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Accessible Tourism Language

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Accessible tourism language represents how we talk about disability within tourism scholarship. It is framed by the scholarship of accessible tourism and considers the expression of terminology used in that scholarship. In a broader sense, accessible tourism language is connected to the wider discourse of disability, predominantly located within disability studies. It considers the critical nature of written and spoken language and the important consequences of language for people with disabilities, with the aim toward wider social change for a more inclusive society. Expressions of language have both positive and negative implications as a result of its 'labelling' consequences. Language is thus reflected in the various ways people ascribe meaning to, and identify or interact with, disability. From a negative perspective, language often takes the form of stigma and stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination. From a positive perspective, language can create a sense of identity and empowerment, and contributes to the social construction and sustainability of environments that are enabling and inclusive for people with disabilities. Language can therefore reframe otherwise negatively stigmatised and stereotyped identities (Gillovic, McIntosh, Darcy & Cockburn-Wooten, 2018).

The concept of accessible tourism follows previous scholarly discussions of similar terms, including disabled/disability tourism, easy access tourism, barrier-free tourism, universal tourism and inclusive tourism (Darcy & Buhalis, 2011). Accessible tourism addresses the socially constructed nature of tourism for people with disabilities and other access needs. It considers a whole-of-life approach to access and participation in tourism, including attention to universal design in tourism environments (Darcy & Dickson, 2009). While the accessible tourism agenda extends to include other people with access needs, for instance, parents with young children, the language discussed here relates specifically to the aspect of disability and the social discourse surrounding this.

In the past, people with disabilities have been given derogatory labels in society, for example, 'cripple', 'spastic' and 'retard', among others. Discourse has emerged to critically examine the consequences of this language use for those people who live with disability. Notably, two models of disability have dominated the discourse; the medical model and the social model. Importantly, the social model of disability gives consideration to discourse, language and stigma. The stigmatising effect of language (perceived or felt) also has been found to have negative consequences for people living with hidden disabilities, for example, epilepsy (McIntosh, 2020). As such, the discourse around language use, or use of terminology, has held important consequences for our consideration of accessible tourism, if this type of tourism is to render tourism more accessible for tourists with visible or invisible disabilities.

Historically, the medical model has held prime place in disability scholarship. It views a person's impairment, and the embodiment of this, as their disability. Disability is thus seen as some functional deficit or loss, caused by disease, illness or trauma, and therefore requiring medical intervention, treatment or rehabilitation (Oliver, 1990). As it has been historically dominant, this model has influenced general assumptions and understandings of disability held by society at large. These assumptions have served as a basis for negative and limiting attitudes, policies and outcomes (Darcy & Buhalis, 2011).

The social model of disability was borne from the disability movement in the late 1970s. It saw disability as a product of the hostile social attitudes and disabling social environment that marginalises and excludes people with disabilities from participation in all areas of citizenship and social life (Oliver, 1990). Disability was no longer postulated as a medical issue, but an issue of social, economic and political injustice. It gave voice to experiences of prejudice and discrimination. As such, if disability is a social construct then a social resolution is possible. Hence, it is the responsibility of society to remedy barriers and engender positive action for social change (Darcy & Buhalis, 2011a).

Language continues to hold importance and power in disability studies (Jaeger & Bowman, 2005). One of the most significant debates surrounding the language of disability remains the distinct approaches to describe the relationship between impairment, disability and society, and the respective employment of adjective-first or person-first terminology. Within the medical discourse, definitions of impairment concentrate on lack or loss, whereas in the social discourse, impairment is part of humanity's diversity and disability is a social reality that is firmly based in cultural, social, economic and political contexts. For example, the use of the term 'wheelchair bound' compared to that of 'person who uses a wheelchair'.

Another point of contention is the linguistic preference of the use of 'disabled people' or 'people with disabilities'. While there is no monolithic language style that is shared across all those living with disability, in many countries, the most widely accepted language style is usually informed by its legislative context. For example, in Australia, this is 'people with disabilities', and in the United Kingdom, this is 'disabled people'. The adjective-first term, 'disabled people', emphasises disability and identifies an individual by their impairment. But for some, it can be a source of identity and recognition that the disabling barriers exist within society and not the individual. The person-first term, 'people with disabilities', linguistically places heightened importance on the person before their disability. Others justify the word structure, 'disabled people', because an impaired person is disabled by society, while 'people with disabilities' indicates some deficit that is singular and individual to the person (Jaeger & Bowman, 2005). Here, language becomes important to alleviate the social constraints faced by people living with disabilities. Indeed, one of the biggest constraints faced by people with disabilities is attitudinal barriers. Integral to the hostile social attitudes expressed to and about them, is the stigma and labelling that comes with language (Jaeger & Bowman, 2005).

Stakeholders of accessible tourism language include people with disabilities, scholars, industry, government and wider society. Language is indeed applicable to, and has implications for, each stakeholder group, and ultimately, for the 'normalising' of disability within society (Oliver, 1990). Language too has important implications for how we consider tourism as a leisure activity that is generally known to be exclusionary in nature. In fact, Gillovic et al. (2018) provided a first and critical examination of the language used in previous

accessible tourism studies (see Table 1). They questioned what language had been used in accessible tourism scholarship, and what reasoning (if any) was provided for such use of terminology by scholars. The authors argued that a diversity existed amongst the varying terms adopted by scholars, and that these terms were mostly used loosely, inconsistently and interchangeably. The terminology used was based around widely-cited academic definitions or that of official international bodies. Also evident was some account for cultural, geographic and legislative context, dominant models of disability discourse, or the study participants themselves. In addition, a number of scholars did not disclose their philosophical position and linguistic perspective, nor did they make reference to a specific model of disability. The authors called for a greater focus on, and consistency of, accessible tourism language, arguing that scholars should be cognisant of, and critical about, their language use and the discursive aspects of it, in order to avoid (re)producing oppression through language to instead facilitate social change (Gillovic et al., 2018).

Because tourism environments can be exclusionary and disabling by their nature, there is a need for future accessible tourism scholarship to consider social solutions in working toward the creation of more enabling, accessible and inclusive environments. Language provides one such pathway. Language, whether conscious and intentional, or unconscious and inadvertent, creates barriers and limitations. Instead, there is a need to consider the use of language for more positive outcomes that portray people with disabilities in ways that promote dignity and equality, access, participation and inclusion. Ultimately, the dominant social worldview determines disability discourse and language. This impacts the way in which people with disabilities are perceived and received in tourism (Darcy & Buhalis, 2011a). There is an opportunity for tourism scholars to more readily engage with disability discourse and language from disability studies to encourage social change through less marginalising and stigmatising language. As discourse and language continue to evolve, they become open to challenge and re/new use. Tourism scholars should strive to critically consider the discursive aspects of their work, and where possible, give precedence to people with disabilities, and the language they themselves choose to identify with.

To this end, future considerations may involve a move beyond medicalised words/labels such as 'impairment' or 'disability', or account for different foreign languages, cultural and legislative contexts. Accessible tourism language could also be considered with regards to service provision and disability awareness training in tourism and related organisations. Tourism scholars have the opportunity to further a discursive exchange between disability studies and tourism studies, and most importantly, the language of people with disabilities themselves.

Table 1. Commonly used language in accessible tourism scholarship

Terminology: Disability categorisation	
<u>Adjective-first terminology</u>	<u>Person-first terminology</u>
Disabled people	People with disabilities
Disabled person/s	Individual/s with disability/ies
Disabled population	Person/s with disability/ies
Disabled tourist/s	Tourist/s with disability/ies
Disabled traveller/s	Traveller/s with disability/ies
Terminology: Tourism categorisation	
<u>Type of tourism</u>	<u>Tourism market</u>
Accessible tourism	Access market
Accessible travel	Accessibility market
Barrier-free tourism	Accessible tourism market
Disability tourism	Disability market
Tourism for people with disabilities	Senior tourism market

Table adapted from Gillovic et al. (2018).

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