



# **ACCOMMODATION NEEDS, MOTIVATION AND MARKET ATTRACTION: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON ACCESSIBLE TOURISM INDUSTRY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN MALAYSIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Tourism sector, specifically accessible tourism, is getting more positive progress in the last few decades. Studies in the past mainly focused on inclusive tourism or tourism for all. Somehow, accessible tourism, which includes people with disabilities, is one of the ignored consideration in the field of tourism development. Most studies have ignored the inclusion of people with disabilities in the tourism sector. Making tourism more accessible to the disabled is not only a social responsibility, but there is a significant economic and business need to improve accessibility as it can boost the attractiveness of tourism in Malaysia. Past evidences show that by making adjustments to facilities, providing accurate and important information, and understanding the needs of people with disabilities can result in increased number of visitors. Thus, the main purpose of the study is to investigate this overlooked segment of our society, in order to come up with recommendations that can influence the intention to travel among people with disabilities in Malaysia. Data will be collected from 100 respondents which includes 50 who are disabled and have traveled more than once and stayed in a hotel for at least one night within last year and 50 participants consisting of managers from different hotels operating in Malaysia by employing semi-structured interviews. These 50 respondents with disabilities include people with mobility and physical impairments and people with hearing and communication disabilities. The data gathered will be investigated by employing two statistical packages, namely SPSS and Smart PLS. Multiple regression analysis will be utilized to predict the value of the variables in this research.

**KEYWORDS:** Tourism, Accessible tourism, people with disabilities, hotel accommodation.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The numbers of individuals who are living with disabilities is large. It is also projected to substantially rise in the coming thirty years (Colby & Ortman, 2014). The main aim of this study is to explore the tourism practices of people with disabilities (PWD) and their needs for travel opportunities. This study investigates the facilities in the form of accommodations, PWDs own motivation to travel and market attraction that promotes social inclusion available for these PWDs. Although PWDs are people who need special access due to their disabilities, they are basically individuals who have similar demands and needs for tourism, just like the common people (Yau, McKercher, & Packer, 2004).

A study by Buhalis et al. (2005) described that there are 12.75 million individuals who are facing the flexibility issues in the region of European Union. These peoples along with their caretakers have billions of Euros which can be consumed on tourism.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Altman (2014) concluded that disability has been utilized in numerous circumstances to denote impairments that comes as an outcome of sickness, damage, mental issue, physical and emotions restrictions or even the disputes that a person faces as an outcome of his impairment. Though, for the intention of existing research, disability can be easily described as the social concept that rises as an outcome of the social and physical situation inside where the people live (Braveman & Gottlieb, 2014).

Based on the study by Mattke et al. (2006), due to new innovations in the form of new technology, healthcare, and enhancement in lifespan of elder people, it is expected that tourism among the older generations will also increase. Additionally, this increase will have positive and significant effect with portable disability, which implies that with the passage of time there will be additional individuals with physical incapacities prepared to contribute to the activities of tourism (Jette & Branch, 1981).

Accessible tourism is a developing zone for scholars' research and business practices (Darcy and Buhalis, 2011). The elderly populace and emphasis on the enclosure and accessibility has led towards a rise in the literatures and investigation of theoretical perceptions that support the emerging accessible tourism sector. The accessible tourism sector comprises of those tourists who have different degree of accessibility necessities which have been poorly assisted by the sector of tourism (Miller and Kirk, 2002). Earlier literatures about accessible tourism have often considered the individual with some sort of disabilities as poor (Buhalis et al., 2005; Horgan-Jones and Ringaert, 2004; Van Horn, 2002). While the fact is that disabled residents can pay €1000 and €2000 price extra for appropriate tourism service and products as compared to a general tourist in Germany (BMWA, 2004). Moreover, disabled tourists are ready to pay extra for their holidays and spend more than usual on their holidays, if appropriate amenities were provided and promoted constantly. This means that the supplementary expenses produced from the disabled client is greater (Disability Rights Task Force, 1999). Therefore, there is a need for a research assessing the motivation and market attractiveness of the accessible tourism industry in Malaysia with a major focus towards tour and accommodation facilities.

According to Malaysia's tourism annual report (2019), the tourism sector remains a formidable industry which contributed 13.3% of economic growth to Malaysia in 2019, totaling MYR 102.11 billion. There is a huge and profitable market in Malaysia which has been ignored by the tourism industry for a long time. Based on the opinion of Darcy (2008), this specific market is as huge as over 650 million people globally and it is estimated that by the year 2050, the number of people living with disability globally would have risen to 1.2 billion. However, this rise will be attributable to ageing population, non-communicable diseases, the rise of chronic health problems, increasing life expectancies, diminishing in rates of child mortality, and introduction of better and smarter tools for identifying and measuring disabilities. In addition, studies in past literature shows that these members are new market for tourism growth as well as they can be easily converted into regular and loyal customers as compared to usual tourists. Averagely, they may spend more per trip than the usual tourists. So, the question arises here is that who are those customers? Who is this new market that should be targeted to increase the economic development of the Malaysian economy? The answer for these questions is that they are part of the accessible tourism which is considered as a new concept and primarily an untapped target group.

In recent years, tourism among PWDs is getting popular. Unfortunately, the current environment for accessible tourism is still not suitable for the usage of people with different disabilities. It is understood that to attain sustainable profit from tourism industry, it is important to stabilized tourism development by adding new target market and accessible facilities. The World Tourism Organization (2012) encourages accessible tourism to be included in the formulation and implementation of national and local tourism policies. Unfortunately, there are no public records available on PWDs utilizing hotels with accommodations. Thus, only a few locally focused studies provide generalizable conclusions, which leaves a lot of room to explore and investigate this issue.

According to World Health Organization's (WHO) estimation in 2015, approximately 15 percent of the worldwide population consists of people with disabilities. These disabled population consists of people with disabilities with physical and intellectual disabilities, sensory including hearing, vision, and speech disabilities, psychiatric or mental sickness, people with permanent and temporary injuries, also women who are pregnant, and last but not the least, people with small children and people who suffer from obesity are also considered as disabled. Furthermore, disable people are often marginalized from the social environment because they may tend to be older, less educated, poorer,

and has fewer employment opportunities than the abled. Many people become disabled because of direct clash either by battle or from wounds due to mine explosions in the countries like Afghanistan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Syria. In Malaysia, many become disabled due to accidents and health issues such as obesity and being diabetic.

Access to justice for PWDs is often said to overcome discrimination, communication and physical access and they are at higher risk of becoming victims of crime and exploitation. Normally, they may not be aware of the use by others for criminal purposes. As a result, such group of people are ignored from the chance of tourism because of their physical differences as well as lack of access to facilities. Similarly, all over the world, the number of ageing populations is also increasing day by day, especially in the developed and developing countries. As many of these seniors have the desire and the means to travel for pleasure, learning and discover, the goal for service provider in tourism sector could delight and amuse them into becoming repeated customers which in turn can give benefit to the economic growth of the country. This similarly can increase the employment rate of the country and can create more job opportunities. Therefore, this study targeted the motivation and market attractiveness of the accessible tourism.

### **3. PROBLEM STATEMENT OF THE STUDY**

Numerous legislatures have been approved in advanced nations to confirm presence of individuals with disabilities. Individuals who are living with disabilities along with their families and friends establish a larger marketplace from which tourism and hospitality sectors can easily get benefit (O'Neill & Knight, 2000). Organizations which do not invest in the understanding the desires of the market of disabled tourists' might reject the several assistances which is connected with this section.

Older citizens and the disabled tourists are considered as the probable profitable marketplaces of the hospitality sectors. Till now, the costs of creating a hotel with accessibility is not forbidden in the country of United States and/or Taiwan. Maximum fresh hotel amenities are mandatory to lodge disabled individuals along with the elder citizens. These kinds of lodgings can be measured as beneficial for both hoteliers and tourists. Hotel workers can raise profits and client loyalty by delivering accessible amenities and lodgings. The quantity of leisure tourists is enhancing universally, and the percentage of tourists who need accessibility remains to be enhanced. Surprisingly, maximum number of Malaysian hoteliers do not still identify the position of fascinating disabled clients, although the Malaysian government does pay attention to the rights of individuals who are disabled. However, maximum of the Malaysian hotel proprietors attempts only to meet the least requirements of the Act of Physically and Mental Disabled Citizens Protections Whitford (1998) demanded that the accommodation sector should go more than the lowest wants by the laws and make accessibility obtainable to all the disabled tourists so the hotels can tap into the profits of this marketplace.

Individuals with disabilities have a diverse negative travel experience to face. For numerous tourists with disabilities, a condition which include the following is an acquainted one: public transport is problematic and regularly not cooperative to PWDs, and the rooms of hotel do not constantly meet accessibility laws. Numerous restrictions and blocks exist, and overall physical entree is still the main restriction to come across to individuals with disabilities problems (Darcy & Daruwalla, 1999). Evading blocks to travels involve greatest skills and persistence on the parts of the tourist (Turco et al, 1998).

In the year 2006, the Government of Malaysia came up with provision on the rights of individuals with diverse capabilities in the conference of the National Councils on Local Government. The Malaysian Prime Minister, Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak maintained, 'except for fresh buildings, present buildings and public facilities, the local establishments would deliver procedures to make those spaces sociable to individuals with diverse capacities to accommodate for their wants (Malaysian Information Network on Disabilities, (2010). It is similarly more specified that accessibility in travel sector is still in newborn stage in Malaysia, and subsequently there is not much study completed in this range to advance the existing condition accordingly. In the hotel sector, there are yet records of different hotels that are not capable to deliver a good convenience to their hotel precisely in relation to the individuals with disabilities. In Malaysia, there are minimum studies concentrating on the wants, tours and lodging facility for tourists with disabilities.

The conclusion of this research hopes to find the answers for the research objectives mentioned below which will cement the loyalty between hotel proprietors and dealers in building client loyalty for disabled tourists by providing them first-class accessible tours and lodging amenities.

#### 4. OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

The general objective of the study is to examine the motivation and market attractiveness of the accessible tourism industry in Malaysia. Specifically, the objectives of this study are:

- i. To analyze how accessible tourism can create tourism demand and its overall contribution to the Malaysian economy.
- ii. To investigate the level of accessibility in accommodation sector provided by Malaysian hotels
- iii. To identify the determinants affecting accessible tourism for the PWDs

#### 5. RESEARCH QUESTION

Research objectives are followed by research questions. The research questions of this study are given as below.

- i. How accessible tourism population can create a demand in tourism sector, and contribute to Malaysian economic?
- ii. What is the satisfaction level of travelers with disabilities regarding accessible accommodations at Malaysian hotels?
- iii. How would it be possible to attract disabled people from home-leisure-related activities to tourism-destination activities?

#### 6. THEORETICAL REVIEW OF DISABILITY STUDIES

**6.1 The Social Model of Disability:** This study will use the social model of disability theory, According to this theory, the persons with disabilities are serious of the medical model and contended for a wider viewpoint that tested culture and service benefactors to stop concentrating on the suggestions of disability and start giving essential cares and services to eliminate environmental and societal fences (McKercher et al., 2003. This method is created from philosophies put forward in 1970s in a file printed by the UK-based Union of the Physical Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS, 1976) that re-conceptualized disability from a “individual disaster” to a composite method of community domination (Oliver, 2009) resultant from disabling community fences rather than person impairments (Oliver, 2013).

The social model measures a disability as a product of the socially built disabling atmosphere and predominant aggressive social insolences that relegate disabled individuals from social contribution (Darcy and Buhalis, 2011; Shakespeare, 2013). Creating a significant discrepancy among impairment and disability, the important component of the social model was the renovation of an impaired individual to a disabled individual as a product of the conducts in which society was prepared (e.g., the built atmosphere); consequently, impairment was measured dissimilar from disability and elimination of social, financial, political, communal, and interpersonal fences were suggested (Barnes and Mercer, 2003; Goodley, 2017).

Furthermore, WHO (2001) modified the Social Model of Disability, combining the social and medical models of disability and apprehended the incorporation of the numerous viewpoints of operational. Worldwide Arrangement of Functioning, Disability and Health (2001) consequently provide an intelligible opinion of dissimilar viewpoints of health from a biological, specific, and social viewpoint. Moving away from the medical model and to the social models, a few years later, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006) accepted the social model method to incapacity and encouraged for the human rights and self-respect of people with disabilities.

The social model of disability undertakes a common knowledge of domination for individuals with disabilities, irrespective of their impairments. Would this be the situation, conferring to the social model, any society or investigation of individuals with disabilities grounded on their precise impairments would unavoidably be superfluous (Shakespeare, 2014). This, in turn, makes impairment-precise companies along with impairment-precise creativities challenging. In complaining the similar method of the social model to individuals with numerous impairments, Shakespeare (2014) contends that dissimilar impairments require dissimilar and precise social and medical wants and problems that need medical study and clinical interventions. Consequently, he contends, there is no indication or motive that defends the rejection of impairment-precise organizations or enterprises as the social model needs.

## 7. EMPIRICAL REVIEW ON ACCESSIBLE TOURISM AND THE PWD MARKET

The profile of tourist with disabilities tend to travel more frequently during the low season and has a pattern of less seasonal travel than the general population. This signifies that the accessible tourism market represents a great opportunity for the countries. It can be true to say that the advantages of this type of population have high degree of loyalty, mainly due to fact that they have difficulty in finding destinations suitable for their specific needs. Therefore, the accessibility barriers can be considered as one major determinant that can affect the travel incentive and experience of the PWD. According to Burnett and Baker (2001), PWD remains as a group which is to explore to seek out their interests in travelling and their interest toward the tourism activities. Generally, this group may make more tours to the destination to some parts of the world and their average expenditures are also higher than normal tourists. Therefore, this sector also needs to be target and should be considered to increase the tourism.

Accessibility refers to how easy it is for everybody to approach, enter and use buildings, outdoor areas and other facilities, independently, without the need for special arrangements. Providing information on accessibility and improving access benefits a wide range of people who want to travel, but who may find it difficult (Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004). It is important to adapt accommodation facilities for disabled visitors when we speak about accommodation facilities. There should be good access to the building e.g., ramps and special parking spaces with proper identification for vehicles of persons with reduced mobility closer to the hotel. All car parks should have a minimum of one space designated for disabled drivers. Best practice is 6 % of barrier-free parking spaces, it means parking space at least 3.3 meters wide (Linderová, 2015a).

Accessible accommodation should be as close as possible and on the ground floor where possible. A reasonable number of rooms in an accommodation establishment should be fully accessible to a person in a wheelchair without assistance (UNWTO, 2005). Such rooms should be designed in such a way as to allow all users to carry out the actions of moving, grasping, locating, and communicating easily and independently. This shall apply also to bathrooms and terraces if the room is so equipped (UNWTO, 2005).

A minimum transfer space for toilets, beds and seating is 750 mm. Best practice is 950 mm or wider. Height of controls for door handles, switches, lifts should be within the minimum range of 900 mm to 1,400 mm from the floor. Best practice is 850 mm to < 1,200 mm. A minimum area of circulation space for all rooms, WCs, bathrooms is 1,200 mm x 1,200 mm (or diameter 1,200 mm). Best practice is 1,800 mm x 1,800 mm (or diameter 1,800 mm). If a person with visual impairments is occupying a room alone, staff should offer to orientate the guest on the position of furniture and facilities in the accommodation (Linderová, 2015a).

Also, hotel catering possibilities as restaurant, café, lobby bar should by adapted for disabled visitors as well as other services e.g., swimming pool, wellness center, sauna, or garden. Restaurants, cafés, and bars in the hotel should provide accessible facilities which consider ease of exterior access, furniture designed to enable their utilization by users in wheelchairs, bars at different heights, menus in Braille and with easily readable type, accessible bathrooms, etc. Such establishments should be clearly marked to make them easy to find (UNWTO, 2005).

Barriers to accommodation occur in relation to the surrounding environment of the accommodation (location, proximity to services, public transport, parking, and drop-offs), the reception, other facilities and services, and the rooms. The accommodation needs of disabled visitors on the individual, their disability, and the level of their support needs (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2003).

A few recent studies have used quantitative approaches to ascertain accessibility and attitudinal barriers to transport, accommodation, hospitality and attractions in the USA and China (Avis, Card, & Cole, 2005; Bi et al., 2007). Statistically each of these studies produced different yet significant results, suggesting that gender and age provided some explanation for different levels of accessibility required by the group. While, Bi et al. [year] suggested that functional ability was a major influence on perceived accessibility of accommodation.

## 8. RESEARCH GAP

In past literature most of the studies focused on tourism related problems among abled people while the studies related to the travel experiences of individuals with disabilities who do travel, have been ignored and not studied extensively. This study therefore, investigates the travel and tour experiences of individuals with disabilities, specifically those with mobility impairments, in Malaysia.

Moreover, studies in past literature on accessible tourism industry with a major focus towards accommodation facilities have been somehow studied in the developed nations like United States, Japan and Australia but no study is available related to the accessible tourism in an emerging nation like Malaysia.

### 9. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The research framework of this study is shown in Figure 1 below.

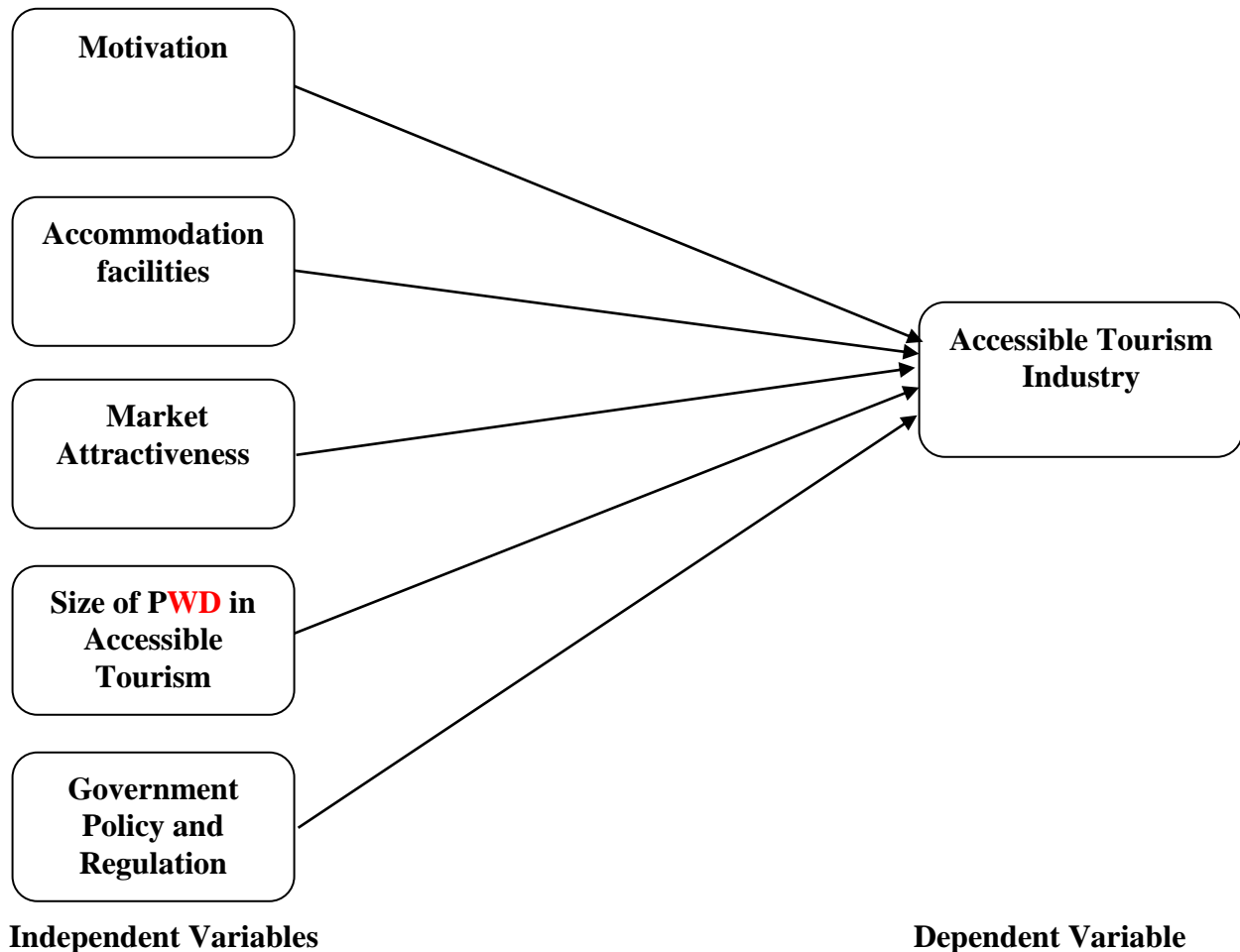


Figure1. Research framework

### 10. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study will be based on a triangulation approach. As the research questions in this study are focused on understanding choices, actions and decisions and getting a better understanding of what accessibility mean to people in contiguity with accessible tourism, therefore a qualitative approach will be an option to obtain a more in-depth understanding of accessible tourism. Furthermore, this research will also use quantitative methods to answer the questions to solve the problems facing by tourism sector related to accessible tourism in Malaysia. The population of this study will all the Malaysian individual with some sort of disabilities. For example including physical, hearing, speaking impairments, pregnant women, aging or old (above 60 year of age) people and parents with toddlers. No mentally handicapped participants will be surveyed or included in the study. Moreover, population of the study will also include all the managers of hotels working in Malaysia.



A diversified sample of 100 respondents will be selected in this study, of which 50 respondents will belong to PWDs who has traveled more than once and stayed in a hotel for at least one night within last year and 50 participants will be the managers of different hotels operating in Malaysia. This study will use non-probability sampling techniques in which the units of the sample will be selected on the basis of personal judgment. This research will utilize semi-structured interviews to collect primary data from the field. An interview guide will be used to guide the flow of conversation and notes will be taken by using a transcriber. A recorder will be used to record the discussions during interviews. The collected information after the process of interview will be processed by using SPSS and Smart PLS to clearly understand the outcomes of the research that can help policy makers for future studies.

## 11. DEPENDENT VARIABLES

**11.1. Accessible Tourism:** Allowing individuals with access necessities which include the movement, visions, hearing, and reasoning dimensions of access, to purpose self-sufficiently and with fairness and self-respect concluded the delivery of collectively planned products, services and environments.

## 12. INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

**12.1 Family Motivation:** According to the study by Edwards and Rothbard (2000), ~~family as the individuals who are related to each other by biological ties, customs, marriages, and social acceptances.~~

**12.2 Accommodation Facilities:** According to the definition by Mensah (2009), accommodation is an institution which delivers amenities and services to individuals for rest, relaxation and sleep who are provisionally away from their homes or office in return for some fee.

**12.3 Market Attractiveness:** Market attractiveness is the level of market opportunities which is given by a market section and organization capability to accomplish the needs of that section in view of the competitive environment.

**12.4 Size of People with Disability:** Size of Pwd will be calculated by taking natural logarithm of total number of Pwd.

$$\text{LOG} = \ln (\text{Pwd})$$

**12.5 Government Policy and Regulation:** A regulation of instruction having the force of law, given by the superiors or the competent authority, that is related to the actions of those under the authority's control (Janosik, 1987)

## 13. CONCLUSION

Numerous researches have been carried on tourism in emerging or less advanced nations with stresses on the touristic capacities as foundation of economic empowerment for the government, along with the culture, together with growth and sustainability exertions. Until now, numerous previous literatures on people with disabilities have intensive information on convenience, kinds or features of disabilities, the financial capacities of the groups, and the legislature that creates provision for them. However, this market is intensively considered by advanced nation and totally ignored by developing countries like Malaysia. Therefore, this study will contribute to the existing literature by studying the factors affecting accessible tourism in developing countries such as Malaysia. Researches directed in the advanced nation have lots of conclusions and recommendations intended at contesting barriers and prejudiced practices for people with disabilities to boost contribution in the tourism and hospitality events, as mentioned by Yuksel Ozturk et al, (2008), Ricardo Pagan-Rodriguez, (2014); and Small et al, (2012). Hence, there is a need to study on the establishment of hotel facilities and tourism amenities in emerging nations to recognize those challenges people with disabilities meet. Furthermore, Chen (2004) highlights that it is the responsibility of the administration to realize that travel is a barrier to people with disabilities.

Therefore, this study will contribute to the management of hotel industry to understand the needs and satisfaction of accessible tourism customers. Furthermore, this research pursues to inspect an area where slight or even no data has been gathered in relation to the existing subject. In a period in which accessibility is a dominant subject in travel progress supported by the UNWTO, it is a main anxiety for the administration, the private division, NPO [what is this??] companies and the culture at the large to recognize the consequences of their activities.

Besides, this study contributes to tourism activity by increasing the target population and customer base market share, reduces effects of seasonality, exploits competitive advantages, improves profitability, and enhances destination competitiveness. Studies in past literature have ignored the concept of accessible tourism, while evidence shows that those people are engaged in independent travel. Therefore, there is a greater need to hear about their needs and experiences as consumers which is regarded as a big opportunity as they are the most ignored population. This study therefore contributes to the body of literature by addressing an ignored disabled population as a target market.

Furthermore, numerous studies in past literature have examined the motivational factors and market attractiveness in normal and capable people in both developed and developing countries. However, there is a lack of researches related to the motivation and market attractiveness in accessible tourism in developing countries. Furthermore, there are very limited studies available in past literature to examine accessible tourism in Malaysia. It is expected that the consequences of this study will allow the tourism sector to improve its services to people with disabilities and their caretakers. The outcomes are projected to deliver academic suggestions and stimuluses for upcoming studies addressing the tourism experiences of people with disabilities and their caretakers. This research has some limitations attached to it, and those limitations further require to be taken into consideration. The primary limitation of existing research is associated with the available literatures in which there is an absence of any book and different sources of data which show services and amenities to the disabled people in the hotel sector in Malaysia. The sample which is used in this study comprises only tourists with mobility impairments, whereas all other kinds of disabilities of individuals are omitted from this study so consequently, this study is not entitled to provide a complete picture of tourist experience of all those tourists who have all other different types of disabilities.

Last but not the least, there is another major issue in gathering of participants for collection of data. As individuals who live with disability are reflected as a minor group, therefore there is a possibility that there will be limitations to obtain the projected number of samples for this research.

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