

Participation of Disabled Tourists in Malaysian Tourism

National Parks in Johor State

Shalini Sanmargaraja¹, Seow Ta Wee²

Dept. of Construction Management^{1,2}
Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM)
Batu Pahat, Malaysia
angelanamika86@gmail.com¹
tawee@uthm.edu.my²

Abstract—The increment in the disabled tourists in the tourism sector has resulted in the existence of demand for the provision of special facilities for the disabled in the forest recreation park so that they can also have the easy access to the facilities without needing help from the third party. However, the facilities provided in the parks currently not disabled-friendly. Most of the built environment is not suitable for use by people with disabilities without assistance from others. Many obstacles have to be faced by the disabled in order gaining experience visiting national parks. This paper aims to identify the obstacles due to environmental and facilities aspects and to identify all the facilities available for the disabled tourists currently in all the National Park in Johor State, Malaysia. Audit and observation were conducted to investigate the real situation, it is found there is limitation of facilities provided for the special group in all the National Parks in Johor State. Less provision also cause a special facility cannot be provided at recreational park such as national parks. Imperfect facilities could restrain the travelling interest of the disabled people.

Keywords—disabled; Malaysia; national parks; obstacles; participation

I. Introduction

The increment in the disabled tourists in the tourism sector has resulted in the existence of demand for the provision of special facilities for the disabled in the forest recreation park so that they can also have the easy access to the facilities without needing help from the third party. However, the facilities provided in the parks currently not disabled-friendly. Most of the built environment is not suitable for use by people with disabilities without assistance from others. Many obstacles have to be faced by the disabled in order gaining experience visiting national parks.

Tourism is considered to be one of the biggest industries in the world in the 21st century. In order to gain stable profit from this industry, sustainable tourism development throughout the world should be ensured. Tourism is an economic phenomenon concerning the movement of people to places outside their usual environment for either personal or business

or professional purposes. As such, tourism has implications for the economy for the natural and built environment, for the local population at the destination and for the visitor themselves. Due to these multiple impacts, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) encourages an alternative tourism in the formulation and implementation of national and local tourism policies [1].

Tourism is a rapidly growing industry in the Asian and Pacific region and people with disabilities and older persons are becoming a growing group of consumers of travel, sports, and other leisure-oriented products and services. People with disability have a right to and do want to enjoy travel leisure experiences. Furthermore, with regard to physical access, families with young children who are also becoming part of this increasing tourist market have similar needs to persons with disabilities and older persons. However, their travel experiences are still characterized by transportation constraints, inaccessible accommodation and tourism sites and inadequate customer services. Thus large numbers of people require tourism to be made barrier-free. Although the number of tourists who would benefit from accessible facilities and services is on the increase, most tourism services providers in the United Nation Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) region have still not yet recognized the importance of taking action on this issue. Most hotels, transportation facilities and tourist sites are not physically accessible for many people with disabilities and older persons. Their staff members have not been trained to provide disabled person-friendly services. This is associated with an absence of explicit government policies and strategies for promotion of accessible tourism, lack of training for tourism service personnel on means of meeting the access needs of tourists with disabilities and shortage of tourism programs that address such needs [3,4].

Former United Nations Secretary General Perez de Cuellar described the situation of disabled people around the world as "the silent emergency". Accurate figures on a world-wide scale are difficult to collect. Many countries have not carried out research and definitions of disability and impairment vary.

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In many respects, the figures given are a poverty or development index. Lower socioeconomic status and higher poverty levels are directly associated with higher numbers of disabled people. According to United Nations estimates, there are 500 million disabled people worldwide [5]. Disabled people consist of 0.13% of Malaysian population. There are a total of 359, 203 people who are disabled in Malaysia. Disability is divided into several categories such as visually impaired, hearing, physical, learning disability, speech, mental and others [6].

There are two objectives in this paper. Firstly, this paper aim to identify the obstacles due to environmental and facilities aspects. This objective is tested by using the literature review method. Many research papers are studied carefully seek information regarding this issue. Secondly, this paper aims to identify all the facilities available for the disabled tourists currently in all the National Park in Johor State, Malaysia. This objective is tested by using observation and auditing method to evaluate the available facilities in the national parks.

II. Scope and Methodology

The first objective of this paper is testing by conducting literature review method. Many research papers are studied carefully seek information regarding this issue. The second objective of this paper is testing by conducting observation and auditing method. Observation of this research is performed by using a list which this results will be compared with the standard and guidelines to check whether the facilities is same as recommended in Malaysian standards such as Tourism Services-Hotel and Other Types of Tourism Accommodation (MS1926:2006) and Code of Practice on Access for Disabled Persons to Public Buildings (MS1184:2002). The focus of this paper is on the facilities inside and outside of the national park and the data are compared between the study locations. From Table I and Table II, it is found that all of the Johor National Park does not have facilities such as pedestrian crossings, locker room or breastfeeding, grocery store or corner shop, the bus stand and pay phone booths.

III. Findings

Findings of this paper can be divided into two parts. First part of findings will be discussing about the first is to identify the obstacles due to environmental and facilities aspects. Second part of findings will be discussing on second objective which is to identify all the facilities available for the disabled tourists currently in all the National Park in Johor State, Malaysia.

A. Obstacles Faced by the Disabled Tourists

There were also attempts to establish the potential development opportunities that could emanate from facilitation and empowerment of the disabled sections. Besides the production and distribution of disability-specific goods and services; provisions for recreation and tourism needs of these groups have also been often highlighted as avenues with great potential. Notwithstanding these, existing

materials would suggest that noticeable improvements in the overall conditions of the disability-affected persons are still to emerge. However, there exist many but surmountable barriers of different forms and nature that these groups are subject to negotiate with often inhibiting their participation in meaningful ways. The barriers can be observed at every stage of travel process and are hardly understood especially in the developing societies. The outcome is expected to provide better insight on the problems of disabled tourists and to elicit some useful mechanisms to address the barriers in focused manner [7].

Leisure obstacles can be categorized into three main categories, namely intrapersonal constraints, interpersonal constraints and structural constraints. Intrapersonal constraints includes lack of self-confidence, lack of encouragement or lack of information about opportunities for leisure that effect preference or lead to a lack of interest in a particular type of leisure activity. Interpersonal factors are those associated with other individuals including lack of leisure partners or lack of social interaction skills. Structural barriers are those that exist between individual preferences and participation in a leisure activity, including lack of finances, lack of transportation, limited abilities and lack of time or architectural barriers.

Information about the site, traffic and restaurant is very important for the disability in Barrier-free Tourism, which could make their travelling easier. But the fact is the travel destination information is deficient. First, the maps, travel magazines or manuals for the disabled are few in recreation park. Secondly, false or incorrect information on the web would mislead the disabled and reject their second time travelling. For example, exaggerating the effect of the destination and lacking of booking information would mislead them when they try to find the fitful places to go [8].

Later on, there were attempts to examine social and behavioural dimension to understanding travel barriers. Accordingly, intrapersonal constraints have been linked to a person's psychological state, physical functioning or cognitive abilities. It covers themes such as stress, anxiety, lack of knowledge, health related problems and social effectiveness. These are also taken as antecedent constraints in that some intrapersonal factors such as personality and socialization may predispose individuals to participate in or avoid certain leisure activities [7].

Families do in general not have the possibility to travel off-season (in particularly families with school-aged children and with disabled child. Families which are facing difficult social circumstances prefer to travel to domestic destinations. Families who has disabled in their family does not encouraged disabled to travel due their physical limitations [9]. Tourist arrivals in Bhutan, for example are subject to pronounced seasonality. March/April and October/November are the top months are the weather is deal for trekking and religious and cultural festivals are taking place all over the

country. January/February and June/July are the months with the lowest activity as the weather is too cold or rainy for trekking and there are hardly any significant cultural events taking place. The seasonal nature of tourism leads to a highly inequitable distribution of visitors throughout the year adding pressure on the limited infrastructure during the peak seasons. As a result there is a severe resort to makeshift arrangements that may not meet the desired quality of service [10].

For people with physical disabilities, planning a vacation can be somewhat more complicated. Depending on the type of disability, the would-be travellers need to ensure that during the envisaged vacation due attention will be made to their special needs such as special lifts for coaches and adapted hotel rooms. Such arrangements cannot be made without the assistance of travel agencies that cater to those special needs. Tailoring packages to people with various disabilities requires labour-intensive work, making therefore a low-margin business. Yet specialized agents, especially in Europe, are joining forces through transnational association to exchange information, set up data banks, launch joint marketing campaigns and lobby for better services. At the same time, specialized European travel agents and non-profit organizations have been cooperating by pooling what they have learned about the availability of special facilities in various countries [4].

The disabled need professional service to satisfy their special needs. On one hand, the cicerone or waiter should have the ability to offer special service such as expertly operating the wheelchair, offering gesture language explanation. The college that has the major of tourism always ignores teaching students the special service for the disability [11]. The Department of Tourism lacks both manpower and finance to manage and monitor the tourism industry effectively. There is a lack of qualified manpower, particularly at the management and entrepreneurial levels. There are no formal hotel and tourism training institutes in the country. Most companies have problems in attracting and keeping adequately trained employees at all levels [10].

Limited variety and time of disabled travelling misleads the agency thinking that the profit cake of this field is small, which opposite their financial garget. Therefore, they have little incentive to explore this field. The present travel products are obviously unreasonable for the disabled. Many tourism companies have no disabled travel product. They often choose the public product or only modify little of the travel line, which could not satisfy the travel demand [8].

While building regulations now demand that new buildings be accessible, these new facilities are usually in the upper class and charge prices outside the budgets of most disable travellers. A further economic barrier to travel lies in the need for many disabled to be accompanied by an attendant, a parent, spouse, friend or employee [12]. They have experienced room rates that are more expensive than the

standard room rates, often because the accessible room is classed as a "suite". This is considered to be discriminatory. Many people with disabilities are on relatively low incomes, which can make cost a barrier to travel [13].

Unperfected foundation establishment is the most serious problem in Barrier-free Tourism. Barrier-free establishment refers to the service establishment such as the road, public building, flat etc which are set to serve the disabled, patient, child and other social members' traffic security and convenience. Today, the Barrier-free establishment in China is not perfect enough [3].

An issue among some travellers with disabilities is the damage to and loss of wheelchair on airplanes. While some travellers have encountered the misfortune of lost or delayed luggage, being without one's wheelchair is much more distressing. Several travellers complained of wheelchairs being improperly reassembled or missing parts or batteries upon arrival. Other issues for travellers with disabilities include the difficulty of transferring flights and the inaccessibility of airplane restrooms. People with hearing or visual impairments note that airline staff occasionally treats them differently than they would people with physical mobility disabilities [3].

Reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities constitute still another set of challenges. For example, very few hotels offer accessible disabled person-friendly rooms with wider entrances; low-level switches, hand dryers, towels racks and beds; chair lifts and room information written in simple and concise language for people with cognitive disabilities. Access throughout hotels is also problematic. Few hotels have lifts to all floors on slow timers, access to reception, pool and bar areas, clear signage, visual alarms and clear access through the entire building. [4].

B. Auditing Facilities in the National Parks in Johor State

The study has been conducted at the recreation park in Johor, especially in Pulau Kukup, Tanjung Piai, Gunung Ledang and Endau-Rompin. The design consisted of auditing, and observations.

In Endau Rompin, all the facilities are fully accessible facility. Accessible special or pedestrian paths and sidewalks, entranceway with proper signboard, accessible two unisex toilets, newly build chalets, adequate statements signs, directions signs, warning signs, special sign board, written signs, comfortable fixed or built-in bench or seat and partial accessible drain or ditch available. Newly renovated roads make the journey throughout the national park is comfortable. There are also a number of facilities provided are not very barrier-free such as ramp, handrail, grab-bar, staircase and car parking. There are also a number of facilities that were not available such as pedestrian crossings, special car parking, changing or breastfeeding room, grocery store or corner shop, bus stop, warning signs and paid phone booths.

TABLE I. FACILITIES IN ENDAU-ROMPIN AND PULAU KUKUP

Element	Endau-Rompin		Pulau Kukup	
	Audit	Provision	Audit	Provision
1. Accessibility				
a) Ramp	√	**	√	*
b) Handrail	√	***	√	***
c) Grab-bar	√	***		*
d) Special or pedestrian paths and sidewalks	√	***		***
e) Building entrance	√	***	√	***
f) Staircase	√	***	√	***
g) Pedestrian crossings		*		*
2. Spatial				
a) Special car parking		*		*
b) Toilet	√		√	
c) Changing or breastfeeding room		*		*
d) Provision of residential units or chalets	√	***		*
e) Grocery store or Corner Shop		*		*
f) Bus stop		*		*
3. Supporting Facilities				
a) Statement signs	√	***	√	***
b) Direction signs	√	***	√	***
c) Warning signs	√	***	√	***
d) Special sign board		*		*
e) Written signs	√	***	√	***
f) Fixed or built-in bench or seat	√	***	√	***
g) Paid phone booths		*		*
h) Drain or ditch	√	***		*

Criteria for accessibility rating:

- ***** Facility is fully accessible. Features and facilities meet and exceed the Universal Design principles.
- **** Majority of the facility is accessible; however there are some accessibility barriers. Some improvements are needed to make the facility fully accessible.
- *** Facility is partially accessible. Barriers exist to fully accessing the facility and an alternate facility may be necessary.
- ** Facility is partially accessible. Barriers exist to fully accessing the facility and an alternate facility may be necessary.
- * Facility has poor accessibility. Alternative facility is recommended if barrier free access is required.

In Pulau Kukup, all the facilities are fully accessible entranceway with proper signboard, staircase with handrail and adequate statement signs. There are also a number of facilities provided are not very barrier-free such as handrail, special or pedestrian paths and sidewalks, grocery store or corner shop, car parking direction signs, warning signs and written signs. Some of the facilities is not provided at all such as grab-bar, pedestrian crossings, special car parking, changing or breastfeeding room, grocery store or corner shop, bus stop, special sign board, fixed or built-in bench or seat, paid phone booths and drain or ditch. Clear data is shown in Table I.

TABLE II. FACILITIES IN TANJUNG PIAI AND GUNUNG LEDANG

Element	Tanjung Piai		Gunung Ledang	
	Audit	Provision	Audit	Provision
1. Accessibility				
a) Ramp	√	***	√	**
b) Handrail	√	***		*
c) Grab-bar		*		*
d) Special or pedestrian paths and sidewalks	√	***	√	**
e) Building entrance	√	***	√	***
f) Staircase	√	*	√	*
g) Pedestrian crossings		*		*
2. Spatial				
a) Special car parking		*		*
b) Toilet	√		√	
c) Changing or breastfeeding room		*		*
d) Provision of residential units or chalets		*	√	***
e) Grocery store or Corner Shop		*		*
f) Bus stop		*		*
3. Supporting Facilities				
a) Statement signs	√	***	√	***
b) Direction signs	√	***	√	***
c) Warning signs	√	***	√	***
d) Special sign board	√	***		*
e) Written signs	√	***	√	***
f) Fixed or built-in bench or seat	√	***	√	***
g) Paid phone booths		*		*
h) Drain or ditch		*	√	***

Criteria for accessibility rating:

- ***** Facility is fully accessible. Features and facilities meet and exceed the Universal Design principles.
- **** Majority of the facility is accessible; however there are some accessibility barriers. Some improvements are needed to make the facility fully accessible.
- *** Facility is partially accessible. Barriers exist to fully accessing the facility and an alternate facility may be necessary.
- ** Facility is partially accessible. Barriers exist to fully accessing the facility and an alternate facility may be necessary.
- * Facility has poor accessibility. Alternative facility is recommended if barrier free access is required.

In Tanjung Piai, all the facilities are fully accessible entranceway with proper signboard and adequate statement signs. There are also a number of facilities provided are not very barrier-free such as ramp, handrail, special or pedestrian paths and sidewalks, staircase, toilet, direction signs, warning signs, special sign board, car parking, written signs and fixed or built-in bench or seat. A list of facilities is not provided such as grab-bar, pedestrian crossings, special parking, provisions of residential units or chalets, grocery store or corner shop, bus stop, paid phone booths and drain or ditch. Clear data is shown in Table II.

In Gunung Ledang, all the facilities are fully accessible residential units or chalets, adequate statement signs, direction signs, warning signs and written signs. There are also a number of facilities provided are not very barrier-free such as ramp, car parking, fixed or built-in bench or seat and drain or ditch. There are also a number of facilities that were not available such as handrail, grab-bar, pedestrian crossings, special car parking, changing or breastfeeding room, grocery store or corner shop, bus stop and paid phone booths. Non-accessible activities are also provided for the tourist. Clear data is shown in Table II.

iv. Recommendations on Disabled Facilities

By creating an environment that meets the needs of wheelchair users for example, can reduce the problems which occur during the movement of the wheelchair users. This is because the normal travelers can drag their luggage on the ramp access is provided bigger lifts not only provide comfort to travelers with disabilities but also to staff. Government should also increase tourist area design standards. Currently, policies and existing standards are not sufficient to standardize all rounder facilities in the park. Provision of special facilities for people with disabilities is one of the social responsibilities of all of us. To take full advantage of the tourism potential without barriers is a matter important to improve services to people with disabilities. Training and special education on facilities management is one of the key challenges facing the tourism industry in relation to meet the needs of disabled people. Staffs need to be sensitive and willing to use their interpersonal skills to overcome many obstacles involving inability travelers.

v. Conclusion

From audit and observations it is found that all of the Johor National Park does not have adequate facilities for the disabled. Due to lack of facilities, most people with disabilities are not really interested in visiting national parks in Johor. Johor National Parks Corporation also not keen about making publicity in print and mass media causes people to not know much about a place of recreation provided by this corporation. Less support from the government also cause disabled tourists not able to pay a visit to these parks due to financial constraints. Pulau Kukup and Tanjung Piai don't provide accommodation for the tourists, this is another reason why disabled tourist loss interest to visit these places. Accessible information system should be provided to create awareness in society regarding disabled tourists and their requirements in the tourism sector.. Assumption of things will change overnight is highly unrealistic due to the limitations of cost and short time. In the long run, provide more in-depth approach to promoting the restructuring and overhaul of the tourism sector.

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