) (major stops)</li> <li>low level information monitors (major stops)</li> </ul>	<b>Timetable &amp; Service Announcement (Communication)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) / Electronic screens</li> <li>audible announcements</li> <li>timetable displays</li> <li>presence of induction or T-loops (major stops)</li> </ul>
<b>Physical Accessibility of Stops</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>presence and position of ramps, raised kerbs, dropped kerbs, tactile paving and others (relevant for all stops)</li> <li>set down/pick up points close to entrance and exits (major stops)</li> </ul>	<b>Physical Accessibility of Vehicles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>like hood of low floor accessible</li> <li>gap between platform and train</li> </ul>
<b>Lighting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>if stop environment is well lit (possibly due to personal safety fears rather than accessibility concerns) whether shelters are illuminated (similar to above)</li> </ul>	<b>Surface</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whether shelters are constructed of glass or a non-clear material (relevant for people with visual difficulties who may have difficulty locating such infrastructure) whether surfaces are glare free / minimized (relevant for airports and major rail and bus stations where there tend to be a lot of shiny surfaces. Such surfaces can cause difficulties for the visually and hearing impaired.</li> </ul>

### Accessible Pre-travel Information:

The responsibility of the website developers or website owners is to create an accessible website which can be accessed by everyone. Developers need to be familiar with the international standards that so that they will be aware of the actions need to be taken to make their website accessible through the W3C Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). WAI collaborate with various organizations around the world to develop guidelines, strategies and resources in order to an accessible websites for all. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0 (WCAG 1.0) is the crucial accessibility guidelines according to W3C WAI. There are total of 65 checkpoints in WCAG 1.0. For each guideline, it includes one or more checkpoints. Based on the impact on accessibility, checkpoints are categorized into three priority levels. Checkpoint under the same guideline may be categorized into different

priority level. Working Group assign each checkpoint with a priority level based on the checkpoints impact factors on accessibility (Aziz et al., 2011).

According to British Authority (2012), the description regarding accessible facilities on travel websites should be checked frequently. The tourists must be provided with the local tourist information centre with a list of the current accessible facilities and all the information need to update if there is any addition of new facilities. The requirements of the accessible information are given in the Table 3.

**Table 3:** Requirements of Accessible Information (British Tourist Authority, 2012)

	Specifications
General Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large text need to be used. 12 point is the minimum, large print should be at least 14 but 16 is the best.</li> <li>• Clear typefaces such as sans serif typefaces e.g. Arial or Verdana need to be used.</li> <li>• There must be contrast between the text and background. Text in red in colour need to be avoided.</li> <li>• Justifying text need to be avoided as large gaps can be confusing.</li> <li>• Italics or capitals for large blocks of text need to be avoided.</li> <li>• Pictograms and symbols need to be used to help users navigate text.</li> <li>• Images with a various range of visitors need to be used.</li> <li>• Content need to be structure in a logical order.</li> <li>• Plain English need to be used and long sentences need to be avoided if possible.</li> <li>• Make sure your designers are familiar with Web Initiative (WAI)'s web accessibility guidelines when planning to commission a new website</li> </ul>
Websites and Brochure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear email address and fax number need to be given, especially for those who have difficulty using a telephone.</li> <li>• Provide address and travel information.</li> <li>• Provide an access statement.</li> <li>• Provide assurance of quality and accessibility through an official rating system example, star rating or national accessible scheme rating</li> <li>• Clear pictures and details of rooms and facilities need to be given</li> <li>• Floor plans and requirements need to be provided.</li> </ul>
Pricing Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure prices are easy to locate on your websites (within two or three clicks) and consistent with your brochure.</li> <li>• Be clear about what is included and what is excluded.</li> <li>• Avoid extra charges for facilities and services that could be considered as discrimination under the DDA, for example Braille menus.</li> <li>• Consider flexible family tickets that allows different number of adults and children, including grandparents and caretakers. In some attractions and accommodation, caretakers can go free of charge.</li> <li>• Cancellation chargers need be flexible for the disabled people who may need to change their arrangements at the last minute due to illness.</li> </ul>

### ***Common Requirements In Preparation Of The Accessible Tourism Destinations:***

Internet can be used as a mainstream information source to provide unique opportunities to publicize and promote the information as well as to construct an advanced communication structure. However, the current failure to give positive feedback to meet the requirements of the people with disabilities separates them fully from the information technology as an information accessibility constraint (Eichhorn et al., 2007).

Provision of information is also a main theme throughout of the tour planning process for the tourists. Accessible information is commonly needed in the areas such as accommodation, restaurants and bar facilities, parking, public transport links, toilet facilities, parking and tourist attractions (Capability Scotland, 2011).

If there is necessity for separate guides or brochures, then it must be updated frequently, well-advertised and free of charge if possible (Leidner R, 2008; Namatame et al., 2003). Concentrating merely on accessibility for the disabled is however not enough because the information must also meet their needs (Williams et al., 2007).

According to World Tourism Organization (2005), requirements of the accessible facilities is given in the Table 4. Areas which need crucial attention are such as parking areas, signage, elevators, public telephones, public toilets, bathroom, accommodation facilities, transportation services, entrance, paths of access, dining and bars and pricing.

**Table 4:** Common facilities requirements (World Tourism Organization, 2005; Department of Tourism Republic of South Africa, 2015; Forrester, and Davis, 2012)

No.	Areas	Requirements
1.	Parking areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special parking areas should be available with proper signage near to the building exit</li> <li>Specially designated pick-up points near to the exits and not obstructed by any vehicles or objects</li> <li>Parking spaces should be adequately large to allow the disabled tourists to move around easily.</li> </ul>
2.	Signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information, check-in and ticketing desks should be clearly specified</li> <li>Announcements should be given in both visually and acoustic</li> <li>Facilities should be written in appropriate font and contrast with the background</li> </ul>
3.	Elevators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elevators need to be provided in the multi-storey structures and should be sufficient enough to be used by the wheelchair users</li> <li>Buttons in the lifts need to be prepared in Braille, acoustic and written information</li> </ul>
4.	Public telephones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Telephones should be placed in the suitable height</li> </ul>
5.	Public toilets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water closet washbasins need to be installed in the suitable height</li> <li>Consideration also need to be given in installing toilet stalls to be in proper height and dimensional aspect also need to be taken into account</li> <li>Provide a fixed handrail</li> <li>Ensure the height of the mirror placement from the floor</li> </ul>
6.	Bathroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the width of the door and the spaces in roll in shower</li> <li>Provide wall mounted shower seat and ensure the availability of free standing chair upon request</li> <li>Provide shower handrail and remote shower head</li> </ul>
7.	Accommodation facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information regarding accessibility of accommodation facilities</li> <li>Ensure universal design principles is practised</li> <li>Provide safety evacuation safety plan</li> <li>Supply vibrating pads for tourists with hearing impairment which linked to fire alarm or smoke alarm</li> <li>Fire alarm need to be installed in both visual and acoustic</li> <li>Provide wireless telephones with messaging services</li> <li>Ensure larger spaces at the side and empty space under the bed</li> <li>Provide the clothes rail in appropriate height</li> <li>Provide light switch beside the bed</li> </ul>
8.	Transportation services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure accessible tour buses with safe tie down facilities</li> <li>Ensure the availability of hydraulic lift to larger buses</li> <li>Provide monitors in the train, bus stations and airports</li> <li>Provide information in Braille, acoustic and printed in large font</li> <li>Audible announcement at each tour destination</li> </ul>
9.	Entrance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide ramp or lower access level</li> <li>Ensure the a wider door width which allows the wheelchair access</li> <li>Type of door which can be used such as automatic, manual, manual with doorman</li> </ul>
10.	Paths of access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide the ramped access in hotel which leads to swimming pool, parking and restaurant</li> <li>Provide pool lift in the swimming pool</li> <li>Provide a safe environment in the garden or connecting paths especially their width and surface</li> </ul>
11.	Dining and bars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide an accessible door entry which leads to the dining table</li> <li>Ensure the outdoor setting table allows roll under wheelchair with WC facilities</li> <li>Provide menus using Braille and large print font</li> <li>Provide dietary restricted catered food</li> <li>Allows tourists to make choice of table locations and sizes</li> </ul>

**Conclusion:**

Basically, accessibility can be defined as providing everyone with all the opportunities to participate fully in their everyday life without any kind of discrimination. Accessibility concept is a very easy concept to be practice because it is all about attitude, inclusion and understanding the people with disabilities who may have different needs. Meeting people with disabilities frequently and reading many research papers will make one to have a better understanding regarding accessibility concept.

Generally, disability should be perceived as an umbrella which protects impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. There are two (2) types of disabilities namely, disabilities which can be seen (physical, sensory, learning, intellectual disability and physiological disorders) and hidden disabilities (asthma, obesity, high blood pressure, cancer). Those who are temporarily disabled such as pregnant ladies, families with small children, those who are injured, elderly can also benefit from accessibility environment. Therefore, accessibility is not specified for certain group of people only but it is meant for all regardless any type of disabilities or any type of discriminations.

Information plays a huge role in promoting accessible tourism because it is very new concept in the tourism industry. Tourists will know about the availability of the accessible or barrier-free facilities with the existence of the comprehensive and reliable information. Success of barrier-free environment can only be achieved with the information accessibility which can be either in printed, pictograms or accessible websites. Most of the time,

tourists with access needs are not even aware of the existence of the accessible facilities in the specific tourist destinations due to lack of source of information. Therefore, the paper is important to list down the importance of the accessible information in motivating the tourists in making their travel decision. Usually, a detailed information will create a good first impression about the tourist destinations.

Accessibility to information and information regarding accessibility is two different things. If we manage to understand the terms well, many barriers in tourist destinations can be solved easily. A reliable information can save the disabled tourists from experiencing a nightmare and waste their precious time with uncomfortable situation. Accessibility is no more disabled community's issue but it is one of the profitable marketing tool. Tourism as a major area of activity which can enhance the quality of life for tourists and local residents as well. Quality of life defines human life.

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