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### Viewpoints on inclusion in tourism - From accessible tourism to accessible hospitality

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#### Abstract

In this review article, inclusion in tourism is referred to in terms of accessible tourism, tourism for all and finally accessible hospitality. According to previous research, accessibility has many different dimensions: economic, cultural, social and communicational, for instance. New market segments will emerge, which makes it important to further examine the terms, concepts and implications of accessible tourism. Hospitality and accessibility have until now been seen as different discussions, but in this review article they are closely linked to each other. Hospitality refers not only to the industry we operate in, but an attitude towards others, may they be our friends, relatives, acquaintances or strangers. A particular attitude called *accessible hospitality*, would serve as a basis where all other aspects of accessibility are integrated. This article approaches accessible hospitality by discussing the different viewpoints on inclusion and present insights to possible customer groups that would benefit from more considerate service. The groups that are presented in the article are, senior travellers, ethnic groups and LGBTIQ tourists (Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Transgender, Intersex, and Questioning)/rainbow tourists. The article contributes to discussions concerning social responsibility in tourism, and accessible tourism, in particular, by offering a new viewpoint of accessibility and hospitality as an inseparable whole.

**Keywords:** *hospitality, accessibility, attitude, tourism for all*

## Introduction

Travelling has been referred to as something of a “basic need” (Moutinho, Ballantyne, & Rate, 2011, p. 8). By some, travelling is considered a human right (UNWTO, 2015). Lovelock and Lovelock (2013, p. 171) underline the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which states that everyone is entitled to the same rights of leisure, rest and freedom, without distinction of any kind. Caruana and Crane (2011, p. 1495) have studied the concept of freedom and its construction in the context of tourism. They state that in tourism lies a promise of “getting away from it all”, away from everyday life. The same right to be free applies to everyone and tourism can be seen as a means of achieving a sense of freedom.

Having said that, it should be noted that the world in which we live is changing rapidly. The international dimension of the tourism industry makes it impossible for its actors to detach themselves from the turbulent global environment (Moutinho et al., 2011, p. 8). As the flow of information keeps changing and travelling keeps speeding up, our world is getting smaller. However, not everyone is able to experience this new sense of liberation despite the various positive impacts tourism has on well-being (see for example Chen & Petrick, 2013, pp. 713–715; English Tourism Council, 2000, p. 5, as cited in Minnaert, Maitland, & Miller, 2006, p. 16) as tourism activities are difficult or even impossible for many due to different barriers, difficulties and problems.

This development leads the authors to discuss accessible tourism and its significance for the future. The discourse is universally relevant for three distinct reasons. First of all, it is a question of human rights. Secondly, respect for cultural and individual diversity and the rise of softer values are gaining ground. One example is research conducted by Visit Finland in 2012. The research introduced a target group called modern humanists. The target group is described as appreciating responsibility, humanity and culture (see Hietasaari, 2012). Consequently, tourism as a frontline industry of globalization and, thus, both a vehicle and a target of cultural exchange, is a central part of this development. Third, accessible tourism is said to be a profitable business (ENAT, 2015). Taking accessible tourism into account in developing tourism destinations, businesses and products can provide a competitive advantage in the global tourism market.

According to Harju-Myllyaho and Kyrrä (2013, pp. 8–9), anticipating future development and understanding the drivers of change, for example megatrends, provides a basis for understanding future tourist behavior and the demand for accessible tourism. Based on their holistic and future-oriented approach to accessibility in tourism, Harju-Myllyaho and Kyrrä (2013, p. 16) suggest the concept of *accessible hospitality*, a welcoming attitude towards others and willingness to serve all kinds of customers. Hospitality as a term has gained some academic attention, but according to Nousiainen (2014, p. 14), information on the issue is somewhat sporadic due to diverging interests and a variety of discourses. Höckert (2015, pp. 94–98) has described hospitality, for instance, as a relationship between self and the other. Germann Molz and Gibson (2007) have collated viewpoints on hospitality, stating – quite accurately – that “hospitality is a profoundly evocative concept that reverberates with cultural, political and ethical undertones” (Germann Molz & Gibson, 2007, p. 1). The authors also beautifully describe hospitality as a concept that binds together images and senses which are familiar from ancient mythology, cultural traditions and national narratives. The complex nature of hospitality is revealed through places, moments, objects and fantasies and the range can

vary from very material things, such as a warm handshake, to moral tales and iconic symbols of open doors. The authors also encourage us to seek answers to the question concerning who gets to be the guest and under what conditions (Germann Molz & Gibson, 2007, p. 8).

Bell (2007, p. 32) writes that concerning the mega-events that are common in today's societies, hospitableness is not only realised through appropriate infrastructure and facilities but also through the welcome that the location offers. In this sense people are the key factor. There are, according to Bell, countless moments of hospitality that are an important guarantor of guesting experience. Bell (2007, p. 35) cites Laurier and Philo (2006) as he notes micropractices, through which the customers and workers enact hosting in commercial spaces. As Bell (2007, pp. 32–35) argues, this is seen for example in their reactions towards each other and their willingness to share space or assist one another. The performance of hosting and for example interaction between staff and locals or with local customers serve to include or exclude. This way, moments of hospitality are enacted in commercial hospitality spaces. In addition, they are also enacted in various other places of encounter.

Cuthill (2007, p. 98) combines the idea of inclusion and hospitality by writing: "In eating and drinking venues, service cultures express messages of inclusion and exclusion and mark out venues as hospitality spaces for particular types of people. Hospitalities are sensed as welcoming to those who fit in, and sensed as unwelcoming by those who choose not to enter. In assessing service cultures, customers sense the hospitableness of the place."

Similarly, hospitality in the context of this article refers to an attitude and general behavior towards others rather than to an industry. It has become clear that while the concept of hospitality might contain the idea of tolerance and inclusion, it is still lacking the view of accessibility as a broader concept. Thus, there is a need to study the concept further.

This article provides fresh insights to the discussions concerning social responsibility in tourism. Addressing the different viewpoints of accessibility gives awareness of possible customer groups that would benefit from more considerate service. The article addresses three individual customer segments, which are brought up as examples (LGBTIQ/rainbow tourists, senior travellers and ethnic minorities). These segments help understanding the diversity of accessibility issues. The article stresses the heterogeneity inside the different customer groups. It is recommended, while reading, to think about accessibility-related intergroup and intragroup similarities and differences. There might, for instance, be some overlapping categories and other interesting viewpoints to be discovered.

### **Increasing need for accessible hospitality**

In this article, inclusion in tourism is referred to in terms of accessible tourism, tourism for all and finally, accessible hospitality. Accessibility is often restricted to physical and communicational aspects. However, according to research (for example Darcy & Buhalis, 2011, p. 27; Jutila, 2013, pp. 4–5; Oliver, 1996, p. 32), accessibility has a number of other dimensions relating to social, cultural, economic and political aspects. According to previous research (see for example Darcy & Buhalis, 2011, p. 27; Jutila, 2013, pp. 4–5; Oliver, 1996, p. 32) social accessibility refers to equality, openness, participation and attitudes. A positive attitude and the desire to serve each and every tourist can sig-

nificantly remove physical barriers. The basis of social accessibility can be found in the social model of disability, which means that the barriers are part of the society, not the individual. Cultural accessibility relates to awareness and reverence of the habits of different cultures and religions. Also, welcoming attitude towards minorities and ethnic groups makes tourism culturally accessible. Economically accessible tourism (such as affordable transportation and accommodation) is also available for people with a lower income, affordable for tourists travelling alone and does not charge extra for applied solutions. Political structures and regulations, such as mandatory permits and travel documents, can create insuperable barriers to travelling (Edelheim, 2013, p. 93).

Thus, when talking about accessible tourism, physical barriers are an important issue, but not the only one and the need to address the different dimensions will increase in the future. For example, Harju-Myllyaho and Kyyrä (2013, pp. 8–9) have listed the following five megatrends that have an impact on accessible tourism in the future: demographic changes and ageing, division of economic prosperity, technological development, scarcity of natural resources and changing value systems. Liberal Western values and individual happiness are becoming important in some regions, while others are inclined to preserve their own traditional and more conservative values. There are countries where for example gender equality and freedom to express one's sexuality are not seen acceptable. Conventional approach to accessible tourism is transforming into something usually referred to as tourism for all (see for example Eichhorn, 2014, pp. 32–34). Eventually the concept should expand to also cover accessible hospitality that relates to encounters and attitudes.

Tourism for all takes a holistic positive attitude towards what is conventionally known as "special needs" (English Tourist Board, 1989, p. 13, as cited in Minnaert et al., 2006, p. 15). The role of attitudes, primarily the tourism companies and personnel, is essential. As Bizjak, Knezevic, and Cvetcznik (2011, p. 844) argue, the hotel industry has to follow legislation and regulations pertaining to accessible hotel rooms, but if there is a front desk manager with a lack of knowledge about disabilities, or a lack of a welcoming attitude, the benefits of accessible rooms are lost. According to Dávid and Kiss (2011, p. 116), a positive attitude makes it possible to increase equality in tourism and to engage in conscious planning for the benefit of all tourists. This issue is of central importance when addressing accessible hospitality.

## **Invisible markets in tourism**

In this chapter, three individual customer segments are discussed in terms of accessible hospitality. The presented segments include people who would especially benefit from the tourism companies' and industry's willingness to serve all kinds of customers, today and in the future. These categories are demonstrative when examining accessible hospitality, but it should be noted that people benefiting from accessibility can be found in all customer segments. Besides distinctive factors between different segments, the authors also stress similarities and overlaps, as well as heterogeneity within the segments.

### **Senior tourist – the silver market**

The senior market is presently one of the largest market groups, and its significance is expected to grow in the future in terms of accessible hospitality. This is due especially

to the expected growth of the population that forms the ageing market (for example Nielsen, 2013, p. 111). In addition to the growing number of senior citizens, the market is important because the senior population has both free time and resources for tourism activities. The segment is known by figurative names such as “the silver market”, “silver surfers” and “the golden mafia” (for example Kohlbacher & Herstatt, 2011).

Against common belief, seniors are not a heterogenic segment (Harju-Myllyaho & Kyyrä, 2013, p. 15). According to Karisto (2005, pp. 46–49) the baby boomers, who were born in the years following the Second World War are often a misunderstood cohort, as there is a difficulty in separating the impacts of age, time period and cohort. On one hand, focusing on age only can lead to misconceptions and phenomena seen in places where they do not exist and on the other hand, if the interest is merely on generations, it might be forgotten that features of different generations are a result of age, history and temporary conditions (Karisto, 2005, pp. 46–47). There is a matter called “the third age”, though, which according to Karisto is the age between working life and becoming a senior. Although there might not be massive changes in behaviour patterns of older people, there might just be some smaller things, which have an impact when the generation is relatively large in number (Karisto, 2005, pp. 52–53). It can be argued that the senior segment will want to preserve their earlier consumer habits after retirement (Chen & Shoemaker, 2014, pp. 60–61). Presented like this, people’s personal characteristics and consumer patterns are not likely to change very much over time. Rehn (2014) stated that seniors are not taken seriously enough as consumers and that they are, in fact, an affluent consumer segment.

It is safe to assume that the economic prosperity of senior citizens – or any other demographic group – will not be divided equally in the future. For instance, Yeoman (2011, pp. 4–5) argues that in some Western countries the generations achieving senior status after the baby boomers are less likely to be economically well off than their predecessors. Hall (2011, pp. 35–36) states that many people do not take holidays due to economic reasons. He mentions retirees as one example of customer segments including people economically excluded from tourism. When working with the senior tourist segment, it is also necessary to consider that some individuals may have lost a spouse and are therefore travelling alone, which tends to increase travel costs (Harju-Myllyaho & Kyyrä, 2013).

The senior population is physically more able-bodied than before, but it is a fact that due to ageing, the population with mobility and mental impairments is growing. It is important to take into account that this does not concern the entire senior population, but here the senior segment is overlapping with the segment of people with disabilities. However, according to Sund and Boksberger (2007, p. 25), regardless of their physical state, seniors tend to prefer not to carry heavy luggage and appreciate convenience. Thus, reduced physical barriers can be seen as a motivating factor for this segment in making destination and accommodation choices.

According to Blichfeldt and Nicolaisen (2011, pp. 89–90) technological development has led to the saying that “any holiday is but a few clicks away”. However, this does not seem to be the case for all senior tourists. Seniors with restricted mobility are forced to make many more decisions than others to ensure the suitability of their destination, transportation, accommodation, activities and attractions (Blichfeldt & Nicolaisen, 2011, pp. 89–90). Additionally, although the senior population is more experienced with different kinds of e-services than ever before, there are also those within the segment who are

not. When it comes to the effects of technological developments on tourism, such as the emergence of sharing economy and accommodation or catering services in local homes, some senior tourists are facing more barriers than when using the traditional services of the industry. They may be physical, as private homes do not have the same requirements for accessibility as hotels and restaurants. Barriers might also be social or communicational due to possible unfamiliarity with different forms of peer-to-peer products and websites intermediating them. Thus, there is even a risk that technological development increases the inequality between tourists. Michopoulou and Buhalis (2011, p. 287) stress the importance of design for all in ICT products and services.

It is important to acknowledge that defining senior segments is not easy. For instance, all senior consumers do not relate to the marketing targeted at them (for example JWT London, 2014; Spiegel, 2015). For example, a study conducted by JWT London (2014) indicates that people in the age group of 50+ years feel that advertisements directed to them are patronising and stereotyped. This shows that the silver market is not thoroughly understood. This statement supports the authors' view that many customer segments that are seen as homogenous are in fact anything but. In addition to age, people's identities are affected by their financial affluence, ethnic background, gender and sexuality, for instance.

### **Ethnicity and tourist behaviour**

According to recent critique in tourism studies, (for example Fugmann & Aceves, 2013, p. 160, 167; Jafari & Scott, 2014, pp. 13–14) the tourism industry has for long been defined by Western liberal ideas, values and paradigms, and it is still viewed through Western norms and standards to a great extent. The diverse understanding of hospitality in different cultural contexts is clear. The difference is notable for instance between Western and Asian cultures. The new division of prosperity makes tourism economically possible for people from countries and cultures that have until recently been somewhat outside the global tourism market (Yeoman, Tan Li Yu, Mars, & Wouters, 2012, p. 9). Yet, the Western way of life also determines travel styles and holiday activities. Despite the new possibilities for travel, people from different cultures are facing many cultural, communicational and religious barriers.

Reisinger, Mavondo, and Crotts (2009, p. 237) argue that cultural context influences travel choices and plays an important role in determining what is considered important. Their research shows that cultural background affects Asian tourists more than Westerners. Asian people appreciate safety, clear preliminary information and services tailored to the group's collective needs, while Western tourists are more interested in products tailored to their individual needs (Reisinger et al., 2009, p. 249). With the emergence of Asian cultures, the industry is changing and has already adopted many new trends and practices.

Geographical background and national culture are important issues when developing international tourism. For instance, in Finland many hotels are actively seeking solutions to adapt to the needs of Chinese customers (see Yle, 2016). However, cultures correspond to ethnic and religious entities rather than nations (Reisinger et al., 2009, p. 239). A good example of this is the constantly growing number of Muslim tourists, who, however, cannot be considered as a homogenous group. According to Jafari and Scott (2014, pp. 8–13) there are some distinctive requirements set by Muslims tourists for

non-Muslim countries in terms of food, attire, daily prayers and certain practices regarding health and hygiene, such as washing before daily prayers. Many tourist destination management organizations have already taken these requirements into account by adding relevant information to their websites, by training their staff to treat Muslim tourists with respect and by offering separate swimming pools for male and female guests (Jafari & Scott, 2014, p. 8). Currently, also Muslim tourists may be faced with prejudices and attitudes resulting from political anxiety. However, as Jafari and Scott (2014, p. 13) point out, tourism may have the potential to become a positive force in promoting a bilateral understanding between the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds.

Viewing any national, religious or ethnic community as a homogenous group is a simplification, as there are always many factors affecting tourist behaviour. For example, Cai and Combrink (2007, p. 16) maintain that gender strongly determines travel attitudes and motivations among Japanese tourists. Jafari and Scott (2014, pp. 2–5) instead note that as Islam has spread around the world to many countries, Muslims cannot be treated as a homogenous group. There is significant variation between countries in the way Islam influences values.

### **LGBTIQ people and tourism – value discussion or market value discussion?**

In addition to ethnic and national cultures, new cultures and subcultures have gained visibility due to general value change and the development of information and communication technology. These cultures are built on, for example, a common interest or ideology and can include for example modern humanists (see Hietasaari, 2012), charity or aid tourism and special interest tourism (SIT). According to Smith (2009, pp. 9–13) it is fair to say that the concept of culture in today's society is very challenging to define, since it can mean almost any activity relating to lives and lifestyles. For tourism consumer segmentation, the development means even narrower special and SIT segments spread globally. Consequently, people will increasingly experience collisions between national and ethnic identities, as well a variety of subcultures.

One well-known tourism market is the LGBTIQ market (Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning). This market is often referred to as the Pink Dollar (for example Kivinen & Murtola, 2012; UNWTO, 2012, p. 8). During recent years, the tourism industry has witnessed the potential of the LGBTIQ market, since its agents are known to be affluent and to spend more on travel than the average tourism consumer (Blichfeldt, Chor, & Milan, 2012, pp. 473–483). Some authors say that the gay culture is also constructed according to Western white heteropatriarchal norms, painting a narrow picture of gay tourism. For example, Puar (2002) questions how “differences” are acknowledged in queer spaces. According to her, gay venues in North America and Europe are pictured as producers of liberatory disruptions of heterosexual space and as such there are not many studies made about racial, class or gender related issues (Puar, 2002, p. 935). According to Harju-Myllyaho and Kyyrä (2013, pp. 14–15), in Western tourism, LGBTIQ people are often discussed in relation to lifestyles and consumerism, but they can also be discussed in view of human rights and values. While sexual orientation is becoming less of an issue in many Western societies as a result of the widening recognition of gay rights, the situation is not the same on a global scale. In many places, LGBTIQ rights are not acknowledged and expressing one's sexual orientation can even be a punishable offence. Sexual and gender minorities should be considered when dis-

cussing accessible hospitality, as for many, taking a vacation might be the only way to express their sexuality and experienced gender.

Discussions on human rights and on the potential value and consumer patterns of LGBTIQ people are varied and carried out at many levels (in academic journals, media and social media platforms), but they do have points in common. Understanding and individuality play an important role in both issues. Sexual or gender orientation does not define a person; it is one feature that intersects with a number of others, forming the identity of a person. People in the LGBTIQ market also cover a variety of social and cultural backgrounds and generations. For instance, Hughes and Deutsch (2009, pp. 454–463) state that the travelling habits of aged gay men differ from those of their younger counterparts.

Accessibility could be advanced in tourism by increasing understanding and tolerance, by providing accurate information and by supporting encounters with sexual and gender versatility. Accessibility can be promoted simply by offering space for LGBTIQ people or by letting customers know that the destination is gay friendly. There are various ways this could be done. For example, Helsinki is using the gay friendly Helsinki label, while some ski resorts in Lapland have been hospitable venues for Arctic Pride events (Seta, 2016; Visit Helsinki, 2016). Hotel Helka in Helsinki used Facebook to inform customers that they had started selling Tom of Finland products in the hotel (Hotel Helka, 2016). Tom of Finland is well known for gay art.

Mannermaa (2003, pp. 105–106) stated over a decade ago that, from the viewpoint of cultural diversity, we are headed towards a mosaic society. Tolerance for difference becomes increasingly important especially in countries such as Finland, where the population has been culturally rather homogenous throughout history. In the future, people can have multiple identities, and as stated by Mannermaa, there is no reason to doubt that the direction is towards more diverse lifestyles and values.

### **Accessible hospitality and holistic tourism development**

A future-oriented approach to accessibility gives an opportunity to reflect upon destination and product development for various segments. Ziakas and Boukas (2013, p. 231) discuss the way in which destinations can remain sustainable and competitive in the changing operating environment and global market. They state that niche tourism has features that can meet the needs of some of the underserved tourism segments and, thus, can help in diversifying products that have lost some of their appeal. As suggested in the present article, the concept of accessible hospitality can both boost the image of a destination and benefit tourists who face barriers while travelling. In addition, it can provide a basis for increasing social and economic sustainability. The viewpoints support each other, as accessible hospitality offers a platform, synergy and common goals for developing destinations and products for different niche markets, such as seniors and ethnic groups. Often, even when tourists face different kinds of challenges and barriers, their experiences of helplessness and exclusion can be quite similar; feeling helplessness and exclusion.

According to Ziakas and Boukas (2013, p. 231), tourism products can be enriched, for instance by presenting new solutions and services and by enhancing existing ones. To maximise tourist flow, they suggest: attracting new markets, fostering repeat visitation and eliminating seasonality. The image of a destination can be enhanced by connecting its brand to niche tourism.



In the beginning of the review article, it was stated that, in tourism, everyone should be entitled to freedom to travel. Eichhorn, Miller, and Tribe (2013, p. 579) state that tourism has the potential to provide a space to avoid exclusion. Giving up the right to travel and to gain experiences can lead to exclusion. Crucial are attitudes and ways of thinking. Roy (2015) has described the way in which designs for the disabled can be of better quality than those designed for the able-bodied. She sees that designing products for the disabled can just be the trigger that makes us think differently. She emphasised the role of service design (Roy, 2015), but her way of thinking can be applied in many development processes, where customer experience is central. Similarly, designing tourism services for any minority can help discovering new viewpoints on developing services for the mainstream customer as well.

## Conclusion

Tourism is a cross-sectoral industry for which accessibility brings a major challenge. Therefore, there is a need for wider and deeper cooperation within tourism stakeholders. Accessible hospitality is all about cooperation. The emphasis should be in sharing information, enhancing communication and understanding difference. By supporting accessibility, a company or destination can broaden its market as well as improve the quality of its products. The customer benefits from better and more individual service. In the long run, this development can increase equality in the industry and society. Discussing the future of accessible hospitality brings along the necessity to discuss values and the changes in the value system and value creation in Western societies. The current trends indicate strongly that more empathy is needed in service creation and that people choose services which are meaningful and have a purpose (Hietasaari, 2012).

In the present article, the authors continue the discussion about hospitality that is accessible for all. The authors bring together various discussions which at the same time unify as well as challenge diverse perceptions of accessible tourism. Even though the discourses are different, the consequences and implications can be quite similar. The concept of accessible hospitality gives a new perspective to inclusion in tourism by providing a broader understanding of accessibility as well as a future perspective of customer behaviour. It also combines accessible tourism with the concept of hospitality. Accessible hospitality, however, requires a broader and deeper analysis. Hence, an empirical study of the plausibility of accessible hospitality should be conducted to get a more comprehensive perception of the issue. Future research could, for instance, investigate companies' ability to anticipate and serve emerging and underserved tourism segments. It would be interesting to ponder upon how the concept of accessible hospitality could support social, economic and cultural sustainability. Further, the discussions should also address those who do not seem to fall into any segment or niche market. These people may be physically challenged but without a medical diagnosis, for example obese persons. Accessibility issues can be confronted by asking whose standards we should follow and who can conform to them.

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