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PUBLICATIONS

**Manual on  
Accessible Tourism for All:**  
Principles, Tools and Best Practices

**Module I:** Accessible Tourism – Definition and Context

prepared with the support of:





# **Manual on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Best Practices**

Module I: Accessible Tourism – Definition and Context

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**Manual on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Best Practices –  
Module I: Accessible Tourism – Definition and Context**

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The contents were researched and written by the ILUNION Consultancy Services team (part of the ONCE Foundation's ILUNION Group), in collaboration with ENAT.

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The UNWTO's Ethics and Social Responsibility Programme was in charge of the general coordination and revision of the publication.



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## Foreword

Direct and personal access by each human being to the discovery of our planet's wealth is an essential prerequisite for all citizens to be able to exercise their right to tourism.

Persons with disabilities and specific access requirements are increasingly calling for a place in tourism activities. In response, many actors in this sector are already committed to initiatives dedicated to adapting their products to different consumer profiles, in support of Tourism for All.

Much still remains to be done for universal accessibility to become a reality in the tourism sector, especially in developing countries and emerging destinations. A change in mindset and in the model for tourism services provision is necessary, not only to respect the human rights of persons with disabilities and their families, but also to meet a major market demand, which could significantly increase the competitiveness and growth of tourism destinations and businesses.

These convictions constitute the basis of the work of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in the field of Accessible Tourism for All, and have materialized in a series of specific actions with the signing of a trilateral framework agreement in 2011 with the ONCE [Spanish National Organization of the Blind] Foundation for the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities and the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT).

Following the "UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Tourism for All", adopted by the UNWTO General Assembly in 2013, the three partners have maintained their commitment to work together to promote universal accessibility through the publication now of this highly comprehensive technical manual.

This manual will be a key tool for the international community to understand the accessibility chain in tourism, the economic impact of accessible tourism, and the steps to follow in order to create accessible destinations in accordance with the Design for All principles.

The crucial components of this work are the long-standing experience – both in awareness-raising and technical know-how and in business development – of the ONCE Foundation and ENAT, as well as the UNWTO's role in the global dissemination of the principles of tourism that is sustainable, responsible and accessible for all.

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We trust that this manual will offer all stakeholders basic knowledge, tools and resources to make their tourism destinations, facilities and services accessible for all. We encourage all the stakeholders involved to seek inspiration in these best practices and continue working to make tourism truly a universal right.

Taleb Rifai  
*Secretary-General,  
World Tourism Organization  
(UNWTO)*

Alberto Durán López  
*First Executive Vice President,  
ONCE Foundation*

Anna Grazia Laura  
*President,  
European Network for  
Accessible Tourism (ENAT)*



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# *Manual on Accessible Tourism for All*

## Executive Summary

Persons with disabilities are participating more and more frequently in tourism activities as a result of their growing level of economic and social integration. However, there remain many impediments and barriers of all kinds that hinder access to tourism services.

Accessibility is not a requirement solely and exclusively for persons with disabilities, as they are not its only beneficiaries; tourism destinations that address these requirements and understand them as positive measures will see their product and service offerings evolve, thus facilitating the tourism experience and improving the quality of life of all their residents and visitors.

The idea of providing tools for the implementation and efficient management of accessibility in tourism destinations was at the heart of a collaboration agreement signed between the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the ONCE [Spanish National Organization of the Blind] Foundation for Cooperation and Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities, and the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT) in 2011. One of the outputs of this collaboration – among other actions – has been the publication of this manual, which provides a series of recommendations for ensuring that all persons can access, use and enjoy tourism environments and services under equal conditions.

The recommendations described in this manual constitute intervention guidelines drawn from experience, recent academic studies, international standards, and technological and scientific advances that have been made in this field. The ONCE Foundation has made available to the authors its extensive professional experience of over 25 years in carrying out projects related with the implementation of Universal Accessibility and Design for All in different environments and services. This endeavour also enjoyed the support of ENAT, in which the ONCE Foundation holds the Vice Presidency.

This manual offers a reference framework for the interventions, tools and resources that are necessary for the provision of services and the management of accessible tourism. Through these instruments, the UNWTO aims to encourage the key actors in the tourism sector to implement measures that will result in greater participation by different groups of people in tourism activity, including persons with disabilities.

The publication is divided into five separate modules, each addressing key issues regarding accessibility in tourism: the general context, recommendations, key intervention areas, indicators for national tourism administrations, and international best practices.

**Module I** establishes some theoretical foundations and discusses the barriers to accessibility that can be found in tourism-related activities. It describes the wide range of beneficiaries of accessible tourism, highlighting the emergence of “senior tourists”, whose tourism activity is similar or even greater than that of other population segments, and whose needs and demands

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require accessibility measures. This first module also provides a breakdown of the economic impact of accessibility on tourism and a set of statistical data backing up the fact that accessibility, in addition to being a right, is also a highly significant business opportunity in quantitative terms.

**Module II** presents recommendations in accordance with the specifications of Universal Design based on the most current international standards, including ISO FDIS 21542 on Building Construction – Accessibility and Usability of the Built Environment. These recommendations constitute the foundations for creating accessible tourism destinations, and place special emphasis on the value chain of accessibility in tourism, to which end five key points are discussed: planning and information, transport, accessibility to the environment, accessibility to common spaces, and accessibility to specific spaces. Each one of these sections responds to the accessibility needs of different tourism environments, ranging from hotels, tourist information offices and sports facilities, to natural environments, beaches and transport, among others.

**Module III** reviews the intervention areas that constitute the cornerstone of success in achieving accessible tourism, and is aimed at those responsible for the management of tourism destinations. These intervention areas specifically involve five key points:

1. Legislation, highlighting the need for the existence of equal rights legislation;
2. Research, as a starting point to know the impact of accessible tourism;
3. Awareness-raising and training, in formal and vocational education plans;
4. Promotion of tourism products and services through marketing strategies; and, therefore
5. Management, as an element applicable to all tourism sectors, so that it becomes a practice that is maintained over time.

**Module IV** of the manual describes a set of indicators, meant for the use of national tourism organizations, so that they can assess the development of accessibility in tourism destinations. These indicators, accompanied by the corresponding methodology for their application, constitute an unprecedented contribution in the field of the management and evaluation of accessibility in tourism.

The last section of the manual, **Module V**, presents a selection of good practices that will serve as examples for stakeholders interested in implementing and replicating accessibility improvements in tourism. The ONCE Foundation, together with ENAT, conducted a study based on diverse sources and proven experiences, which made it possible to put together a selection of outstanding examples, categorized both by geographical area and by tourism subsector.

The *Manual on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Best Practices* is one of the World Tourism Organization's first manuals to provide a comprehensive overview of accessibility, which like tourism is a cross-cutting global issue.

The ONCE Foundation has applied its professional and practical real-life experience in accessible tourism to the content of this manual. In this regard, it is worth noting the work the Foundation has done in the organization of four editions of the International Congress on Tourism for All, the creation of more than 700 accessibility plans in municipalities, diverse actions related with accessibility in transport, including the implementation of assistance services, and its collaboration with many accessible tourism initiatives in both the public and private spheres.

**Note:** The *Manual on Accessible Tourism for All: Principles, Tools and Best Practices* may be used as a single publication with its five modules, or as five independent volumes explaining the different aspects of accessible tourism. All the modules share the same acknowledgements, foreword, executive summary and general bibliography of the entire project.

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## Who is this manual for?

This manual is for all stakeholders, whether public or private, involved in the tourism sector at the international, national, regional and local levels:

**National and international tourism management agencies:** to provide them with useful and practical information on how to implement and develop accessibility in all tourism-related areas.

**Legislators at the international, national and regional levels:** responsible for implementing international organization directives, national legislation, and regional legislation.

**National, regional and local governments:** that are the administrators of public infrastructure, including buildings.

**Public administrations and entities:** including all publicly funded institutions and any bodies that tender contracts for building works through public procurement procedures.

**Economic operators:** as a source of information on how procuring administrations must approach the achievement of objectives when conducting public and private tenders.

**Private companies and entities:** that carry out their activities mainly in the tourism sector, so that they may have information on measures and requirements, be encouraged to implement them and, as a result, participate more fully in Accessible Tourism for All.



# Module I

Accessible Tourism: Definition and Context



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## Introduction

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has developed this manual on Accessible Tourism in the framework of a collaboration agreement with the Spanish ONCE Foundation for Social Inclusion of People with Disabilities, and in cooperation with the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT).

The present module I is the first of five modules making up the complete manual. It presents a reference framework in the context of Accessible Tourism at an international level. The aim of this module is to offer readers an overview that will enable the application of the tools that are provided in the subsequent modules.

This module starts off by putting forward a provisional definition of the term “Accessible Tourism” in order to explain how the term arose, how it is used in different countries, and how it has evolved over recent decades. Reference is also made in the module to how the term “Accessible Tourism” is used in its current sense, and the trend towards including it within a broader concept of “Tourism for All”. The module also looks back over UNWTO’s engagement and commitment over the last twenty years to including the rights of persons with disabilities in the tourism sector.

In addition, the module focuses on demand as one of the key aspects underpinning the need to address accessibility from the standpoint of tourism. This section approaches demand in two ways; firstly, by looking at the distribution of demand on the basis of different profiles in which the wealth of benefits of accessibility can be patently seen. Secondly, by looking ahead to future trends and prospects where there is evidence that accessibility will be both an advantage and a requisite as a factor in the economy and the growth of the tourism sector.

The module also describes the most common barriers to accessibility and focuses on the repercussions those barriers can have for tourism. The more holistic or all-embracing perspective of the concept known as Universal Design or Design for All is presented as a tool to apply accessibility criteria and eliminate existing barriers.

Lastly, module I includes a reference section on the benefits entailed by the inclusion of accessibility that broadens the concept beyond its social facet and identifies the economic aspect and the business opportunities it can give rise to.



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## Chapter 1

### Definition of Accessible Tourism

“Accessibility is a central element of any responsible and sustainable tourism policy. It is both a human rights imperative and an exceptional business opportunity. Above all we must come to appreciate that Accessible Tourism does not only benefit persons with disabilities or special needs; it benefits us all.”

Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General

Today there is still no internationally agreed and approved definition of the term “Accessible Tourism” because the concept itself has evolved significantly over the last ten years.

There are two factors that make it difficult for a single common definition to be adopted:

1. The research carried out on Accessible Tourism and the evolution over time of the concept have given rise to several synonyms for Accessible Tourism that are used in different countries without any agreement on the use of a common term. Some examples of the terms used are: inclusive tourism, adapted tourism, Tourism for All, Barrier Free Tourism (BFT), Easy Access Tourism and Universal Tourism; and
2. Since tourism has been linked to the concept of accessibility there have been a number of attempts to come up with a concrete definition of the term but no agreement has been reached on a single definition, despite the fact that the concept is now coming into sharper focus. Every expert on the subject has a different definition and no international consensus has been reached yet on a satisfactory definition for all the stakeholders.

The purpose of this manual is not to create a different definition to the ones that have already been proposed recently but rather to offer an overview of the aspects that are taken into account within the concept of Accessible Tourism. Two examples of early definitions of the term are given below:

1. “A series of activities performed during free time devoted to tourism by people with restricted capacities that makes their full functional and psychological integration possible and so full individual and social satisfaction is obtained.”<sup>1</sup>
2. “A process of enabling people with disabilities and seniors to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of Universal Tourism products, services and environments”.<sup>2</sup> This definition is inclusive of the mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, intending to facilitate access for persons with disabilities to tourism services.

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1 Grünewald, L. et al. (1996), *Turismo Accesible: Experiencias y reflexiones sobre accesibilidad*, AMSCA and Fundación Delia Lascano de NAPP. Translated into English from the original Spanish for this publication.

2 Darcy, S. (2006), *Setting a Research Agenda for Accessible Tourism*, Sustainable Tourism for Cooperative Research Centre, Gold Coast.

If we analyse the background to the term “Accessible Tourism” we find that there was an initial conceptual line of thought that approached the integration of persons with disabilities on the following basis:

- The participation of people with disabilities in tourism; and
- The removal of existing barriers in different, environments, services and products in the tourism industry.

Following on from the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,<sup>3</sup> efforts were made to change the disability focus by considering the environment as a disabling factor and by taking a more positive view, oriented towards accessibility as a measure to create accessible environments, irrespective of the capabilities of each individual, i.e. environments for all.

As the approach to disability evolved, so did the concept of Accessible Tourism. It no longer referred solely and exclusively to tourists with disabilities but rather to the accommodation or adaptation of the tourism environment to make it accessible for all population groups. The current trend is to integrate the Accessible Tourism concept with the overarching idea of Universal Design by adding other more global aspects such as:

- An expansion of the population groups involved;
- A linkage between disability and seniors;<sup>4</sup>
- Accessibility as a useful factor for the greatest number of people as possible; and
- Universal Design or Design for All as a tool to achieve accessibility.

Over recent years, academic and government concern to further the concept of Accessible Tourism has led to other more comprehensive definitions of the term that has evolved to become broader and more inclusive. Some examples of these new definitions of Accessible Tourism are:

1. “Accessible Tourism is tourism and travel that is accessible to all people, with disabilities or not, including those with mobility, hearing, sight, cognitive, or intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, older persons and those with temporary disabilities.”<sup>5</sup>
2. “Accessible tourism is the ongoing endeavour to ensure tourist destinations, products and services are accessible to all people, regardless of their physical limitations, disabilities or age. It encompasses publicly and privately owned tourist locations. The improvements not only benefit those with permanent physical disabilities, but also parents with small children, elderly travellers, people with temporary injuries such as a broken leg, as well as their travel companions.”<sup>6</sup>

One definition that has been used in the most recent academic publications on the subject and that includes all the concepts described earlier would be:

3. Accessible Tourism is a form of tourism that entails strategically planned collaboration processes between stakeholders that “enable people with access requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently

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3 United Nations Organization (2006), *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

4 Darcy, S. et al. (2010), ‘Accessible Tourism and sustainability: A discussion and case study’, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*.

5 Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2009), *Takayama Declaration on the Development of Communities-for-All in Asia and the Pacific*.

6 Agnes, F. et al. (2010), *Accessible Tourism*, VDM Publishing.

and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments.”<sup>7</sup>

This definition adopts a whole-of-life approach to tourism. The benefit of accessibility in tourism is evident for every person throughout the whole of their lives. This would include people with permanent and temporary disabilities, people with specific medical conditions, seniors and families with small children.<sup>8</sup>

**We can therefore conclude that the concept of Accessible Tourism has evolved from the idea of accommodation or adaptation so that people with disabilities can participate in tourism towards a concept of quality tourism for all, understanding that accessibility is an important part of that quality.**

The table below gives an example of the context in which the Accessible Tourism concept was placed prior and subsequent to its consideration of the environment as the disabling factor.

Table 1.1 **Evolution of Accessible Tourism concepts**

	<b>Accessible Tourism</b>	<b>Accessible Tourism for All</b>
Targeted at	Persons with disabilities.	Everyone.
Tools	Accessibility/elimination of barriers.	Accessibility.
Aim	Inclusion and normalization.	Quality tourism.

It is likely that new definitions will continue to arise given that tourism is not an exact science, but rather a phenomenon that is constantly evolving and growing, while being underpinned by many political, socio-economic, cultural and environmental factors. Therefore, the definition has to be accompanied by the context it is trying to describe instead of creating closed and absolute definitions.

7 Darcy, S. and Dickson, T. (2009), 'A Whole-of-Life Approach to Tourism: The Case for Accessible Tourism Experiences', *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*.

8 Adapted from Buhalis, D. and Darcy, S. (2011), *Accessible Tourism, Concepts and Issues*, Channel View Publications.



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## Chapter 2

### Accessible Tourism and Tourism for All

According to the most recent and all-embracing approach to what Accessible Tourism means, it is increasingly obvious that the benefits of accessibility do not solely impact people with disabilities but rather the whole population.

When the topic of Accessible Tourism started to be addressed, there was a widespread trend in many countries to use the term “Tourism for All”, given that the goal is for tourism services and environments to be used and enjoyed by all persons, with or without a disability. Within this reference framework the question arose about whether that equivalence in terminology could be established without mentioning accessibility. The concept of “Tourism for All” that appeared for the first time in the Tourism for All campaign run in the United Kingdom in 1989 as a result of the report published by Mary Baker,<sup>1</sup> was defined as: “That form of tourism that plans, designs and develops leisure and free time tourist activities that can be enjoyed by all types of persons no matter their physical, social or cultural conditions.”<sup>2</sup>

In this regard, Tourism for All is a term that covers the entire population not solely in terms of accessibility but reflecting other aspects of tourism such as Social Tourism, that studies the inclusion of population groups with different economic and social characteristics as factors involved in tourism integration. Social Tourism has a broader understanding of its potential beneficiaries, as its goal is to combat inequalities and the exclusion of any person with a different cultural background, of those who have lower economic means or live in underprivileged regions.

The term “Social Tourism”, according to the International Social Tourism Organization (ISTO) can be defined as “the effects and phenomena resulting from the participation in tourism, more specifically the participation of low-income groups. This participation is made possible or is facilitated by initiatives of a well-defined social nature.” It encompasses the rights and the needs of young people aged 15 to 25, large families (with three or more children), people with disabilities and seniors (over 50 year-olds) with respect to travel and tourism.<sup>3</sup>

In the case of sustainable tourism, the protection of cultural diversity and the environment aims to ensure tourism can be maintained in the long term by minimizing the invasive actions of tourists or by repairing any damage tourism development may have caused.

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1 Baker, M. (1989), *Tourism for All: A report of the working party chaired by Mary Baker*, English Tourist Board, London.

2 Fernández, M. T. (2007), *Turismo Accesible: Análisis accesibilidad Hotelera Cádiz*, tesis doctoral, Universidad de Cádiz. Translated into English from the original Spanish for this publication.

3 International Social Tourism Organization, Definition of Social Tourism, available at: [www.oits-isto.org/oits/public/section.jsf?id=39](http://www.oits-isto.org/oits/public/section.jsf?id=39).

According to the UNWTO, sustainable tourism can be defined as: “Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.”<sup>4</sup> Tourism for All, therefore integrates other subtypes of tourism, such as Accessible Tourism, Social Tourism and sustainable tourism.

Following on from the concern to achieve quality tourism, the UNWTO states in article 7 of its Global Code of Ethics for Tourism that tourism is “a right equally open to all the world’s inhabitants... and obstacles should not be placed in its way”. This includes Universal Design, social and cultural integration and economic accessibility as a challenge to achieve the right to tourism for all people.<sup>5</sup>

A picture of the different approaches to tourism as a social and responsible factor and the position of Accessible Tourism is given below.

Figure 2.1 **How Tourism for All is configured**



In this manual Accessible Tourism will be dealt with as an integral part of Tourism for All. That means the terminology to be used will be Accessible Tourism or Tourism for All.

4 World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Definition of “Sustainable Tourism”, available at: <http://sdt.unwto.org/content/about-us-5> (20-10-2016).

5 World Tourism Organization (1999), *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET)*, UNWTO, Madrid.



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## Chapter 3

# The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and Accessible Tourism

Over recent decades the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has been concerned to highlight the importance of tourism as a social and responsible factor, with the underlying philosophy that all persons have the same rights to access and enjoy travel and tourism. The key milestones in achieving Accessible Tourism are reviewed below.

As a result of the social vision of tourism, at the UNWTO General Assembly held in **Manila in 1980**, through the Manila Declaration on World Tourism, the terms tourism and accessibility were linked for the very first time. Tourism was acknowledged to be a fundamental right for quality of life and a key vehicle for human development and UNWTO recommended its Member States should regulate tourism services by providing the best practical, effective and non-discriminatory access to this type of activity.

The following year, **1981, was declared “International Year of Disabled Persons”** by the United Nations. It was a year in which an important and significant change in attitude towards the people with disabilities sector took place, leading to what was called the “Decade of Disabled Persons”, between 1983 and 1992.

The concept of Accessible Tourism gained relevant importance **in 1989**, when a working party of experts on tourism and disability from the United Kingdom published a report entitled “Tourism for All”<sup>1</sup>. That report studied the progress that had been made since the International Year of Disabled Persons with the purpose of promoting the design of services in the tourism sector targeted at everyone, irrespective of their age or disability. Furthermore, it defined Tourism for All as that form of tourism that plans, designs and develops leisure and tourism activities in such a way that they can be enjoyed by persons of all kinds, regardless of their physical, social or cultural conditions.

That was the decade when the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on “Standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities”<sup>2</sup> recommending the implementation of policies geared to achieving equal rights for people with disabilities. This framework of interventions prompted the following actions that were taken by UNWTO.

**In 1991**, the ideals and recommendations of the UNWTO Manila Declaration were taken up in the UNWTO paper *Creating Tourism Opportunities for Handicapped People in the Nineties*, approved in the ninth session of the UNWTO General Assembly in Buenos Aires, in the annex to resolution A/RES/284(IX). This text defined the concept of a person with a disability and set out

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1 English Tourist Board and Holiday Care Service (1990), *Tourism for All, Report of the Working Party*, English Tourist Board, London.

2 United Nations Organization (1993), *Standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities*, Resolution 48/96.

the problem of the barriers to tourism. It offered some initial ideas for action for the tourism sector in the area of tourist information and publicity material, staff training and on the general and specific requirements that the different tourism facilities must comply with to be accessible to persons with reduced mobility.<sup>3</sup>

In **2005**, the sixteenth session of the UNWO General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/492(XVI)/10, which then became the paper *Accessible Tourism for All*<sup>4</sup>. The document explained in a fair amount of detail the accessibility requirements that each element making up the tourism service should have. This document is the revised, updated version of the document published previously by the UNWTO in 1991.

Article 30 of the text approved by the UN International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in **2006**, recognised the rights of participation in cultural life, recreational activities, leisure and sport. Accessibility as a legitimate right of people with a disability in the access to and enjoyment of installations and services related to tourism was ratified.<sup>5</sup>

In **October 2009**, the UNWTO once again highlighted the importance of accessibility within the Declaration on the Facilitation of Tourist Travel, approved by the UNWTO General Assembly at its XVIII session held in Astana, Kazakhstan.

In **2011**, a tripartite collaboration agreement was signed between the UNWTO, the ONCE Foundation for cooperation and social inclusion of people with disabilities, and the European Network for Accessible Tourism, ENAT.

The first outcome of that agreement, in 2012, was the updating of the 2005 resolution in collaboration with ONCE Foundation and ENAT, through the creation of a short document consisting of general recommendations on Accessible Tourism approved by the General Assembly in **August 2013** (A/RES/637(XX)).<sup>6</sup>

It is becoming evident that more importance is being attached to Accessible Tourism by governments thanks to the adoption of different declarations, recommendations and the publication of a series of awareness-raising and technical manuals and brochures by UNWTO. That is why UNWTO now wishes to take a step further towards achieving its key objectives, develop tourism in all its forms and variations, including all groups of visitors in this process, irrespective of their social circumstances, age or personal abilities.

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3 World Tourism Organization (1991), *Creating Tourism Opportunities for Handicapped People in the Nineties*, prepared with the help of experts from the ONCE Foundation, UNWTO, Madrid.

4 World Tourism Organization (2005), *Accessible Tourism for All*, UNWTO, Madrid.

5 United Nations Organization (2006), *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

6 Following the publication of this Module in the Spanish original (2014), there have been significant advances with regards to UNWTO's work in the sphere of accessibility. The General Assembly adopted in September 2015 the Recommendations on Accessible Information in Tourism (A/RES/669(XXI)), providing guidelines to tourism destinations on providing access to relevant, accurate and regularly updated information on tourism facilities and services to all stakeholders, including to persons with disabilities. Another important landmark has been the celebration of the World Tourism Day in September 2016 under the theme "Tourism for All – promoting universal accessibility".

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## Chapter 4

### Accessible Tourism demand

“Many destinations and hotels promote “Tourism for All” as part of their social responsibility agenda; however the challenge for improving experiences on the ground remains difficult to take up. Yet gaining competitiveness in this demanding segment is worth being encouraged since travellers with special needs can be very loyal, high spenders and influencers for shaping destinations and tourism industries’ social responsibility reputation”.

Olivier Henry-Biabaud, Research CEO, Tourism Competitive Intelligence (TCI), 2012.

Unlike what many people might assume, the beneficiaries of accessibility are not only persons with disabilities but rather any person who during the time devoted to tourism and leisure encounters some degree of difficulty in accessing, using or enjoying tourism and leisure spaces.

This may be the case of older persons (seniors), children, families, pregnant women, people with temporary disabilities, and other groups. In fact, all of us at one time or other in our lives to a greater or lesser extent will have a need for accessible environments, products and services.

This means a substantial proportion of society. Consequently, a large percentage of tourism demand is being neglected since Accessible Tourism products are not being offered given the lack of awareness of the needs and the habits of this major population segment.

#### 4.1 Beneficiaries of Accessible Tourism

There is a preconceived idea that accessible development only benefits people with different disabilities. However, there are numerous population profiles that can benefit from the development of Accessible Tourism. The most important ones are described below.

##### 4.1.1 Persons with disabilities

First and foremost, tourism accessibility undoubtedly benefits people with disabilities; but what do we mean when we talk about disability?

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes that disability<sup>1</sup> is complex, dynamic, multidimensional and contested. Over the years, theories have been constructed about its

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1 World Health Organization (2011), *World Report on Disability*, WHO, Geneva.

meaning and the term underwent significant evolution with the change from an individual, medical perspective to a structural and social perspective. This has been described as a shift from a “medical model” to a “social model” in which people are viewed as being disabled by society rather than by their bodies.

The medical disability model that still persists in many developing countries places emphasis on the rehabilitation and recovery of the person’s functions and often has a negative connotation. It regards disability as an illness resulting in impairment or another health condition that requires continuous medical assistance, in the form of individual treatment by professionals.

In this type of approach, all efforts are concentrated solely and exclusively on health recovery, even at the policy level where actions are targeted at health assistance and healthcare system reforms. A person with a disability is treated by society in handicap or impairment terms. Because of the social stigmas people with disabilities had suffered in the past, the medical model gave rise to definitions couched in mainly pejorative and generalist terms (disabled, invalid, handicapped).

From the standpoint of the social model, however, disability is not seen as an individual problem but rather as the limitations on a person caused by society, which is where the obstacles and inequality situations arise for persons with disabilities.

Over recent decades, the disability movement, together with researchers in the social sciences and health fields, have identified the existence of social and physical barriers present in disability. Society should facilitate access to the different products, environments and services that exist, eliminating the barriers whereby the person is regarded as disabled, not because of their physical, mental, sensory or understanding limitations. A lot of work has been done in this regard on the recognition of equal rights, on the possibility of persons with disabilities taking their own decisions and on the rejection of negative terms relating to disability.

One of the most important changes generated by the social model and stated in the UN International Convention is the adoption of a new term: person with disabilities. The word “disabilities” is added as a descriptor to the most important word to be highlighted, which is “person”. There are currently many different definitions of disability, but we are interested in highlighting the following ones above all and given their relevance for the topic of this manual:

1. According to the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*: “Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”<sup>2</sup>
2. According to the *UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Tourism for All*<sup>3</sup> approved by the organization’s General Assembly in 2013: “Any person whose full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others in travel, accommodation and other tourism services is hindered by the barriers in the environment they are in and by attitudinal barriers.”

The UN International Convention, furthermore, recognizes that disability is an evolving concept and that it is possible the terms will change in the future.

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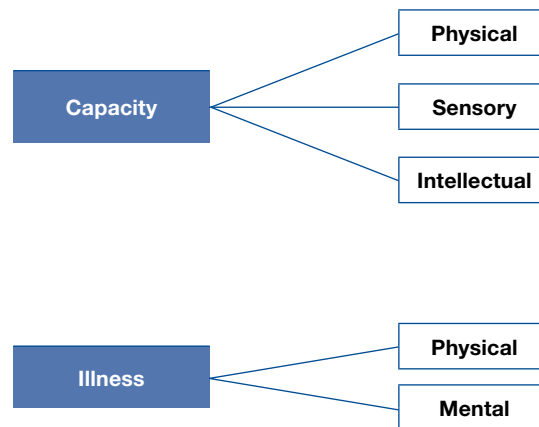
2 United Nations Organization (2006), *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, article 1, p. 4.

3 World Tourism Organization (2013), *UNWTO Recommendations on Accessible Tourism for All*, UNWTO, Madrid.

Traditionally, disability has always been classified according to the areas of the human being that are affected. The World Health Organization has put forward a classification instrument called ICF (International Classification of Functioning of Disability and Health) that attempts to “provide a standard language and framework for the description of health and health-related states.”<sup>4</sup> This classification makes an initial distinction between a human being’s capacities (physical, sensory and intellectual) and illnesses (of the body and mind).

That classification is the one most commonly adopted in studies on Accessible Tourism and the needs of tourists and this manual is based on it. However, it is necessary to point out that just like with the rest of the population, not all persons with disabilities or illnesses have the same characteristics and each one will have different needs and situations.

Figure 4.1 **Classification of capacities and illnesses**



Given that disability varies significantly in its causes, nature, severity and impact on daily functioning, as well as across demographic groups by age, geography, social class and other variables, it is neither accurate nor useful to identify tourists with disabilities as a single market segment. There are persons with disabilities in all age groups and social classes with different interests and characteristics:

- **Capacities:** the development of a human being’s basic capacities may not be fully realized or may be interrupted for a number of reasons including accidents or other causes. In addition, when it comes to disability, we are talking about situations that are inherent to the person. That means that there is no cure no matter how much assistive products and other accommodations can facilitate the person’s interaction with the environment. However, classification of disability goes beyond human functioning, because as we have seen already the environment has a notable influence on the capacities any person can develop.
- **Illnesses:** the effects of illnesses, unlike human capacities, may be reduced with the help of medical treatment. Some illnesses can lead to diminished capacities in a way that can become a cause of disability.

4 World Health Organization (2001), *International Classification of Functioning*, WHO, Geneva.

### 4.1.2 Persons with physical disabilities

Physical disability can be defined as a diminished capacity for movement or a partial or general difficulty in performing conventional motor activities.

We talk about people with a disability that may affect their upper or lower limbs, or both, and that can be due to multiple causes, either congenital, hereditary, acquired or caused by accidents. A distinction can be made between wheelchair users and people with a disability who are able to walk.

The group of people who are wheelchair users includes those people who use a wheelchair because they cannot walk.



A wheel-chair user visiting an archeological site.

The assistance a person with a disability requires will depend on their degree of autonomy. Some people will require help to perform personal hygiene tasks, operate their wheelchair and move from place to place. Other users with a very high degree of autonomy, or ability for independent living, will be able to operate their own chair, negotiate a small step upwards or downwards on their own, move from their chair to a bed, write and/or play a sport.

The needs of people in a wheelchair will be above all to do with moving around in environments, mobility in spaces and concern about objects and furniture placed at different heights.

The group of people with a disability who are able to walk includes people with a physical disability who encounter difficulties to walk around safely and surely, who may or may not require the use of walking sticks or crutches to keep their balance.



A tourist using a walking stick.

This is the case of people who have had poliomyelitis, a hemiplegia, or who have had a leg amputated, as well as some elderly people whose physical capacity has deteriorated and who therefore walk slowly and unsteadily.

These people may be facing mobility difficulties in specific environments or situations, i.e. to cover long distances, to go upstairs, to pick up and transport objects, especially if these persons use crutches and therefore need to use their arms to keep the balance.

An intermediate group is made up of people with walking difficulties who may choose to use a wheelchair (and walking sticks or crutches) depending on the situations. For example, this refers to elderly people who use a wheelchair only when they have to go a long distance.

Lastly, there will be people whose physical disability does not affect their ability to walk around, as is the case of people who have a disability in their upper limbs. These people may experience greater difficulty reaching, picking up and handling objects.

### 4.1.3 Persons with a sensory disability



Persons with visual disability.

The WHO classification includes in this group people with visual, hearing and speaking disabilities. Essentially it covers anyone who has a communication and language difficulty.

This is the second most numerous population group within the category of people with disabilities because of today's life-style and longer life expectancy. For instance, the use of construction machinery such as hydraulic breakers or earphones to listen to music can lead to diminished hearing capacity below the normal levels for human beings. Diabetes or eye injuries can cause sight difficulties.

That is the reason why we should not only think about people who are totally blind or deaf, but a much broader array of people:

- **Sight disability and the blind:** a sight or visual disability does not only refer to the organ we use to see with but also to the structures and functions associated with it. A distinction is made in this group between blindness, or total absence or minimal perception of light, and visual impairment.

The personal characteristics of each individual will mean that we will find people that go from having blurred vision caused by myopia or stigmatism, people who have enough sight remaining to make out shapes or lights, people with central but not peripheral vision, right through to blind people.

This group of people will have specific needs arising from the relationship with their environment in four key aspects: localization, orientation, communication and safety.

- **Hearing disability and the deaf:** a hearing disability is a diminished capacity to hear or no capacity to hear at all. This disability covers hearing but also the structures and functions

associated with it. The degree of disability and the age of acquisition of the disability will have a major influence; the range of people we will find in this group include people using hearing aids or cochlear implants who have lost their hearing through age or an accident, or deaf people whose mother tongue is sign language.



Persons with hearing disability.

This population group does have one common characteristic which they face on a daily basis, and that is the communication barriers that will affect both the environment they have to cope with and the ways in which they communicate with other people.

#### 4.1.4 Persons with an intellectual disability

According to the World Health Organization an intellectual disability is characterized by diminished higher mental functions. This reduced ability has an overall but not homogenous effect on aspects like mobility, perception, comprehension, language and affective skills, amongst others.

It is not at all easy to generalise when talking about people with an intellectual disability and the attention paid to this sector of the population is still insufficient today. Within this group we can find mental retardation, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy and autism amongst other intellectual disabilities. Some people with an intellectual disability may also have other associated symptoms and health conditions such as stereotypies, heart problems, or mobility difficulties.

As a common characteristic, these people may have communication difficulties, orientation problems in unfamiliar situations, or they may behave in a way that is not socially expected from a person of their age.

#### 4.1.5 Persons with mental or physical illnesses

According to the World Health Organization there is another disabling condition that is a mental illness. The “illness”, in the broadest sense of the word, is an intrinsic condition that covers any kind of disorder or accident. There are two types of illness that lead to a temporary limitation of a person’s independence and self-sufficiency: mental illness and physical illness.

Until fairly recently, mental illness was associated with the same intellectual disability group. However, the WHO established the distinction because they are different categories. In the case of both mental and physical illness medicinal treatment can palliate the consequences of the illness.

- **Mental illness:** mental illness is an alteration of cognitive and emotional development processes that can affect the person’s perception of themselves or their perception of reality. There are many categories of mental illnesses and disorders, ranging from a person with a disorder like anorexia, gambling addiction or depression, to an illness like Alzheimer or epilepsy. As a result, the impact of the illness within the social functioning and therefore the symptoms and the needs can vary from one person to another.

In any of these cases the persons may have a degree of difficulty acknowledging reality and have different reasoning and behavioural characteristics depending on their ability to adapt to living conditions.

- **Physical illness:** a bodily illness is regarded as an alteration of a person’s state of health prompted by a number of different factors. Although not all physical illnesses are a disability factor, some of them such as cancer, congenital heart conditions or respiratory insufficiencies, for example, can lead to what is known as “organic disability”.

This category can also include people who for health reasons will have special dietary needs (diabetics, people who have celiac disease, who are lactose intolerant or who suffer from high cholesterol, for instance). In any event, those people who have an illness will need special medical care and monitoring of their state of health.

As far as the number of people with disabilities in the world is concerned, we know that it is practically impossible to measure national, regional or world populations and the proportion of people with disabilities. Nevertheless, the figures put forward in reports reflect a huge potential demand from tourists with disabilities that needs to be taken into account.



#### 4.1.6 Number of people with disabilities

The World Health Organization has been reporting a continuous growth in the number of people with disabilities in recent years as seen in the table below:

Table 4.1 **People with disabilities in the world in 2006, 2007 and 2011 (millions)**

2006	500
2007	650
2011	1,000

The World Health Organization reported in 2006 that the disabled population in the world totalled 500 million. In 2011 the figure was already in excess of one billion people with disabilities in the world, approximately 15% of the total population.<sup>5</sup>

A research study carried out by TRANSED in 2010<sup>6</sup> presented a comparison of the population with disabilities in different countries in the world on the basis of an estimated total of 650 million people with disabilities in the world in 2007. In addition to giving the number of people with disabilities as a ratio of the total population for several countries, the study highlights the fact that in the more developed countries there is a large number of people with disabilities who are users of Accessible Tourism services.<sup>7</sup>

Although not all people with disabilities use tourism resources, many of them could if they had the means they require to do so. Simply by way of indication of the potential number of people with disabilities who could participate in tourism if they had the appropriate means to do so, a few figures are given below:

- European Union: 80 million people with disabilities;<sup>8</sup>
- United States of America: 54 million people with disabilities;<sup>9</sup>
- Asia-Pacific: > 400 million people with disabilities;<sup>10</sup> and
- Latin America: 85 million people with disabilities.<sup>11</sup>

All in all, these data underscore the huge existing economic potential when considering the segment of persons with disabilities as target customers in the market.

5 World Health Organization (2011), *World Disability Report*, WHO, Geneva.

6 Cole, S. and Morgan, N. (2010), *Tourism and Inequality: Problems and Prospects*, CABI, Wallingford.

7 Darcy, S. and Small, J. (2010), *Tourism, Disability and Mobility*.

8 European Disability Forum (2012), *Facts and figures about disability*, available at: [www.edf-feph.org/](http://www.edf-feph.org/) (09-05-2014).

9 Cornell University, Disability Statistics, Online Resource for U.S. Disability Statistics available at: [www.disabilitystatistics.org/faq.cfm#Q9](http://www.disabilitystatistics.org/faq.cfm#Q9) (29-10-2016).

10 United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (2012), *Inclusive Education*, Bangkok, available at: [www.unescobkk.org/education/inclusive-education/what-is-inclusive-education/disabilities-in-asia-pacific/\(09-05-2014\)](http://www.unescobkk.org/education/inclusive-education/what-is-inclusive-education/disabilities-in-asia-pacific/(09-05-2014)).

11 Vasquez, A. (s.f.), *La discapacidad en América Latina*, Organización Panamericana de la Salud.

### 4.1.7 Seniors

Older persons, the elderly people or seniors represent another large beneficiary group of accessibility as they are keen to use tourism products and will increasingly require special products and services. Although age and diminished capacities are certainly directly related, not all seniors have a disability and that is why they make up another important group in their own right.

Another factor regarding older persons that largely benefits tourism is the increased activity of this population sector thanks to the promotion of what has been called “active ageing”. This trend has led to the appearance of another important population sector for tourism: *senior tourists*.

Going beyond the idea of elderly people simply as beneficiaries of health care, in outbound tourism countries, senior tourists are the population group of over 60 year olds, with or without a disability, who practise tourism to a similar or even greater degree than other population groups because of different factors like stable income, more free time and more availability to travel.



Senior tourist.

Longer life expectancy in the world today is prompting a clear demographic increase of so-called senior tourists. This trend is going to mean that for the first time ever in history soon there will be the same number of young people and elderly people.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, the characteristics of this group will vary in ten years time from people who only started to travel at an adult age to people who have travelled since they were young and so have consolidated tourism experience and are keen to be able to do so for as long as possible.

Currently senior tourism demand is a call to the industry to encourage the creation of Accessible Tourism products because there is growing demand for it, especially in developed countries. This population sector has needs and demands that require accessibility measures such as special meals and dietary preferences, hotel rooms with a shower instead of a bathtub, health services close by, adapted transport, among others.

This type of tourists falls into two categories of tourism.

Firstly, they fall into the category of Social Tourism beneficiaries. Many countries run specific schemes and offer subsidies to promote what is known as active ageing so that these population groups can participate more in tourism. One example of this is the tourism exchange initiative Calypso and the EU's Europe Senior Tourism scheme.

Secondly, senior tourists require Universal Design parameters and so at the same time as they increase their travel thanks to Social Tourism, they increase Accessible Tourism demand. These requirements will soon become a new market segment that will need to be served and will contribute to the diversification of the current supply of tourism products.

<sup>12</sup> González, D. and Marcos, D. (2003), *Turismo accesible: Hacia un Turismo para Todos*, CERMI, Madrid, available in Spanish at: [www.cermi.es](http://www.cermi.es) (09-05-2014).

According to UN estimates, in 2009 there were more than 730 million people in the world aged over 60, the equivalent of 10% of the population,<sup>13</sup> 20% up on the figures recorded in 2000.

The forecasts point to a 20% increase in the number of over 60 year olds in the world's population by 2050, i.e. some two billion people, and a fifth of that group would be over 80 years old.<sup>14</sup> This demographic change is a characteristic of developed countries.

Europe's population is rapidly turning into a society with a higher proportion of older persons. In fact demographic ageing is increasing more and more and all the European Union countries are currently on the list of the 30 countries in the world with the most aged population.<sup>15</sup>

There are currently more than 75 million people in Europe aged over 65. It is estimated that the total number of elderly people will increase to almost 35% of the total population by the end of 2025.

In the United States of America, there were 40.2 million people aged over 65 in 2010 and the forecast for 2050 is for more than double that number: 88.5 million.<sup>16</sup>

In other regions like Latin America, the UN is projecting that the percentage of the population aged 65 or over will triple by the middle of this century, up from 6.3% in 2005 to 18.5% in 2050.<sup>17</sup>

It is estimated that by 2050, between 25% and 30% of the population of the main outbound tourism areas, Europe and East Asia, will be aged 65 or over.

This has enormous implications for the tourism sector, especially with regard to accessibility problems given that the incidence of disability increases with age.

People who have grown up in industrialized countries and the new generations of citizens in the emerging regions are used to travelling and wish to travel whether or not they have a disability, some mobility difficulty or an illness. They have got used to travelling and making the most of their independence during their lives and of being able to do so for as long as possible. Indeed, travelling for many of them is a crucial part of their lives.

Accessibility is a condition of the environments and of the services that determine both travel decisions and the degree of satisfaction with the experience of a large number of people.

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13 United Nations Organization (2009), *World Population Ageing*, New York.

14 United Nations Organization (2002), *World Population Ageing: 1950–2050*, New York.

15 González, D. and Marcos, D. (2003), *Turismo Accesible: Hacia un Turismo para Todos*, CERMI, Madrid, available at: [www.cermi.es](http://www.cermi.es) (nº 4), Spain.

16 Velkoff, V.A. and Vincent, G.K. (2010), *The Older Population in the United States: 2010 to 2050*, U.S. Census Bureau.

17 Howe, N. et al. (2009), *Latin America's Ageing Challenge*.

### 4.1.8 Other beneficiaries of Accessible Tourism

The most recent conceptual definition of Accessible Tourism includes the mention of the whole-of-life or life cycle factor as the determining factor of demand.

Changes are inevitable and anyone, at any stage in their life, can have a problem in the way they relate to their environment, including a temporary or permanent disability.

This means that, even though not everyone has a disability, everyone will go through situations in which they will have a need for accessibility, either because of problems interacting with their environment or because of the appearance of temporary or permanent disabilities. Accidents, illnesses or personal decisions have an influence on the ways they relate to the environment, especially when it is not possible to avoid certain activities (need to travel immediately after an operation) or to choose the moment when to be there (for instance having an accident in the tourism destination). In any of these cases, it is evident that because of the different situations that may arise, anyone and everyone can benefit from accessibility at some point in their life.

#### Problems with mobility

Within the context of tourism, one inevitable activity is that people move around from one place to another. However, personal or accidental circumstances prevent some people from doing this easily.



Tourists in different mobility circumstances.

The groups of people that can be included in this broad category due to their problems to access tourism products and services are as follows:

- People who have just had an operation or with an illness at that specific moment in time;
- People with a temporary disability or who for a limited period of time are using crutches;
- People carrying luggage, heavy articles or pushing prams or buggies;
- Pregnant women;
- Small children; and
- People of short and tall stature or with overweight.

It really means anyone who might find themselves in a specific situation in which they have more difficulties than usual moving around. This is the case when pushing prams or baby buggies, or when carrying suitcases or heavy objects. In addition to this, there are other mobility-related difficulties. For instance, a pregnant woman might have more difficulties moving from place to place but be in a different position as regards mobility to get into the bathtub or carry heavy objects for example.

Likewise, not everyone is of average size or weight and that means each individual will have different characteristics that do not match the average size and that might prompt specific access requirements. One example of this is when someone is especially tall and needs an extra large size bed or a person who is obese who needs a wider seat to be able to sit comfortably on a train, bus or other method of transport.

There is a term that is being used now in the European Union and especially in tourism to talk about persons with disabilities and those sectors of the population who for some or other circumstances have problems moving around: “persons with reduced mobility (PRM)”.

### Information and communication problems

Besides being obliged to move from one place to another when travelling, another situation which may arise among tourists is the need to deal with places they are not familiar with. That can lead to difficulties in interaction with the environment in terms of communication and understanding of the elements. When a tourist does not know the environment, that lack of knowledge places him or her in a situation in which they may not understand local language or customs, thus implying the need for an enhanced accessibility in information and communication.

Even though little has been researched on these aspects of Accessible Tourism, it is obvious that the person engaged in tourism is clearly at a disadvantage in the environment they have to cope with and accessibility is going to be key to facilitating the person’s adaptation to the new environment.

The most frequent situations tourists will find themselves in with regard to their surroundings are:

- Not knowing the destination environment, which gives rise to problems of disorientation, when it comes to use of transport or how to move around in the place itself;
- Not knowing the language, and that leads to communication-related difficulties;
- Not knowing the culture and customs, and that leads to problems in dealing with people, dietary adjustments, difficulties in economic transactions and personal relationships; and
- Degree of linguistic ability, mathematical ability or other subject of common use.

These situations show once again that irrespective of the person’s capabilities, the environment, i.e. their surroundings, can generate problems which are all about accessing, using and enjoying it and these problems can be solved through Universal Design. That is the reason why it can be affirmed that Universal Design benefits the whole population, because during a major part of our lives we will experience the same needs whether or not we have a disability. Furthermore, the measures implemented will be advantageous for tourists and for the local population as they will be positive for mobility, information, communication and localization.

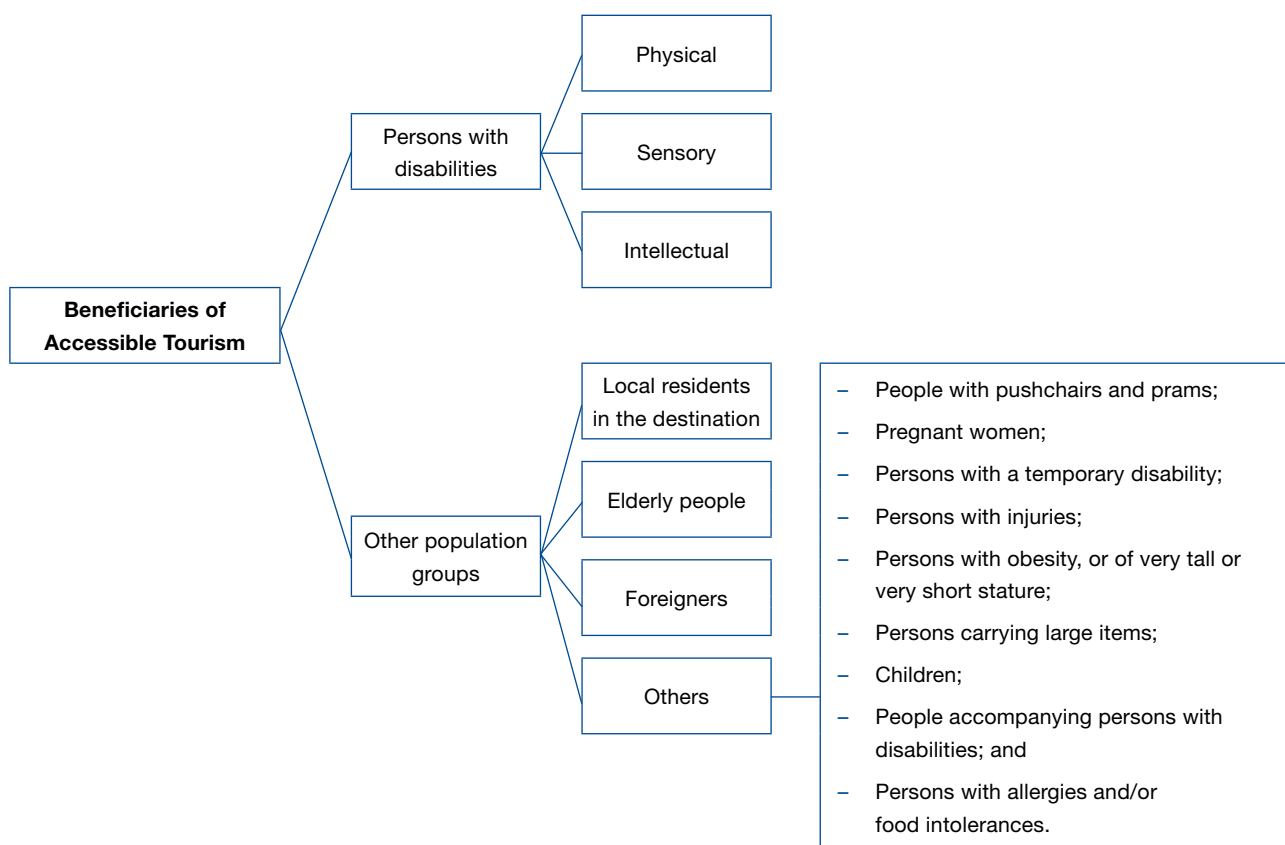


Tourists finding their way in an unknown environment.

One specific example is Europe, where quantitative studies on the subject have shown that if we add together the number of people with disabilities in Europe with the other sectors that benefit from accessibility they total 130 million people.<sup>18</sup>

According to a piece of research from 2007 called *The Case for Accessible Tourism Experiences* the number of people who will have accessibility needs at some point in their lives is equivalent to 30% of the population.<sup>19</sup> If we take into account the WHO data, 25% of users of special needs plus other sectors of the population, the figure would be as high as 40%.

Figure 4.2 **Beneficiaries of accessibility in tourism**



Source: Adapted from Via Libre (2012).

18 European Network of Accessible Tourism (ENAT), available at: [www.accessibletourism.org/resources/toolip/doc/2014/07/06/study-a-economic-impact-and-travel-patterns-of-accessible-tourism-in-europe---fi.pdf](http://www.accessibletourism.org/resources/toolip/doc/2014/07/06/study-a-economic-impact-and-travel-patterns-of-accessible-tourism-in-europe---fi.pdf).

19 Darcy, S. and Dickson, T. (2009), 'A Whole-of-Life Approach to Tourism: The Case for Accessible Tourism Experiences', *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*.

## 4.2 Trends in Accessible Tourism demand

The all-embracing quality criteria of tourism supply are currently undergoing redefinition and one of the most important structural variables that is being incorporated is accessibility. This is due to a trend that, as explained below, an enhanced level of accessibility has a direct influence on the influx of tourists, the overall quality of tourism and economic benefits.

### 4.2.1 Increase in the population with disabilities

Due to the constant socio-demographic changes in the world today, the number of people with disabilities is on the increase. Different factors are taken into consideration to explain this increase:

- **Greater probability of survival after illnesses or accidents:** there are many adverse health situations that take place today such as different types of accidents – traffic accidents, accidents at work, natural disasters, environmental events and illnesses – that prompt the appearance of sections of the population with disabilities acquired at an adult age. At the same time, medical and scientific developments have managed to make a huge improvement when it comes to increasing life expectancy in the case of these accidents and illnesses or malformations that were previously fatal; and
- **Ageing and disability:** another one of the factors that greatly influence the increasing number of people with disabilities is increased life expectancy and population ageing. After a certain age there is a significant relationship or link established between ageing and disability so that a person is 14 times more likely to have a disability when reaching the age of 65 than when he or she was four years old.<sup>20</sup> At a certain age, human beings start to undergo a process of natural impairment of their capacities. People who end up suffering senility will experience growing functioning difficulties that might lead to a disability.<sup>21</sup>

In addition, the elderly people or seniors segment is the group that suffers more traffic accidents, with disability or death being the main outcome.<sup>22</sup>

### 4.2.2 Greater participation of persons with disabilities in tourism

There are a number of reasons why people with disabilities in developed countries have a better quality of life and therefore can engage in leisure and tourism activities:

- **Higher income levels for persons with disabilities:** the consolidation of social assistance and the possibility of integration in the labour market have an impact on the purchasing power and higher disposable income to spend on tourism and leisure;
- **Pension stability:** stable income from public or private pension schemes, either retirement pensions or widowhood pensions, or whatever the pensions are in each region. In addition a large majority no longer have the financial burdens such as mortgages that they took on earlier in their lives or dependent children and so can devote a larger proportion of their income to leisure activities. Furthermore, the interest in making material acquisitions is

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20 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2004), *Disability, Ageing and Carers*.

21 World Health Organization (2011), *World Disability Report*.

22 Marcos, D. I. and González, D. J. (2003), *Turismo Accesible*, available at: [www.cermi.es](http://www.cermi.es).

- transformed into a new interest in acquiring experiences: the enjoyment of new experiences and situations, visits and relationships with people around them;
- **Technological improvements:** technological developments mean there is more information available and they make travel from place to place and enjoyment of tourism destinations easier: the development of science, of assistive products and of new technologies all make greater mobility, communication and understanding possible as well as improving the comfort and independence of persons with disabilities.
  - **Beneficiaries of social schemes:** to a great extent they enjoy specific social schemes created and tailored especially for these population groups, including leisure and tourism programmes. At the same time travel programmes are frequently organized by other entities (parishes, homes for the elderly, social or neighbourhood groups or specialized travel agencies) that attract large numbers of seniors. This type of programmes boost group tourism above all where different services are used collectively (transport, excursions, accommodation, and others);
  - **More availability for travel:** because they have concluded the working phase in their life, a lot of older people find they have more time available and are keen to enjoy and experience travel opportunities they could not take up during their working life. The consequence of this greater availability is that they have more flexibility as regards seasonal constraints, they can travel in low season and so avoid crowds of visitors. This trend also contributes to the deseasonalization of tourism destinations and therefore helps to keep jobs in tourism infrastructures and services; and
  - **Interest in engaging in tourism activities:** once they are free from financial burdens, work obligations and dependents, seniors can see an improvement in their state of mind and body and that in turn makes them feel “healthy” and enjoy their free time doing outdoor activities.<sup>23</sup> These activities include excursions and travel for different reasons and in different fields of individual interest such as health, nature, religion, and culture.

Senior tourists are a real economic blessing for tourism destinations. They normally spend more when they travel, stay longer and it is more likely they can take two or three holidays during the year. Some of them also choose “staycations” (holidays close to home) and they stay in hotels or other types of accommodation for longer periods.

### 4.2.3 Greater requirements for accessibility in tourism

All tourists demand a quality service in tourism environments and tourism services and that quality includes accessibility. These greater requirements in everything relating to accessibility can take the form of access, mobility, communication, nutrition, health, personal service, and other aspects and will all be taken into account when tourists are selecting a destination. Thus, the choice of destination depends directly on whether it matches those needs.

The number of persons with specific access requirements is increasingly becoming a sector with experience in travel and with greater awareness of their rights as customers. That experience and awareness prompts more demand for information on the product or service to be used.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Instituto de Mayores y Servicios Sociales (IMSERSO) (2010), *Vacaciones para Personas Mayores, Un Programa con Grandes Beneficios*, Madrid.

<sup>24</sup> Sniadek, J. (2006), *Age of seniors – A challenge for tourism and leisure industry*, University School of Physical Education, Warsaw.



#### **4.2.4 Accessibility as a positive tool for tourism quality**

Accessibility in tourism can and should be a driver for improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities in inbound tourism countries given that the endeavours benefit society as a whole. Legislation and regulations increasingly demand strict compliance with accessibility requirements that will lead authorities to have greater oversight, and even work together actively to ensure tourism environments are accessible. What international conventions and different laws have not managed to achieve so far will probably be achieved by economic motivations if accessibility is considered beneficial for tourism.



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## Chapter 5

# Principal barriers to Accessible Tourism

“Society’s failure to remove barriers to mobility, communication and understanding is symptomatic of the unequal consideration given to those with reduced abilities. The opposite is also true: every barrier to access that falls takes us a step closer to achieving an equal society.”

Helios (1995), Social Integration, Annual Report, Brussels.

It would be pointless to discuss Accessible Tourism without describing the difficulties most often found in achieving it.<sup>1</sup>

Firstly, people have their own intrinsic difficulties, as everyone has their own individual differences in capacity. Each one of us, in line with our own functional or mental capacities, comes up against barriers to our mobility, to our communication or sources of information, and to how well we can understand messages, instructions, instruments or systems. However, intrinsic difficulties are, at times, less important than the barriers leading to inaccessibility.

Difficulties preventing our use and enjoyment of environments and services can be found in different spheres and are, for the most part, caused by design aimed at a “standard human being” prototype that does not reflect the majority of people, whether or not they have disabilities.

The types of barriers and difficulties involved in tourism activities vary greatly, and can be divided into two major headings: environmental barriers and social barriers.

## 5.1 Environmental barriers

These are the barriers existing between users/clients and the environment around them (transportation barriers, architectural barriers, communication barriers, among others). They hinder – and in many cases prevent – access to and enjoyment of tourism infrastructures and services. Noteworthy examples of the difficulties that can be found here are the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Marcos, D. I. and González, D. J. (2003), *Turismo accesible*, available at: [www.cermi.es](http://www.cermi.es). Adapted into English from the original Spanish for this publication.

### 5.1.1 Planning and booking

One factor currently playing a major role in travel and tourism is access to information, and especially Internet connection. The Internet offers the opportunity to search for, find and book travel and tourism experiences, analysing the product information in detail and comparing prices. This is an activity from which older people and people with disabilities may easily be excluded due to what is known as the “digital divide”.

When tools like the Internet are used to plan a trip, most of the websites are not accessible, and it is often impossible to book services properly. User dissatisfaction with planning travel is as high as dissatisfaction with other elements in the tourism services chain. According to a study by Germany’s Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology for 70.6% of travellers with mobility limitations, the organization of the trip (preparation, information, booking) is very important.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the inaccessibility of websites, the disparity of standards and the lack of oversight regarding compliance with the law also make it complicated to trust the information found online. Moreover, in the commercial sphere that is the framework for tourism, advertising may end up being misleading if the service offered or promised cannot be used.

The main problems involving information on the Internet are:

- Inaccurate information;
- Information that is not detailed enough;
- Disability is not contemplated comprehensively, as a need for all;
- Obsolete information; and
- Inaccessible websites.

It is important to understand the impact that this has on the marketing channels used by Accessible Tourism service providers, which makes it necessary to resort to traditional channels such as travel agencies, the press, the telephone, or information provided by friends and acquaintances.

This problem is also reflected in the information offered by travel agencies, because there is no means of verification available. This is aggravated by the fact that certain offices are not accessible or do not have trained staff who can deal with persons with disabilities and specific access requirements.

Another major problem is that the information provided may not be updated, accurate or correct. In certain cases, this incorrect information may give rise to situations that are hard to resolve. For example, a wheelchair user may arrive at a hotel and find that the room is not actually adapted, or that the adapted room is not available. In cases like these, it is not possible to solve the problem immediately, and this has a negative impact on the traveller, on the corporate image of the hotel or on the tour operator.

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<sup>2</sup> Neumann, P. and Reuber, P. (2004), *Economic Impulses of Accessible Tourism for All*. Study commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology and Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour, Berlin, available at: [www.bmwi.de/English/Redaktion/Pdf/economic-impulses-of-accessible-tourism-for-all-526,property=pdf,bereich=bmwi2012,sprache=en,rwb=true.pdf](http://www.bmwi.de/English/Redaktion/Pdf/economic-impulses-of-accessible-tourism-for-all-526,property=pdf,bereich=bmwi2012,sprache=en,rwb=true.pdf) (29-11-2016).

Another problem arises out of the disparity of information standards at different destinations or with different travel providers; when tour operators provide information, it may vary considerably. For example, an operator specializing in adventure tourism, such as Tours Gap, will describe 100 steps as a very low physical fitness requirement (level one), whereas Norwegian Cruise Lines, which targets more sedentary clients and senior tourists, will describe the same tour as one of its most demanding in terms of physical effort.

It is well known that physical access is a key factor for persons with disabilities to be able to travel. However, it is important to underline that accurate and reliable information about accessibility is crucial for visitors at each stage of their trip. Without such information, both before and during the trip, people with access needs cannot even consider travelling far from home.

### 5.1.2 Infrastructure and transportation

Transportation remains a major obstacle for many people with disabilities. When Universal Design parameters have not been taken into account in transportation infrastructures such as stations or airports, we can find barriers or difficulties to negotiate abrupt changes in level, move along narrow pavements, or cross streets with no curb ramps.

Other examples of barriers are insufficient lighting, long pathways with no resting areas or elements, glass walls that are not properly marked, and slippery or shiny floors. These barriers not only make it difficult to use these areas, but also are dangerous for travellers' safety.

A lack of services such as changing rooms, waiting rooms or accessible toilets is also an obstacle for persons with reduced mobility.

We can find difficulties in transportation, such as boarding the bus, aeroplane, train, car or other type of vehicle when the appropriate resources are not available or if there are no adapted local buses or taxis available for transfers to the tourism facilities.

Inside the means of transportation, important barriers include narrow aisles between seats, a lack of reserved seating, and a lack of appropriate fastening devices. Catching an aeroplane, which is a common experience today for many people, may be particularly physically and psychologically challenging for travellers with disabilities. There are countless stories about the trials and tribulations of people with disabilities travelling through airports. Much remains to be done for all passengers to receive the same degree of customer care, comfort and respect.

Upon arrival at the destination, local transportation options may constitute a further barrier. In many cases, if there is no accessible transportation, the tourist experience will be limited. Most trains and undergrounds (and many tramway systems) are not accessible for wheelchair users, who must inform the company 24 hours (or even 48 hours) in advance in order to provide an access ramp on the departure and arrival platforms. Some cities do not have any accessible public transportation at all, or any accessible transportation system operating in parallel to the public transportation grid. This constitutes a barrier in the destination environment.

### 5.1.3 Buildings

If buildings are not sufficiently accessible, some people will find it difficult to enter and use them. For example, if a hotel only has one entrance and there are steps up to it, people will have problems entering when carrying luggage, and wheelchair users will find it impossible or dangerous.

Buildings can have barriers at doorways and lifts, narrow hallways, tables at restaurants or cafeterias preventing movement in tight spaces. Elements in the environment such as counters, cupboards, or payphones may constitute a barrier if they are not placed at the appropriate height. Entrances to buildings, indoor areas, lifts and other facilities are often not inspected and refurbished following Universal Design criteria, or even in accordance with current laws on accessibility in force in many countries.

In the specific case of accommodation facilities, the most elementary accessibility measures such as properly designed washbasins and accessible toilets for all clients continue to be the exception. More specific measures like vibrotactile or visual flashing alarm systems for deaf people are also rare. Providing a shower chair and a non-slip bath mat are inexpensive and effective measures to guarantee guests' comfort and safety, but they are rarely found. Likewise, it is often possible to enjoy certain activities at a hotel, but not everyone can always use the swimming pool or even the hotel restaurant.

### 5.1.4 Communication

We will come up against communication barriers when information is not offered in accessible or alternative formats, when messages are not clear and concise, and when there is not sufficient information coverage.

In this sense, barriers exist when there is no adequate signage system enabling all guests to find their way independently and safely; the problem may be an absence of Braille or icons, the language used, the difficulty in reading signage or as a result of the lack of standards in this field.

Sound-based communication systems, such as loudspeakers, alarms, bells, buzzers or audio guides constitute a barrier for many visitors, especially people with hearing impairments, if they are not accompanied by visual elements to supplement them. Announcements presented only in visual form are not accessible to the blind. This includes information that can only be found in brochures, printed restaurant menus, panels at airports without public address (PA) announcements, and flat keyboards on devices or on lifts.

There is an additional communication barrier for many tourists with disabilities. All tourists can come up against a language barrier between themselves and their hosts, but this is further aggravated for people with speech impairments. Such impairments may require a higher level of concentration in order to understand information. Persons without disabilities may also have attitude problems towards persons with disabilities, further compounding the communication problem.

### 5.1.5 Activities involving the destination

When the destination environment is only conceived for certain population profiles without taking into account people's diversity, and therefore does not offer possibilities or alternatives for all types of people, this should be considered a bad practice in tourism. For example, certain cities, towns or parks have many obstacles restricting the free movement of people with reduced mobility, people with visual impairments, older people, children, and any tourist in general.

Villages, towns and cities are essential locations for a visitor's experience. The appeal of these areas is often related to their historic nature, with elements that have remained unchanged throughout the years, even for centuries. Many projects and initiatives have proved that these environments can be preserved while at the same time being made accessible for people with reduced mobility; however, this seldom occurs.

Attractions and sightseeing activities at tourist spots pose accessibility problems for clients with reduced mobility, the deaf, the blind, the visually impaired, and children and adults with learning difficulties. We can find countless examples at stadiums, museums, natural environments, theatres and cinemas. Visitors with disabilities have limited possibilities of participating in the services offered if their needs and capacities are not taken into account, and, consequently, their holiday experiences may be very limited.

Table 5.1 **Summary of the principal barriers to Accessible Tourism**

Planning and booking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Inaccessible websites; and</li> <li>– Travel agencies: inaccessible environments and untrained staff.</li> </ul>
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Transfer from home to the point of departure;</li> <li>– Access to transportation terminals: stations, airports;</li> <li>– Boarding means of transportation; and</li> <li>– Lack of adapted services: toilets, information systems, emergency systems.</li> </ul>
Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Access to and interior of tourism establishments: rooms, common areas, toilets, leisure areas, sports facilities; and</li> <li>– Access to and interior of other tourism attractions.</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Appropriate signage; and</li> <li>– Alternative systems for conveying information.</li> </ul>
Destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Moving around the urban and rural environment;</li> <li>– Access to tourism resources (natural and cultural attractions, among others) and to general resources (shops, supermarkets, pharmacies); and</li> <li>– Leisure and cultural activities.</li> </ul>

One of the most obvious reasons why these barriers have not been eliminated is the lack of political and financial investment in this sector. Here, accessibility is conceived as a cost rather than as an opportunity for improvement that will have a return on investment and guaranteed profitability.

According to an international survey published by TRAVELSAT Competitive Index in 2012, 43% of tourists with special needs file some type of complaint during their stay. This amounts to twice as many complaints as the average for all tourists (table 5.2).

Table 5.2 **TRAVELSAT Index 2012, areas of complaint by tourists with disabilities (%)**

Areas of complaint	Average all tourists	Tourists with special needs
Transportation at destination	7	15
Accommodation	9	14
Safety	4	12
Health	2	9
Food quality and services	8	8
Cultural and leisure activities	2	3
Visa formalities	3	2
At least one negative experience	27	43

Transportation and accommodation are the areas with the greatest problems, and at times they cause negative experiences in terms of health and safety. Moreover, there is a great discrepancy in the assessment of the quality of services depending on the destination visited.

## 5.2 Social barriers

Social barriers could be described as those involving factors linked to society and how society treats disability and accessibility-related issues. At times, these difficulties are much more limiting and discriminatory than environmental barriers, because society's consideration of accessibility is what can drive the necessary political, social and economic changes to make it possible.

### 5.2.1 Lack of training in tourism-related businesses

The key social barrier in tourism is direct interaction with persons with disabilities and specific access requirements. The tourism sector employees are not prepared for different demands, and even if on occasion they do have the means to address them, these requirements are not met because the employees are not aware of the existence of these means or how to use them. For example, the installation of a magnetic loop benefiting persons with hearing impairments is often pointless if the staff do not know that it is available, or do not know how to activate and use it.

In addition, training in how to treat persons with disabilities or with specific access requirements is essential in order to understand the reasons for the possible demands and to be familiar with treatment strategies that ensure non-discrimination. Another example occurs when persons with difficulties ask for a hot beverage in a wine glass instead of in a standard glass, or ask for a drinking straw, because that way they can drink independently. In these situations the personnel in



the establishment may not understand why these clients have this specific demand, which implies that the training is essential to avoid misunderstandings.

Here, training should be incorporated not only as a rights-based issue but also to enhance the quality of service and make it possible to broaden the market. Accessible services offer should ensure disability awareness among visitor service staff, and make sure that accessibility training is part of their customer service training. A welcoming attitude, and knowing how to approach, communicate with and help customers (in case they actually ask for any assistance), are all essential in giving full weight to the concept of good service.

## 5.2.2 Lack of awareness about accessibility

Lack of knowledge about accessibility-related needs can be seen not only in staff who deal directly with the public, but also in the absence of international and national policies and strategies aimed at fostering accessibility in tourism services. There is a major lack of effective comprehensive policies to improve accessibility, understanding accessibility as a value chain with different links, that need to be systematically addressed. Many stakeholders are involved in improving accessibility, and each one of them has a series of responsibilities and possibilities to contribute to achieving that goal. However, a coordinated strategy is needed to establish the steps and priorities to follow, the goals to achieve, and the concrete measures to take.

## 5.2.3 Attitudinal barriers

The social exclusion of persons with disabilities in environments and services is reflected in aspects such as the negative view of disability. For example, refusing to stay at a hotel that accommodates older people or people with disabilities, preventing diverse groups of people from participating in leisure activities, or considering that persons with disabilities should not travel.

The immediate effects of such attitudinal barriers range from dissatisfaction expressed by clients who have spent their money on a tourist experience just like anyone else, to situations of concern, disappointment or even anxiety in the face of any sense of freedom being hindered. In this regard, it is worth noting that each barrier affects each person in very different ways, depending on their type of disability and their physical and psychological abilities.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to this, the different perceptions of disability in certain regions of the world (considering that people with disabilities have been punished by God, that they have been cursed, or that disability is contagious) breed negative stereotypes of persons with disabilities, limiting their expectations about their abilities.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> González, D. and Marcos, D. (2003), *Turismo accesible: Hacia un Turismo para Todos*, available at: [www.cermi.es](http://www.cermi.es).

<sup>4</sup> European Commission (2004), *Guidance Note on Disability and Development*, DG Development.

These differences have implications for the likely social participation and predisposition to travel of people with disabilities in the outbound tourism regions. Such conceptualizations may affect the acceptance of travellers with disabilities in the destination regions.<sup>5</sup>

It is very important to consider that social difficulties, and especially attitudinal barriers, constitute a much greater problem than environmental issues. Eliminating attitudinal barriers and achieving social changes that incorporate equal opportunities as a question of rights and market opportunities can be a more complicated task.

However, according to the World Bank, there have been encouraging initiatives as “[...] commitments by the United Nations, the European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and other important regional entities [...] spawned national commitments on the parts of most of the world’s remaining countries, resulting in what now amounts to a global commitment to equalizing access to social and economic opportunities for people with disabilities.”<sup>6</sup>

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5 Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2003), *Barrier-free tourism for people with disabilities in the Asian and Pacific region*.

6 World Bank (2004), *Disability and Development, Background paper prepared for the disability and development research agenda meeting*, Washington, D.C.

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## Chapter 6

# Principles of Universal Design

After establishing the framework of the demand for Accessible Tourism and the difficulties facing its achievement, we can now address the question: How can accessibility be achieved in tourism? To answer this question it is essential to go back to the definition of accessibility, or of universal accessibility. This document has referred to different definitions proposed for Accessible Tourism, but what is accessibility?

One definition of Universal Accessibility and Universal Design is the following: “It is the condition that environments, processes, goods, products and services, as well as objects or instruments, tools or devices, must fulfil in order to be comprehensible, usable and practicable by all persons safely and comfortably, and as independently and naturally as possible.”<sup>1</sup>

The concept of accessibility has varied over time, shifting from a perspective of “elimination of barriers”, mainly architectural barriers, in building and city planning, towards a broader perspective that includes sensory barriers, up to the current concept, based on Universal Design.

### 6.1 Universal Design

Universal Design is the tool that must be used in order to achieve accessibility. In the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Universal Design is defined as “The design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. “Universal Design” shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed.”<sup>2</sup>

The aim of Universal Design is to simplify the lives of all people, making products, communications and the environment usable by the greatest number of people at the lowest possible economic cost. Universal Design benefits tourism in its entire extension and in all its phases.

This design philosophy was coined and defined by the US American architect from the Ronald L. Mace (1941–1998) and ratified and explained in greater depth in the 2004 Stockholm Declaration<sup>3</sup> of the European Institute for Design and Disability. It is based on seven principles:<sup>4</sup>

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1 Act 51/2003, of 2 December, on equal opportunities, non-discrimination and universal accessibility of persons with disabilities (2003), Boletín Oficial del Estado [Official State Gazette], Spain (online), available at: [www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2003-22066](http://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2003-22066) (03-11-2014).

Translated into English from the original Spanish for this publication.

2 United Nations Organization (2006), *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

3 EIDD Annual General Meeting (2004), *The EIDD Stockholm Declaration*.

4 Universal Design Centre (1997), *The Principles of Universal Design*, North Carolina State University.

- 1. Equitable use:** the design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities. Tourism designed for all persons must provide the same means of use for all users and avoid segregating or stigmatizing any users. This principle highlights the need for environments to be safe and appealing, which in our case is important as it is applicable to all tourism resources;
- 2. Flexibility in use:** the design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities. Any resource, and most especially tourism resources, must provide the possibility of changes or variations depending on people's circumstances or needs. It must provide choice in methods of use and adapt to the user's pace;
- 3. Simple and intuitive use:** use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level. This is an essential principle from a tourism standpoint. There cannot be any unnecessary complexity or confusing and insufficient information. Tourism design must accommodate a wide range of languages and cognitive abilities; therefore, achieving the greatest wealth of content with the greatest simplicity of use is the basis for all projects;
- 4. Perceptible information:** the design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities. A characteristic of tourism activities is that they are used by travellers most of whom do not know about their destination. Information provides tourists with knowledge of the environment chosen, and becomes the first point of contact with their destination. This principle activates the use of different presentation modes (pictorial, verbal, tactile), adequate contrast between essential information and its surroundings, the legibility of essential information, and compatibility with a variety of techniques or devices used by people with sensory disabilities;
- 5. Tolerance for error:** the design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions. Elements must be arranged to minimize hazards and errors: the most used elements must be the most accessible, whereas hazardous elements must be eliminated, isolated, shielded or minimized. In this latter case, it will be necessary to provide warning of possible hazards;
- 6. Low physical effort:** the design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue. In any type of tourism activity, users must maintain a neutral body position. It is necessary to minimize repetitive actions and the need for unreasonable operating forces in order to carry out different actions; and
- 7. Size and space for approach and use:** appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility.

In tourism itineraries, it is necessary to provide a clear line of sight to important elements for any seated or standing user. Tourism destinations must be accessible and must provide adequate space for the use of assistive devices or personal assistance.

The Universal Design strategy basically refers to newly built environments. However, it is not incompatible with “reasonable accommodation” measures<sup>5</sup> that must be adapted to already built environments. In this regard, and based on the tourism market’s concern for the cost of accessibility, it is necessary to mention that environments built under Universal Design parameters do not involve an additional cost.<sup>6</sup>

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5 Definition given by the United Nations Organization, corresponding to the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (New York, 2006): “Reasonable accommodation: ‘Reasonable accommodation’ means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

6 World Bank (2004), *Disability and Development, Background paper prepared for the disability and development research agenda meeting*, Washington, D.C.



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## Chapter 7

# Accessible Tourism as a business opportunity

“Understanding this interconnectedness and interdependence of individual businesses in the experience of the visitor is essential in order for destinations to grow their market share. To achieve this understanding may require the leadership of destination managers and marketers, such as regional tourism organisations, local chambers of commerce as well as local governments.”

Dickson and Darcy (2012).

There has been a considerable evolution from a situation of inequality, difference and dependence towards greater equality, integration and independence of people with disabilities. This has been a gradual change, and it is slow in certain countries, but the shift toward greater participation in all aspects of society is now very clear. This is why the tourism industry should now pay attention to improving accessibility in response to this growing market.

In order to address this segment as a business opportunity it is necessary to take into account two key premises to help combine business and tourists' rights effectively:

**Marketing accessibility requires a comprehensive approach** that includes actions at the national, regional and local levels. When offering accessible services, small businesses must always be supported by improvements in accessibility to public spaces, and by comprehensive management and marketing actions regarding what these businesses offer in accessible destinations.

**Focusing on accessibility is not an ultimate objective in itself**, but, rather, a tool for enhancing positive elements such as higher quality service, reduced impact of seasonality, and the creation of a single sales proposal.

## 7.1 Benefits of Accessible Tourism

Travel agencies and destination managers are aware that for tourism to survive and prosper it must continuously adapt its products and services. Tourism is constantly changing in order to get to know visitors' tastes, and to anticipate and adapt to sociological and geopolitical changes, technological innovation and new business opportunities.

Tourists that wish and need accessibility when they travel are now beginning to be taken into account as a niche market that offers considerable benefits for destinations and businesses that are ready to cater to them. This market is not new, but it has been neglected for a long time. This is partly because the tourism industry did not consider it a market worth exploring, and because

the sector did not know how to cater to the needs of these customers. However, the Accessible Tourism market offers many benefits:

- **Travel, both international and domestic, is rising steadily**, making the tourism sector one of the world's most important economic activities. The more people travel, the greater the demand for accessibility will necessarily be. In order to compete on the global market, tourism providers must respond to visitors' diverse needs at every link in the chain, offering accessible services for everyone;
- **Multiplication of customers**: studies conducted in different regions, particularly in Europe and Australia, support the general idea that people with disabilities are more likely to travel with companions. The multiplier effect of at least 0.5 times<sup>1</sup> can be added to every trip by persons with disabilities. That should make this sector of society more attractive for the tourism industry. Moreover, the client base is usually broader than average, as it includes large families or multi-generational groups;
- **Reduction of the seasonality phenomenon**: attracting tourists with disabilities could help combat the seasonality phenomenon in certain destinations. A considerable number of persons with disabilities have no work responsibilities, and this is now starting to be taken into consideration by tourism providers in certain countries and destinations, who now offer special prices and promotions in the low season;
- **Accessibility must be part of all tourism products**: what began as a niche market will end up being mainstream through the provision of facilities and services with Universal Design. There will still be a need for specialized services for the small number of visitors with a severe disability or who are highly dependent. Here, there is a business opportunity for new tourism products with high levels of accessibility and/or assistance;
- **Accessible destinations can contribute to improving the standard of living of their residents**: accessibility provides additional benefits for communities in terms of higher quality service, sustainability and social inclusion. Local non-governmental organizations are important actors that can play a key role in fostering and supporting Accessible Tourism initiatives;
- **Increased market share**: fostering and retaining the loyalty of this market segment will significantly raise the current market share, thus increasing the profitability and strengthening the financial base of tourism businesses and destinations; and
- **Enhanced corporate image**: in addition to the financial benefits and security, brand image is also enhanced, offering a differentiated image of destinations, businesses and services, which is so important for retaining customer loyalty and attracting new visitors.

## 7.2 The potential of Accessible Tourism

The estimated size of the Accessible Tourism market is a very good reason itself to consider systematically introducing accessibility improvements in tourism businesses and destinations. Even though in developed countries there is a rising demographic trend of people with special accessibility requirements, statistics from this past decade show many signs of unmet demands

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<sup>1</sup> Following the publication of this Module in the Spanish original (2014), the following study found that each individual with special access needs (in the EU and beyond) travelled with 1.9 companions on average. Individuals with disabilities travelled with 2.2 companions on average as opposed to 1.6 companions travelling with older people: European Commission (2014), *Economic Impact and Travel Patterns of Accessible Travel in Europe – Final Report* (online), available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/DocsRoom/documents/5566/attachments/1/translations/en/renditions/native> (15-12-2016).



with regard to accessible services in the travel and tourism sector. To date, the tourism sector in general has not collected data and figures regarding this market in a steady and consistent manner. Moreover, there is no common reference framework for market studies on these issues. Therefore, it is necessary to consult a wide variety of information sources to draw an outline of potential and actual demand in the sphere of Accessible Tourism.<sup>2</sup>

Some statistics at the international, regional (European Union) and national (United States of America and Australia, in this case) levels, collected from different sources, are presented in the following table.

Table 7.1 **Growth potential of the market of persons with disabilities**

Region/country	Persons with disabilities (millions)	Average yearly expenditure on tourism by persons with disabilities
Worldwide	1,000 <sup>1</sup>	Data unknown
European Union	> 80 <sup>2</sup>	EUR 80 billion
United States of America	54 <sup>3</sup>	USD 13.6 billion
Australia	3.9 <sup>4</sup>	AUD 1.3 billion

Sources: 1) World Health Organization (2011), *World Report on Disability*, WHO, Geneva.

2) European Commission (2001), *Disability and Social Participation in Europe*, Eurostat.

3) Department of Health and Human Services of the United States of America (2012), *Number of people with disabilities in the United States*, available at: [www.hhs.gov/od/about/fact\\_sheets/whatisdisability.html](http://www.hhs.gov/od/about/fact_sheets/whatisdisability.html).

4) Australian Bureau of Statistics (2009), *Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings*, available at: [www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/9C2B94626F0FAC62CA2577FA0011C431/\\$File/44300\\_2009.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/9C2B94626F0FAC62CA2577FA0011C431/$File/44300_2009.pdf) (29-11-2016).

According to a University of Surrey study carried out in 2005<sup>3</sup>, the accessibility market potential for tourism in the European Union is estimated at more than 133 million tourists, taking into account all people with disabilities and chronic health conditions, together with their travelling companions.

According to the same source, potential tourism revenues exceed EUR 80 billion, and these figures are even higher for two reasons:

1. The calculations are only based on persons with disabilities and older people together with their friends and family. This is only a partial view of the market, because a larger group benefits from Accessible Tourism; and
2. The calculations are only based on European citizens. But many transcontinental tourists choose Europe as their holiday destination, and many of them are seniors and people with disabilities or with impaired mobility, so they should be added to the total figures.

Tourism planners must bear in mind that health problems and disability will, sooner or later, have an impact on all of us, and that our capacities may vary throughout our lives. Unlike past generations, the elderly people nowadays insist on continuing to travel and on enjoying different types of tourism experiences, even when they have a certain degree of disability or functional impairment.

<sup>2</sup> Buhalis, D. and Darcy, S. (2012), *Accessible Tourism, Concepts and Issues*, Channel View Publications.

<sup>3</sup> Buhalis, D. et al. (2005), *Accessibility market and stakeholder analysis – One-Stop-Shop for Accessible Tourism in Europe (OSSATE)*, University of Surrey, Surrey.

### 7.3 Accessible Tourism as a business case

In destinations and markets where accessibility is insufficient, market performance is 25 to 35% lower than expected. This is approximately the percentage of people whose travel decisions are influenced by accessibility conditions. Destinations that do not prioritize and promote accessibility are ignoring this major market of people with disabilities, senior tourists, and others.

For many years, Europe's tourism market has seen a steady growth in tourists over the age of 55. This is a natural consequence of the ageing of the Western European population. Today, older people have different motivations to travel, whether to visit their families, for cultural experiences, for the gastronomy, for cruise ship trips, for beach holidays, sports events or rural holidays. This has a huge impact on the tourism sector, and particularly involves accessibility issues.

A study conducted by the Accenture consulting firm (2011)<sup>4</sup>, points to the new trends that will affect global markets and their products in the next 10 to 20 years. The study predicts three key changes that will occur in line with the rise in the ageing population:

1. **Experiential goods and services:** a rise in demand for varied leisure, entertainment, travel and tourism opportunities;
2. **Health services and wellness products:** a rise in health spending, including long-term care; and
3. **Age-inclusive consumer goods:** a rise in demand for products designed to adapt to the changing physical and sensory condition of older people.

Each of these trends opens up significant opportunities and challenges for the tourism industry. Considering the large number of people who need adequate access, it is clear that Accessible Tourism is not a niche market, but, rather, a very broad segment of the market. However, until recently, it has been very difficult to get an accurate picture of how many persons with disabilities are travelling nowadays, even though this is a recent phenomenon.

In Australia, the United States of America, England (United Kingdom) and Germany research has been carried out, revealing the size and nature of the current Accessible Tourism market.

In Australia in 2003 and 2004 it is estimated that tourists with a disability:

- Spent between AUD 8.03 billion and AUD 11.98 billion;
- Contributed between AUD 3.07 billion and AUD 4.58 billion to tourism gross value added (GVA) (12.27%–15.60% of total tourism GVA);
- Contributed between AUD 3.88 billion and AUD 5.79 billion to tourism GDP (11.02%–16.41% of total); and
- Sustained between 51,820 and 77,495 direct jobs in the tourism industry (11.6%–17.3% of direct tourism employment).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Accenture (2011), *New Waves of Growth, Report*.

<sup>5</sup> Darcy, S. and Dwyer, L. (2008), *Technical Report 90040: Visitor Accessibility in Urban Centres*, Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre, Gold Coast.

In the United States of America, the overall tourism market is now feeling the effect of the baby boomers – babies born after World War II, who turned 65 in 2011. Baby boomers will continue to join the older people's market in the coming 20 years, and 40% of them will retire with one or more disabilities, and will acquire further disabilities throughout their lives.<sup>6</sup>

A study carried out in the United States of America in 2005 confirmed that there is a sizeable travel market for tourists with disabilities. In the two years prior to the study, more than 21 million US American adults with disabilities travelled for pleasure or for business. The study shows which domestic and international tourism destinations are preferred by travellers with disabilities who are Internet users. Surprisingly, the study shows growth in certain sectors despite continuous accessibility barriers.<sup>7</sup>

In 2009, US American families headed by 65-year-old or older adults possessed 47 times more net wealth than families headed by an adult who was under 35. The impact on the Accessible Tourism sector is, therefore, quite significant, because 40% of this generation will retire with some form of disability, thus making the overall size of Accessible Tourism reach 25% of the market in 2020.

It is no surprise that senior tourists in the United States of America and anywhere else in the world are rapidly becoming a market force that will dominate the development of services and products in the tourism sector. Given the unavoidable correlation between ageing and disability, services must be designed to focus closely on persons whose mobility, sight, hearing capacity, strength and mental health are declining.

*VisitEngland*, the official tourism board for England (United Kingdom), has made an effort to raise awareness among tourism providers of the opportunities existing in the market and to dispel the myths about the difficulties involved in providing good accessibility, through different guides reflecting tourism data.<sup>8</sup> The *At Your Service* guide states, for example, that by 2025 more than a third of United Kingdom's population will be over the age of 55, and estimates that the Accessible Tourism market is worth over GBP 2 billion.

In Germany, the direct turnover generated by travellers with disabilities is estimated at EUR 2 billion, and rises to EUR 4.8 billion if its indirect effects are included. In that country, for example, 37% of persons with disabilities decided not to undertake a trip due to the lack of accessible facilities. However, 48% of them would travel more frequently if more accessible facilities were available, and 60% would be willing to pay a higher price for using additional accessible facilities.<sup>9</sup>

These data extracted from studies carried out in Australia, the United States of America, England and Germany serve as indicators for the conditions of the Accessible Tourism macro-market. At

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6 McKinsey Global Institute (2008), 'Bout My Generation: The Economic Impact of Aging US Baby Boomers', *Talkin*, MGI.

7 *Research among Adults with Disabilities: Travel and Hospitality* (2005), Harris Interactive Market Research, Open Doors Organization Chicago.

8 *At Your Service* (2011), VisitEngland, United Kingdom.

9 Neumann, P. and Reuber, P. (2004), *Economic Impulses of Accessible Tourism for All. Study commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology and Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour*, Berlin, available at: [www.bmwi.de/English/Redaktion/Pdf/economic-impulses-of-accessible-tourism-for-all-526,property=pdf,bereich=bmwi-2012,sprache=en,rwb=true.pdf](http://www.bmwi.de/English/Redaktion/Pdf/economic-impulses-of-accessible-tourism-for-all-526,property=pdf,bereich=bmwi-2012,sprache=en,rwb=true.pdf) (29-11-2016).

the same time it is important to point out that tourism authorities and legislators need to have better statistics on current market demands in every country and region. The international Tourism Satellite Account system does not address this huge market, and most national authorities have not developed longitudinal data on the markets needing accessibility. Tourism destinations should address this situation and collect their own data, thus stimulating rational planning to foster further knowledge about market supply and demand.

## 7.4 Senior tourists are showing the way

As it has been already highlighted, the generation of senior tourists is becoming a market force that will dominate the development of products and services in the tourism sector. Given the clear correlation between ageing and disability, services must be designed to focus on those persons whose mobility, sight, hearing capacity, strength and mental health are declining.

For example, going on a cruise has become a favourite holiday option for families, couples, and seniors in particular. In the past few years, special offers targeting people aged over 55 are appealing to older people, whether single, in couples or in groups of friends. In Spain, for example, regional governments have subsidized hotel prices in the low season to encourage more foreign tourists to visit the country. The first edition of the Europe Senior Tourism winter programme brought nearly 45,000 foreign tourists to Spain. One out of every three tourists who took part in this initiative was Greek, with nearly 15,000 Greeks enjoying a low-cost trip to Spain.

Judging by the many questions asked by travellers to the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT), day trips for tourists on cruises are an area where older tourists require special services. Even if only one member of a group is a wheelchair user, an accessible taxi or van from the port to the sights, restaurants or leisure and shopping areas is required. Without this special type of transportation, the customer will have to stay on board and the potential client revenue will be lost. Similarly, older people with mobility impairments may require a guide who not only knows about the archaeological site, but who also knows the right pathways to minimize their difficulty in walking. Some of these active older clients would appreciate restaurants with accessible toilets, accessible hotel rooms (in all price ranges), parking areas with surveillance for electric scooters, and attractions suitable for people with visual, hearing or mobility impairments. These people may not be strictly considered persons with disabilities, but they are used to travelling and to enjoying all kinds of experiences, so their attitude is generally: “Why should I stop now?”.

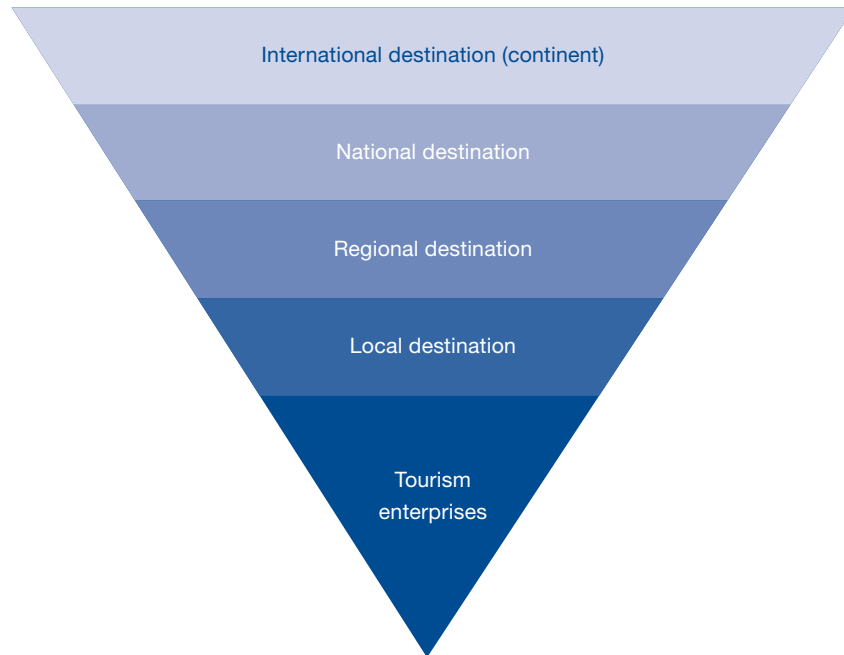
## 7.5 Building an Accessible Tourism destination

If a national tourism administration aims to create a strategy to attract visitors and increase its revenue, Accessible Tourism may not be the first area it focuses on. However, as part of a national strategy it should be on the list of priorities. One of the main conclusions of the analysis of a series of initiatives worldwide is that promoting Accessible Tourism is more successful when carried out through the combined and coordinated efforts of all stakeholders in the tourism sector.

As in other business areas, policies may be developed “top down” by public authorities to foster and encourage actions by private enterprises. Enterprises may also take “bottom up” initiatives to improve accessibility, perhaps seeking to reap the benefits of being the first among the

competition. But the most obvious advantages are those that can be achieved when the two extremes of the tourism system work together at every level to reach the same goals.

Figure 7.1 **Diagram of the different typical levels of government, responsibilities and actions in the tourism sector**



Source: European Network for Accessible Tourism, ENAT.

As shown in the diagram above, there are normally five levels of responsibility (some countries can have more or fewer), and each one of them plays a vital role in determining how destinations and enterprises are developed, managed and promoted.

Whether in the world's regions, such as Europe, Asia, the Americas, Australia and Africa, or in regions within countries, in cities and destinations or in private enterprises, the essential factor for good promotion and marketing is for actors at every level to have shared knowledge and a common goal. When developing an Accessible Tourism marketing strategy, it is important to establish a series of key messages for all actors, and to create a specific action plan setting forth "who does what" so as to put the specific goals into practice.

The basic premise for developing comprehensive planning and a marketing approach is for the respective partners to have effective communication channels and to coordinate their work for the mutual benefit.

It is necessary for destinations to showcase their commitment to Accessible Tourism, so that a joint and accurate message about their involvement and the trustworthiness of the information may be conveyed at every level. Thus, visitors will be able to trust tourism service providers and to rely on a certain level of service enabling them to choose specific providers and plan their trip in a personalized manner.

Understanding this interrelation and the interdependence of individual companies as regards the visitors' experience is essential for destinations to increase their market share. This understanding may require the leadership of management and staff responsible for marketing the destination, such as regional tourism organizations, local chambers of commerce and local governments.<sup>10</sup>

Most importantly, Accessible Tourism is not called on to be a new type of tourism offering segregated trips only for people with disabilities. Instead, accessibility has to be mainstreamed into all kinds of tourism offers and experience, thus enabling all persons to participate in the destination's activities and offers. Accessibility makes it possible for consumers to decide upon and take the holiday trip of their choice.

## 7.6 Understanding clients

Understanding Accessible Tourism demands and requirements from an individual perspective requires a wide-ranging analysis of socio-economic factors, and the consideration of all the parts constituting a trip and the tourism experience. Certain dynamics have an impact on predisposition and capacity to travel. These can be divided into three key factors:

1. Understanding of the socio-economic factors of persons with disabilities or older people when participating in travel and tourism;
2. A second factor is the opportunity to travel; here it is necessary to understand the impact of each phase of the visitor's experience, and each element of the trip must be treated in coordination so as to ensure visitor satisfaction. The key points are access to information, booking procedures and methods, trip to the destination, and the stay within the destination; and
3. A third key factor is identifying social, environmental and service-related problems, which in practice may involve an additional cost for visitors. This includes, for example, accessible means of transportation, barriers in the built environment and tourism facilities themselves, and also aspects such as accommodation costs for people with greater accessibility demands. The availability of assistance and assistive devices may also be an enabling or a hindering factor. Trained staff or professional assistants can be vital on trips taken by many travellers with disabilities or by older travellers. Service elements may include availability of nursing care, medical procedures such as kidney dialysis, medical oxygen, or information about the nearest hospitals, doctors or physiotherapists, among others.

As for people with access needs deciding to travel, a "push-pull" model may be applied, where the push factors are internal: emotional factors inspiring people to travel, relating to the possible benefits of visiting a destination. Push factors include the desire to travel, rest, relax, prestige, health and wellness, adventure, social interaction, enjoying a stay with family, among others.

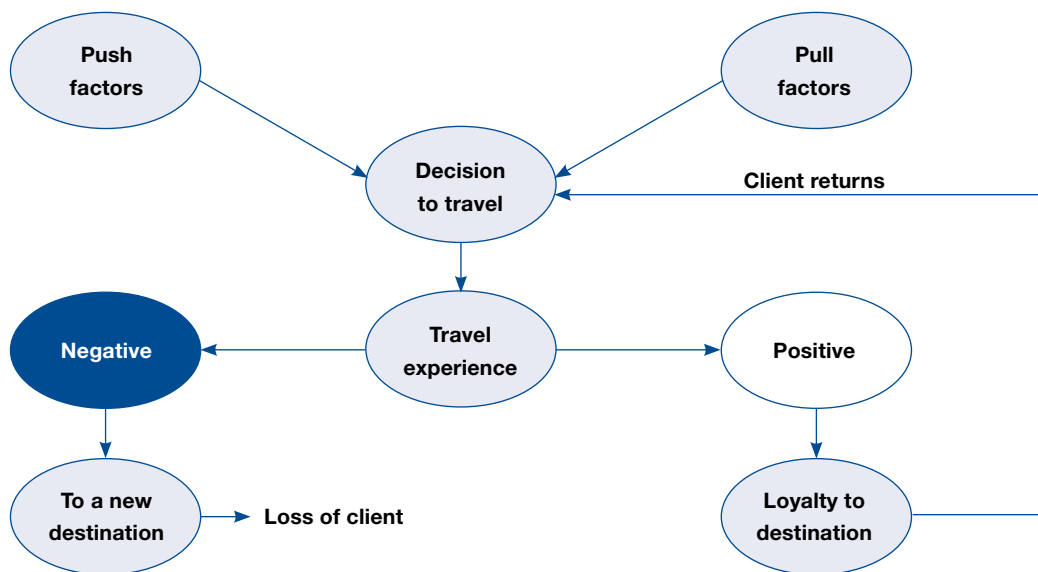
Pull factors include the appeal of a destination, natural elements such as beaches or mountains, recreational facilities, cultural attractions, gastronomic opportunities, entertainment and shopping. For their stay to be inclusive and accessible, visitors must feel that the facilities, transportation and services are appropriate and suitable for their access needs. This intrinsic tourism experience is vital for understanding Accessible Tourism, over and above the mere sum of accessibility

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<sup>10</sup> Buhalis, D. and Darcy, S. (2012), *Best Practice in Accessible Tourism – Inclusion, Disability, Ageing Population and Tourism*, Channel View Publications, United Kingdom.

measures that may or may not be present at a given event. Reasons pushing tourists with accessibility needs to travel include accessibility measures adapted to their individual needs in each link of the chain. Interaction between push and pull factors influences the decision to travel. These motivating factors, together with the travel experience (to, from and at the destination), will determine whether clients develop loyalty to the tourism destination or whether that loyalty is aimed at another destination that acknowledges their needs.

Figure 7.2 **How push and pull factors affect the decision to travel and the desire to return or to choose another destination**



Source: Buhalis, D. and Darcy, S. (2012), *Best Practice in Accessible Tourism – Inclusion, Disability, Ageing Population and Tourism*, Channel View Publications.

Tourism managers must develop the right approaches and acquire the necessary knowledge to respond positively to this commercial phenomenon. Business models need to adapt so as to anticipate changes in the market structure and access demands, which are still ongoing and will continue to grow in coming decades.

Making the tourism products accessible for all should be seen as a golden opportunity rather than as a challenge. With this positive perspective, businesses and destinations can offer higher quality service to increase the number of visitors requiring accessibility, and plough back their remuneration by increasing the sources of income, improving their reputation and offering greater customer satisfaction.

One of the priority obligations is to ensure easy and safe access for persons with disabilities, seniors and other people with specific access requirements, which is key to developing Tourism for All. In addition to being able to enjoy sporting or cultural events, for example, these visitors, just like anyone else, wish to find an appropriate hotel, move around freely and experience the life of the city, enjoy a shopping trip, dine out, go to a concert, visit the sights, or simply be a tourist.

This is an opportunity for tourism destination planners to comply with legislation and make their cities accessible, attractive and sustainable for their citizens, while welcoming all kinds of tourists.

## 7.7 Tourism is international

Obviously, travel and tourism often involves crossing national borders and this may bring about special difficulties for visitors with disabilities. Foreign visitors with disabilities, in certain cases, may find that they are refused entry to tourist attractions or that reduced prices applied to locals do not apply to them. They may at times have to pay extra for a personal assistant, even though persons with disabilities from the country providing such products are not charged for that service. However, it is true that we sometimes find the opposite situation. In Italy, for example, wheelchair users can have priority access to museums and entry is free both for them and their assistant.

Some tourists in wheelchairs or with walking impairments have been refused the use of equipment such as lifts on ferries or entry to attractions and monuments, on the grounds that they do not have the disability identification issued by national authorities.

As for local transportation in cities, transfers to the airport and to other locations, lack of possession of national identification as persons with disabilities or other requirements may prevent visitors with disabilities from using services such as accessible minivans. In such cases, the only alternatives are private rental vehicles, and this may lead to inordinate prices as compared with regular taxis.

Culture, legislation and practices may vary, but whatever the situation, the rule is for appropriate information – at the very least – to be available at tourist information offices, the Internet, venues for specific events, or locations where tourism services are provided.

Other more important obstacles, mentioned above, are the attitudes of certain providers and staff towards disability. Negative attitudes are almost always the result of lack of knowledge and uncertainty as to how to cater to the needs of these clients. The way to tackle these barriers is by improving skills and practical training regarding persons with disabilities. Many enterprises have been successful in implementing better customer service, the key pillar of accessibility improvements, with exceptional results.

**Investing in Accessible Tourism has numerous advantages. To the obvious advantages mentioned at the beginning of this chapter we can add the following:**

- It benefits the entire market and not only persons with disabilities;
- It increases the market opportunities of a tourism destination or business;
- It improves competitiveness and fosters market differentiation;
- It enhances the quality of the travel experience and the warmth of the welcome;
- It heightens the opportunities to create loyalty to the destination, and for it to be recommended;
- It consolidates the long-term viability and financial sustainability of businesses and destinations (in terms of work and revenue);
- It promotes an inclusive approach to development, reflecting social responsibility; and
- It contributes to the civic pride of the community living in the destination.



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[www.edf-feph.org/Page\\_Generale.asp?DocID=13855&thebloc=29268](http://www.edf-feph.org/Page_Generale.asp?DocID=13855&thebloc=29268)

**European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT):**

[www.accessibletourism.org](http://www.accessibletourism.org)

**Europe for All:**

[www.europeforall.com/home.seam](http://www.europeforall.com/home.seam)

**International Air Transport Association (IATA):**

[www.iata.org](http://www.iata.org)  
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**Sydney for All:**

[www.sydneyforall.com/](http://www.sydneyforall.com/)

**The European Accessible Tourism Directory:**

<http://pantou.org>

**United Nations Enable:**

[www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1515](http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1515)

**VisitEngland:**

[www.visitengland.org](http://www.visitengland.org) [www.visitengland.org/busdev/bussupport/access/info/Statements.aspx](http://www.visitengland.org/busdev/bussupport/access/info/Statements.aspx)

**Web Accessibility Initiative:**

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**World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons,**

part 2:  
[www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp/documents/specialrapporteur/images/www.disstudies.org/default.asp?id=24](http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp/documents/specialrapporteur/images/www.disstudies.org/default.asp?id=24)

**World Tourism Organization (UNWTO):**

[www.unwto.org](http://www.unwto.org)  
<http://ethics.unwto.org/en/content/accessible-tourism>

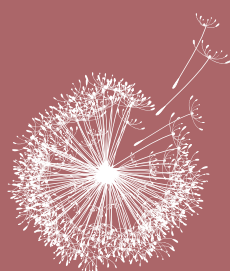




**The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO)** is a specialized agency of the United Nations. As the leading international organization in the field of tourism, UNWTO promotes responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism. It serves as a global forum for tourism policy issues and a practical source of tourism know-how. UNWTO's membership includes 157 Member States, 6 Associate Members, 2 permanent observers and 500 Affiliate Members representing the private sector, educational institutions, tourism associations and local tourism authorities.

**The ONCE Foundation's** main objectives are training and labor inclusion of persons with disabilities, as well as the attainment of universal accessibility by promoting accessible environments, products and services. We work towards the removal of barriers in the spheres of culture, leisure and tourism, and undertake awareness-raising actions through publications and organization of international conferences on Tourism for All.

**The European Network For Accessible Tourism – ENAT**, is a non-profit organization which gathers organizations and individuals from the private, public and non-governmental sectors. Our mission is to make European tourism destinations, products and services accessible to all travelers, while promoting inclusive and accessible tourism worldwide.



**2017**  
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