

FROM GOOD INTENTIONS TO POSITIVE ACTION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter recognises the history of tourism for people with disability has been littered with good intentions, but rarely have these intentions become actualised. A sound strategy for improvement has been lacking, as has the political will, stakeholder collaboration, and resources with which to implement and operationalise such a strategy. As such, many destinations lack the knowledge required to facilitate accessible and inclusive tourist experiences, and hence struggle to be competitive and sustainable in this space (Leiper et al., 2008). From a destination management perspective, the implication is that governments and different tourism stakeholders need to be cognisant of the needs of people with disability to ensure they satisfy their demands, and governments need to engage in effective decision-making to promote the economic, environmental, and social sustainability of the disability-related tourism market (Elliott, 2020; Veal, 2011). To this end, we examine some of the underlying frameworks that can contribute towards developing a better understanding of the strategies and infrastructure required to deliver accessible and inclusive tourism products, services, and destination experiences that enable an individual with disability to assume the role of tourist.

A vision for the tourism industry, globally, has been strategically prioritised by the UNWTO through a focus on accessible tourism, recognising that 15% of the world's population identify as living with disability (WHO, 2023). Accessible tourism, which we define in Chapter 1, "Introduction," according to Darcy and Dickson (2009), has been regarded by the UNWTO as a combination of ethical responsibility, human rights understanding, triple bottom line accounting, and business opportunities through a comprehensive suite of declarations, directives, and documents over the past 20 years (UNWTO, n.d.). Moving from global strategic perspectives through to destination management and local entrepreneurial activity, this chapter discusses how we can move from good intentions to positive action.

STRATEGIC APPROACHES FOR A GLOBAL TOURISM INDUSTRY

Tourism is a global industry, but until the introduction of the UNCRPD in 2006, each nation state had its own approach to what constituted as accessibility and inclusion for people with disability, under respective national access standards, building codes, and disability discrimination legislation. While the first codification of access standards began to develop in the late 1960s and 1970s (Goldsmith, 2000; Preiser & Ostroff, 2001), it was not until the 1990s that we saw the introduction of disability discrimination

legislation, first with the United States, and followed by China and Hong Kong, with countries like Canada and New Zealand only following suit some 20 years later. However, in 2006, the UNCRPD was introduced and has some 165 signatories globally (UN, 2006a). Not only has the Convention introduced a more globalised understanding of what constitutes human rights across all areas of disability citizenship and social participation, but each nation state must report to the UN on its progress on a regular basis (UN, 2006a). By default, this develops a greater comparative understanding of the relative state of accessibility and inclusion around the world. The power of the Convention as a monitoring and research tool has rarely been used in tourism to examine the area from a human rights perspective. Article 3 of the Convention, for example, outlines eight guiding principles, including:

Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons; non-discrimination; full and effective participation and inclusion in society; respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity; equality of opportunity; accessibility; equality between men and women; respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

(UN, 2006b, para. 3)

These guiding principles can be used as a framework within tourism to examine the degree of accessibility and inclusion, as Article 30 of the UNCRPD specifically includes tourism as an area of social participation in cultural life. Considering Article 30 and Article 9 together provides a foundation on which to examine accessibility, as it includes transport, the built environment, and information communication technologies that underpin not just the functioning of government, the private sector, and not-for-profit sectors, but their provision of mainstream, non-segregated and non-discriminatory opportunities for people with disability, across all areas of disability citizenship (UN, 2006a).

A more recent advance supporting the UNCRPD and creating a more global understanding of the disability-related tourism market and value chain, was the development of guidelines to assist responsible bodies in nation states. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO), with Spanish disability not-for-profit and social enterprises, as well as global representation from some 300+ national standard organisation designates and other representative groups,¹ developed the *ISO 21902:2021 Tourism and Related Services – Accessible Tourism for all – Requirements and Recommendations* (ISO, 2021). The standard provides guidelines for accessible tourism for people with disability by providing requirements and recommendations across each stage of the accessible tourism value chain. The development of these requirements and recommendations is closely connected to broader building and

¹ One of the authors, Simon, was a member of the international collaboration developing the standard.

construction standards, but makes an extension to “policy making, strategy, infrastructure products and services and is addressed to all stakeholders involved in the tourism supply chain, whether from the public or private sector. It applies at local, regional, national, and international levels” (ISO, 2021, para. 2). Here, stakeholders are effectively all parts of the tourism industry identified in the accessible tourism value chain. As such, this new framework provides a basis on which to improve tourism offerings for people with disability, particularly given there are no guiding frameworks for accessibility and inclusion for transport, the built environment, and information communication technology. Even so, all stakeholders need to work collaboratively to achieve accessible tourism, from top-down leadership from governments to a meeting in the middle with the grassroots-level actions of local innovators, entrepreneurs, operators, and advocates (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015).

MOVING FROM RHETORIC TO REALITY

Another example of moving from good intentions to positive action is seen in the UNWTO’s directives around ensuring natural areas can also provide accessible tourism experiences for people with disability, published as *Accessibility and Inclusive Tourism Development in Nature Areas – Compendium of Best Practices* (UNWTO, 2021). In framing what comprises best practice for accessible tourism in natural areas, the UNWTO sought to provide guidance to the tourism industry on operationalising accessible tourism experiences in destinations generally (UNWTO, 2021). The criteria, along with its respective components, comprised of “public-private collaboration, training related to accessibility, implementation of accessibility, sustainability of the project over time, possibility of replicating the project” (UNWTO, 2021, p. 13). In particular, the direction provided in the report’s concluding chapter drew on academic expertise to look beyond the good practices of the case studies presented, to provide a way to implement the criteria on which such case studies were based (Darcy & Buhalis, 2021). In other words, the UNWTO wanted to enable others to learn from, replicate, and scale this best practice in a business and entrepreneurial sense (Bellucci et al., 2023; Bianchi et al., 2020; Kalargyrou et al., 2020).

Beyond natural areas, the future tourist experiences of all, including people with disability, implicitly need to incorporate the UNSDG (UN, 2018). A comprehensive review of the UNSDG and tourism has been completed, with disability identified as an important part of future directions for tourism scholars, and as opportunities for policy makers to both respond to global challenges and meet their responsibilities to contribute to a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable global community (Buhalis et al., 2023). While the UNWTO recognises that tourism has the potential to contribute, either directly or indirectly, to all of the global goals, for the disability-related tourism market and people with disability, SDG1, SDG8, SDG12, and SDG14 have particular relevance. In fact, the UN has included specific targets for these goals relating to poverty alleviation (Buhalis et al., 2023), inclusive and sustainable growth (Manzoor et al., 2019; Peña-Sánchez et al., 2020), production and consumption (Patwary, 2023), and the sustainable use of natural and marine resources (Buhalis et al., 2023; Hall, 2021), respectively. Disability is central

to the global goals, and the UNWTO has provided a blueprint for implementation through its different manuals on accessible tourism (UNWTO, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). Since emerging from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UNWTO and World Travel and Tourism Council have also identified the need for engaging with people with disability to reorganise tourism, with accessibility and inclusion as central principles of the future 'new normal' (UNWTO, 2020; World Travel and Tourism Council, 2021). This next section draws on the work of the UNWTO (2021), and the concluding chapter authored by Darcy and Buhalis (2021).

FRAMEWORKS FOR POSITIVE ACTION

In this section, we overview three destination frameworks for positive action in improving the tourist experiences of people with disability. These frameworks provide direction in terms of operationalising accessible tourism products, services, and experiences at the destination level. The three frameworks covered include destination competitiveness and sustainability; implementation science through capability, opportunity, and motivation; and smart tourism ambient intelligence.

DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

Destination managers can learn a great deal about best practice from other successful enterprises to induce a change in behaviour towards the provision of accessible tourism infrastructure, as outlined in the destination competitiveness and sustainability framework. Destination management organisations (DMOs) need to have an authentic understanding of the underlying facilitators for accessible destination experiences so that they can strategically plan for improvements that will convert good intentions into a destination that is recognised as providing great experiences for people with disability. In drawing upon the UNWTO's compendium of best practices in natural areas, a way forward is offered to develop a systematic understanding of how destination managers can formulate and incorporate accessible tourism insights into their strategic planning (UNWTO, 2021).

Ritchie and Crouch's (2003) model of Destination Competitiveness and Sustainability is constructed from a system of interdependent factors and components that can be related to socio-ecological understandings of micro, macro, national, and global levels of development (for example Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Dickson & Darcy, 2021). This foundation is then understood through advantages derived from resource abundance and availability, as well as those gained from resource deployment. The framework has been applied to accessible tourism, accessible destination experiences, and accessible sports events, as a single case study, and in bilateral and quadrilateral comparisons (Darcy & Dickson, 2009; Dickson et al., 2017; Dominguez Vila et al., 2015; Michopoulou et al., 2015; Porto et al., 2019). At the destination level, there needs to be an underlying commitment to disability, accessibility, and inclusion through global human rights conventions, national disability discrimination laws, and positive social policy that encourages the provision of accessible tourism infrastructure and resources. The development of accessible tourism and destination experiences, and the marketing of

these, should be set within a strategic vision from the destination managers and based upon an organisational culture and relevant resources that engage from the top down and the bottom up, to provide quality customer service and tourist experiences. A destination that is accessible and inclusive adds value for all tourism stakeholders and supports the co-creation of memorable tourist experiences for people with disability by not segregating their experience from people without disability.

CAPABILITY, OPPORTUNITY, AND MOTIVATION

The model of Destination Competitiveness and Sustainability, however, does not go far enough in explaining how memorable accessible destination experiences can be developed and implemented for people with disability. As outlined in the UNWTO's compendium of best practices in natural areas (UNWTO, 2021), implementation science can be used to consciously understand the behaviours of those involved in developing accessible destination experiences. Implementation science requires those involved to have the 'capability, opportunity, and motivation' (Michie et al., 2011) to want to deliver accessible destination experiences in a manner that is inclusive for people with disability, and without providing separate segregated experiences, so as to facilitate their engagement with other tourists experiencing destination.

Implementation science emphasises the connectedness between having the capability, recognising the opportunity, and then adding the motivation or, in the case of accessible tourism, the political will to integrate experiences within mainstream tourist offerings so as to not segregate people with disability from people without disability. Of course, the policy implementation set within the model of destination competitiveness and sustainability may vary significantly between the social context of tourism and visitor economy development between nation states and regions within nations. These sources of behaviour have been identified by Michie et al. (2011) "as capability (physical and psychological), motivation (automatic and reflective), and opportunity (physical and social)" (as cited in Darcy & Buhalis, 2021 p. 65). The three wheels of behaviour change can be achieved through the numerous options for the goal of creating accessible destination experiences. Thus, each organisation, or consortium of organisations, together with DMOs, must take stock of the underlying state of the different components in the framework, and choose the appropriate, effective, and efficient combination for their accessible tourism product, service, or experience to be implemented.

SMART TOURISM AND AMBIENT INTELLIGENCE

Smart tourism offers people with disability, tourism businesses, and destinations the opportunity to enhance destination experiences through the integration of information communication technology (ICT). As such, any accessible destination experiences and developments need to be developed to understand the very different needs of people with different dimensions of disability (mobility, vision, hearing, cognitive, neurodiversity, or mental health needs). As with all forms of customer service, these need to be accessible from an ICT perspective so that the assistive technologies used by different groups can access general and tailored trip planning information. In other words, the offerings for these groups

of tourists need to provide personalised and contextualised solutions to support the inclusion of accessible tourism products, services, and destination experiences (Darcy & Buhalis, 2021). The Ambient Intelligence (Aml) Tourism framework “takes advantage of disruptive technologies to create smart infrastructure and a smart digital grid that support the seamless interoperability of all tourism stakeholders and enable fluidity between physical and digital interactions” (Darcy & Buhalis, 2021, p. 65). The framework offers intelligence to both DMOs and broader tourism ecosystems by way of delivering current information and appropriate personalised recommendations, adjusting dynamically in real-time and context (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019).

Aml supports value co-creation, with high technology driving tactile approaches while encouraging people with disability to not only consume tourism but coproduce feedback on accessible tourism experiences through social media, which is then integrated with the continuous cycle of improvement underpinning the smartness of destination experiences and, hence, the entire system. This is particularly relevant in enabling people with disability to assume the role of tourist as their needs are addressed with accessible tourism solutions that are enhanced through architectural interventions and supported by ICT richness. The smartness of destination environments can be continually improved as people with disability coproduce information through social media feedback where destinations, tourism businesses, and DMOs alike, are more aware of the disability-related tourism market and heighten their competitive advantage through the inclusion of more accessible destination experiences (Darcy & Buhalis, 2021).

We challenge those charged with tourism development and destination management to move beyond undertaking obligations for minimal compliance to committing to people with disability as a market group with different dimensions of disability, levels of support needs, and varied constraints and barriers. When the constraints and barriers facing people with different disability are identified, DMOs can then work with businesses to create transformative solutions.

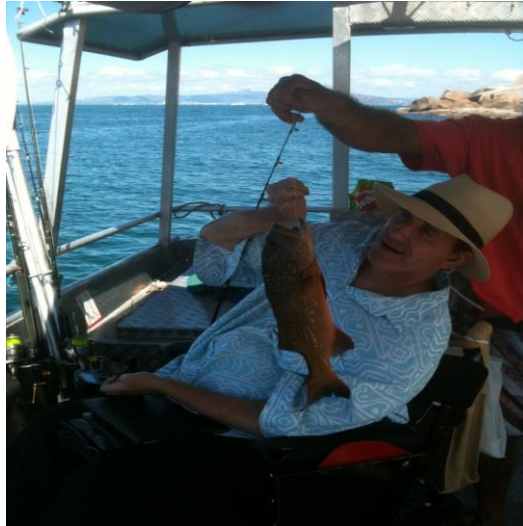
UNDERSTANDING THE TRAVEL CHAIN TO DELIVER ACCESSIBLE TOURIST EXPERIENCES

A key concept with which to develop a vision for the tourism industry is the travel chain. The travel chain “refers to all elements that make up a journey, from starting point to destination. ... If any link is inaccessible, the entire trip becomes difficult” (WHO & World Bank, 2011, p. 179). This seemingly simple concept is embedded with most nation states’ building and constructions codes, disability discrimination legislation, and political will to promote accessible environments and liveable communities. For people with disability to enjoy accessible destination experiences, a whole series of links need to come together and remain unbroken. An effective way to explain the travel chain, in relation to an individual with disability assuming the role of tourist, is with an example. We do so below with a case study of one of the authors, Simon, an individual with mobility disability and a very high level of support needs, who is travelling for both leisure and business.

CASE STUDY: TRAVEL CHAIN AND DESIRED ACCESSIBLE TOURISM DESTINATION EXPERIENCE

In this case study, one of the authors, Simon, pictured below in Figure 1, wanted to experience reef fishing.

Figure 1. Simon reef fishing



(Fiona Darcy, 2012. Copyright 2012 by Fiona Darcy. Reprinted with permission.)

Photo: [Alt Text embedded – A man in a power wheelchair, wearing a blue Hawaiian shirt and straw fishing hat, holding a fishing rod with a freshly caught coral trout. Very happy expression on his face.]

In Table 4, below, the inherent complexity involved in ensuring a high-quality accessible destination experience becomes evident. The experience is reliant upon 23 individual travel chain linkages. If any one of those links were broken, then Simon may not have had his desired destination experience.

Table 1. Links in the travel chain for reef fishing on an accessible boat

Link in travel chain	Description
1.	Information search using websites.
2.	Bookings made via phone calls and on websites.
3.	Leaves suburban Sydney, Australia.
4.	Wheelchair accessible taxi from home to airport.
5.	Navigates Kingsford Smith Airport, Sydney.
6.	Boards the Virgin Australia airplane via Eagle Lifter 2 – physical transfer from power wheelchair to aisle seat to designated seat.
7.	Egresses from the airplane at Townsville, Australia – physical transfer from designated seat to aisle seat to power wheelchair.
8.	Wheelchair accessible taxi from airport to Townsville.
9.	Accessible room booked at the Grand Hotel, Townsville, and hire of patient lifter from a local medical supply business.
10.	Use of power wheelchair to enjoy accessible streetscape.
11.	Purchase of ticket for accessible vessel at the SeaLink ferry terminal.
12.	Use of powerchair on the accessible wharf and gangplank.
13.	Takes SeaLink catamaran ferry to Magnetic Island, Townsville.
14.	Use of power wheelchair on the accessible wharf and ramp system.
15.	Accesses floating pontoon at Peppers Resort, Magnetic Island, Townsville.
16.	Wheelchair accessible roll-on fishing boat via Cliff's Fishing Tours, Magnetic Island.
17.	<i>The fishing experience, including local history and touring, while circumnavigating Magnetic Island.</i>
18.	Accesses floating pontoon at Peppers Resort, Magnetic Island.
19.	Use of power wheelchair on the accessible wharf and ramp system.
20.	Takes SeaLink catamaran ferry from Magnetic Island.
21.	Use of powerchair on the accessible wharf and gangplank.
22.	Navigates the SeaLink ferry terminal.
23.	Wheelchair accessible taxi from SeaLink ferry terminal to the Grand Hotel, Townsville.

Interestingly, in planning his trip, Simon was unable to find any information about a tourism operator or charter with an accessible boat. It was not until Simon was at the destination, talking to local residents and the disability community, that he found out about the available experience, contacted the tourism operator, and organised his trip. This observation about information search and planning leads us onto the next concept, the tourism value chain.

UNDERSTANDING THE TOURISM VALUE CHAIN TO DELIVER ACCESSIBLE DESTINATION EXPERIENCES

Connected to the travel chain is the tourism value chain, which incentivises the private sector's tourism operators to develop tourism experiences that people are willing to pay for; in this case, people with disability and accessible destination experiences (Lyu, 2017). The tourism value chain refers to the sequence of primary and secondary support activities that are fundamental to and of strategic importance for the performance of the tourism industry (UNWTO, n.d.). The concept has been used as a basis for understanding the specific and associated requirements of an accessible tourism value chain. The UNWTO, in conjunction with the European Network for Accessible Tourism and the ONCE Foundation² have determined the elements of the accessible tourism value chain in order of consumption to include planning, information and booking; inbound and outbound transport; accommodation providers; hospitality establishments; urban and inter-urban transport; tourism environments; tourism resources; and tourism public administration (UNWTO, 2016a).

Accommodation, for instance, is an important element of the value chain for people with disability. For people with mobility disability, accommodation was the element that they were most willing to pay for (Lyu, 2017). This is not surprising given that wheelchair users are often unable to commit to a trip unless they are able to find appropriate accessible accommodation, with a series of features that are idiosyncratic to particular individuals with mobility disability. In Darcy's (2010) study, a spectrum of disability types was explored, including manual wheelchair users, power wheelchair users, people with vision disability or who were blind, and people with hearing disability or who were deaf. It was found that, for 55 elements of an accessible hotel room's features, each group had very specific information requirements that needed to be addressed before they could make an informed decision to book the room or continue their accommodation search and move on to the next stage of the accessible tourism value chain (Darcy, 2010).

CONCLUSION

Tourism scholars previously posed a scenario for a tourism future where people with disability expressed their desires – 'the world we dream to live in and the opportunities we hope to have' – in assuming the role of tourist (Michopoulou et al., 2015). We have yet to deliver on this dream. That said, we have seen advancements in human rights, technology, accessible tourism entrepreneurship, and raising awareness about the tourist experiences of people with disability. In this chapter, we have outlined several frameworks that continue to guide destinations to become more accessible and inclusive for people with disability. As governments, the tourism industry, entrepreneurs,

² Once Foundation, or Fundación ONCE (Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles), is an organisation of people with disability in Spain.

and other stakeholders increasingly seek to accommodate the needs of people with disability across the whole accessible tourism value chain, the dream will hopefully become a reality.