The Readiness of Accommodation Facilities to Provide Accessible Tourist Experiences in Cairo, Egypt

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Abstract
Accessible tourism is considered one of the most contemporary themes in tourism and aims to enable disabled customers to move around and perform activities as freely as non-disabled people. According to previous research, the number of disabled visitors is rising due to the aging population. Thus, this paper explores accessible tourism and sheds the light on the requirements of disabled visitors in accommodation facilities. It aims to reveal the readiness of the accommodation facilities in Cairo, Egypt to provide services for visitors with disabilities. As hotels are the most popular type of accommodation globally, this study focuses on hotels rather than other types of accommodation. A checklist-based technique was used to collect primary data. The sample included 13 international five-star hotel chains in Cairo. The findings were satisfactory in terms of accessibility in the sleeping area, bathroom features, reservation and booking, power, lighting, and convenience factors. However, there are insufficient number of guest rooms and parking lots offered for disabled visitors, in addition to some challenges with the location, transportation and accessibility of public areas. Thus, the study provides set of recommendations to enhance services and facilities for people with disabilities in accommodation facilities.
Keywords: Accessible tourism, Accommodation, People with Disabilities (PwDs), barrier-free tourism (BFT)

Introduction
Tourism industry is one of the largest growing industries with people traveling in increasing numbers annually from different countries and regions around the globe. Moreover, it relies on diversification, to better serve specific segments of visitors, which has both psychographic and demographic characteristics (Csapo, 2012). The industry is also constantly looking for new markets as other segments mature according to Dickson and Darcy (2012). Meanwhile, as travelers become older, grey tourism (also known as senior markets) has emerged as a significant new market segment. In the meantime, People with Disabilities (PWDs) are closely related to the demands of the senior market. The travel needs of this group are classified as barrier-free tourism (BFT). BFT introduces a new segmentation option that combines the accessibility needs of

seniors and PWDs, which can also be called accessible tourism (Biddulph and Scheyvens, 2021; Dickson and Darcy, 2012).

Review of Literature
People with Disabilities (PwDs)
The importance of travel and tourism has increased dramatically, and they have become basic essentiality for people, including PwDs. Meanwhile, tourism destinations lack the sufficient accessible tourism facilities that enable PwDs to travel and enjoy their trip without obstacles (Naniopoulos et al., 2016; Özogul and Baran, 2016). PwDs refers to "Any person whose full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others in travel, accommodation and other tourism services is hindered by the barriers in the environment they are in, as well as by attitudinal barriers" (UNWTO, 2014: 32). It is a bit controversial to define 'disability' (Lipianin-Zontek and Szewczyk, 2019). However, Popiel (2014) and Poria et al. (2011) consider that disability can be classified into three categories:

1. Physical accessibility refers to individuals with physical impairments who frequently use wheelchairs or mobility aids and regularly request other amenities such as handrails, ramps, and elevators.
2. Sensory accessibility refers to people who have impaired vision or hearing (vocal disabilities) or other similar sensory impairments. Tactile signs, visual signs, tags, audio-visual systems, and warning sounds for elevators and crosswalks are necessary for them.
3. Communication accessibility refers to individuals with communication impairments, such as those who struggle with reading, writing, listening, or speaking, as well as people from different cultures who need clarification or additional details.

As per World Health Organization (WHO), around 1 billion people, who count for 15% of the world population, have a sort of disability (UNWTO, 2021). Meanwhile, there is a noticeable correlation between aging and disability (Vila et al., 2015; Darcy, 2010), and 2 billion people would be over 60 years old by 2050, counting for more than 20% of the world population (Sonuc, 2017). These large numbers of people have the right to live fully, travel freely and enjoy barrier-free leisure activities, and it serves as a potential market for the travel and tourism industry (Eusébio et al., 2021).

Modern societies have become more aware of the concept of integrating PWDs' needs into the community. Besides, the "right to tourism" was affirmed by Article 7 of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Sonuc, 2017). Moreover, in 2006, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities highlighted the right of PwDs to have equal access to all facilities and services including travel and tourism (Michopoulou et al., 2015). It also consolidated, in Article 9, the concept of accessible tourism concept, featuring that tourism experiences can only be deterred by social, political and economic barriers, not by disabilities (Lam et al., 2020; Natalia et al., 2019).

Accessible Tourism

The concept of accessible tourism is relatively new in the tourism sector, but has recently become widespread, especially in European countries and after the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Special Needs (CRPD) (Steinert et al., 2016).

Accessible tourism is all about providing tourism facilities that allow PwDs, children in prams, travelers with toddlers, pregnant woman, and seniors to travel independently with less required assistance, with equity and dignity (Polat and Hermans, 2016; Darcy and Buhalis, 2011). This is not only a social responsibility, but an unquestionable business opportunity for tourist destinations. Moreover, providing accessible facilities do not only benefit tourists and enriches their travel experience, but enhances the life quality of the citizens as well (European Commission, 2021).

It is defined by the UNWTO as "A form of tourism that enables people with access requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity. It enables this through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments, all of which require a collaborative process among stakeholders" (UNWTO, 2014: 32).

Accessible tourism is a significant emerging market as it allows tourist destinations to not only help PwDs to enjoy accessible travel experience, but to maximize their revenues and have a competitive advantage as well (Ariffin et al., 2017). Besides, PwDs are loyal travelers who often prefer to return to places where they find ease and comfort (Hossam et al., 2022). Moreover, they prefer low season traveling rather than seasonal travel, they travel mostly accompanied or in groups, and they tend to have high average of expenditures (Martin-Fuentes at al., 2021).

In response to the significance of this market, Egypt has taken several steps towards incorporating accessible tourism in its tourism sustainable development strategy. The Egyptian minister of tourism inaugurated the forum of accessible tourism in the Arab region in 2019 (Raslan, 2019). Besides, training programs about handling PwDs were organized for tour guides (Ayyad, 2019). Moreover, a special path was established in the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square for PwDs, and the Karnak Temple was also formulated to receive accessible tourists (Emam and Maher, 2019; Sayed, 2019).

Meanwhile, accessible tourism faces some barriers among which are:
4. The lack of accessible tourism facilities.
5. The engraved mental beliefs that PwDs should be excluded from travel and tourism activities.
6. The lack of correct and detailed information presented to PwDs regarding trips and leisure facilities available for them (Elshamy et al., 2021; Moris et al., 2019).
7. The lack of trained staff who could deal with accessibility issues and give reliable information and advice in that regard (United Nations, 2021).
8. The difficulties PwDs face in finding accessible accommodation facilities.

Such challenges are not limited to Egypt but are experienced by all people with disabilities who want to travel.

Accessible tourism encompasses developing accessible facilities in terms of tourist attractions, transportation, accommodation, restaurants, events and information sources (Linderová and Scholz, 2016).

Hotel Accommodation Facilities for PWDs

In the matter of caring for PwDs, hotel facilities have multiple restrictions, such as hotel transportation, lack of wheelchairs, the challenge of accessibility to different public facilities, and an inability to deal effectively with them (Nyman, 2016). PwDs frequently find it hard to move around and complete things as quickly as non-disabled people can (Dickson and Darcy, 2012). Meeting the needs of PwDs and understanding their behavior is constantly disregarded by hotels management. In order to meet the PwDs' needs, hotel services providers should make reasonable modifications to their facilities, such as offering additional assistance, changing the way services are delivered, or installing step-free access (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016; Paez and Arendt, 2014).

Previous research identified the following key issues: Accessible accommodation information is insufficiently documented, and inaccurate regarding rooms' features. Besides, they do not provide similar amenities as accommodations for non-disabled people. In addition, hotel owners and managers do not perceive PwDs as a market and, as a result, do not effectively promote rooms for them to facilitate making an informed decision about their accommodation requirements (Darcy, 2016). Furthermore, no research has been conducted to determine how the criteria should be provided through accommodation information systems, which is the aim of this study. Researches also cannot frequently provide precise or extensive information on the features of PWDs rooms. Often, lodging providers may advertise their rooms as barrier-free, while PwDs find out that the rooms are not accessible, which creates a terrible travel experience for PwDs (Darcy, 2016).

When considering the accommodation services sector, it is crucial to adapt amenities for disabled visitors. Accessible accommodations involve easy access to the facility, including ramps, as well as special parking areas near the hotel with proof of identity for vehicle types of individuals with limited mobility (Linderová, 2015). Each parking lot should have at least one space designated for drivers with special needs, and the best approach is 5% of the total number of parking spaces (WDU Accreditation Center, 2012).

Accessible rooms should be as close to each other as possible, preferably on the lower floors. A reasonable number of rooms in a hotel should be totally accessible to a wheelchair user without assistance. These rooms should also be built in a way that allows all users to communicate, and move freely. This includes restrooms and terraces if the room is equipped with them (UNWTO, 2015).

Balagué (2016) mentioned some of the requirements for providing accessible accommodation services to tourists with disabilities, and they were, for example, not limited to the following:
1. Wheelchair-accessible.
2. Toilet with grab rails.
3. Lower bathroom sink.
4. Higher-level toilet.
5. Emergency cord in bathroom.
6. Visual aids: Braille (raised dots that blind people can read with fingers).
7. Visual aids: tactile signs.
8. Auditory guidance.

The Egyptian Context
The Egyptian Ministry of Tourism developed new standards for disabled amenities in hotels in 2010, which comply with the standards of the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). These include public restrooms for disabled people, which must meet the following requirements: Each hotel should provide rooms specially equipped for PwDs (e.g., 1% of total hotel rooms with at least 1 room per hotel); The disability door should open outward, be at least 100 cm wide, and have safety handles 90–120 cm above the floor. An elevator should be provided if there are no handicapped rooms on the ground floor. Floors must be solid (carpets are not allowed); all ways should be accessible to wheelchairs; the room lighting should be adjustable from the bedside; and a separate, secured room with shelves and hangers, just for luggage storage and for wheelchairs as crutches for PwDs, must be available (Hussien and Jones, 2016; ADA Website, 2010).

After Declaring 2018 as the Year of people with special needs, the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities began to take successful steps towards sustainable development in Egypt 2030's plan as the country strives for social inclusion and protecting the rights of PwDs in all areas of life. The Ministry is working to improve the effectiveness of some Egyptian museums and renovate them to suit PwDs. For instance, the Ministry has started training tour guides to describe the monuments in sign language (Raslan, 2020).

Research Methodology
The aim of this paper is to focus on accessible accommodation facilities in Egypt and investigate the possibility of the disabled travelers to visit, stay, and enjoy leisure activities as well. It also aims to reveal the readiness of the accommodation facilities in Cairo, Egypt to provide services to PwDs. According to Scriven (2000), a checklist is a set of factors, criteria, tasks, or dimensions that must be considered in order to perform or evaluate a certain issue. Therefore, the research strategy used a checklist-based technique to assess the availability of accommodation services for the PwDs in the hotels sample. Due to the lack of a checklist for evaluating the services that are provided for PwDs in the hotel industry, the research method was developed based on previous studies and criterion including the Hotel Accessibility Scale (HAS) (Darcy,2010), and the Hotel Accessibility Metric (HAM) (Morris, 2017).

The Checklist Development
The Hotel Accessibility Scale (HAS) considered six aspects of a hotel stay to be accessible, which were core mobility, hearing, and vision (communication), ambulance (safety), service and security, amenities (comfort/recreation), and supplemental mobility (Darcy, 2010). While the Hotel Accessibility Metric (HAM) considered six additional important aspects of accessible hotel accommodation: the reservations system and booking experience; ADA compliance in the bathroom; accessibility in the sleeping area of the guest room; access to power outlets, lighting controls, and other convenience items such as hotel location and transportation options, including complimentary shuttle services; and accessibility of the hotel's public areas (Morris, 2017). Modifications were made to the studies of Darcy (2010) and Morris (2017) to assess the services and accommodation facilities provided to PwDs in hotels for use in the current study, and then the research model was developed.

Sample and Data Collection

The research model involves six touchpoints existing in the hotel industry that cover the whole guest journey which are: (1) Reservation and Booking (4 items); (2) Location and Transportation (4 items); (3) Accessibility of Public Areas (7 items); (4) Power, Lighting and Convenience (4 items); (5) Bathroom Features (6 items); and (6) Accessibility in Sleeping Area (5 items). The checklist was divided into two sections: the 1st part consists of five questions that identify the respondents' position, total number of the hotel rooms, total number for PwDs, total number of the hotel parking lots, and the total number of parking lots designated for the PwDs. The 2nd part contained 30 questions that sample the requirements that hotel offers to PwDs with the Likert scale responses (available (1), somewhat (2), and not available (3).

The final version of the checklist was tested on a sample of five managers in five-star hotels and five academic experts to determine whether it was valid from a face-to-face and content perspective. Respondents' comments regarding the checklist's language and variables have been considered. The final version of the study's checklist is presented in Table 1. The Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC, 2022) stated that there are 20 five-star hotels in Cairo. Only 13 five-star hotels in Cairo, which accepted to participate, out of the 20 hotels were selected as a sample for the research, representing 65% of the total number. The checklist forms were filled out after field visits and interviews with hotel management were conducted. To maintain the confidentiality of the information, the names of the hotels participating in the research have been coded. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 23.0, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

Table 1: The structure of accessible accommodation criteria.

Reservation and Booking (Morris, 2017)	• Customers can easily book accessible hotel rooms using the hotel's website or the hotel's mobile application. • The hotel's website specifies if they have accessible accommodations with special facilities. • The website's reservation system includes photos and complete information about accessible restroom facilities. • Accessible hotel rooms of any size and type (standard, suites, deluxe, club level, bed sizes, etc.) can be booked.
Location and Transportation (Morris, 2017; Darcy, 2010)	• The hotel should provide a complimentary wheelchair-accessible shuttle service. • The waiting time for an accessible shuttle (or an alternative service) must be less than what able guests would have had to wait. • Wheelchair taxis should be available upon request in the city and around the hotel. • Friendly, helpful staff who understand the needs of people with a disability.
Accessibility of Public Areas (Morris, 2017; Darcy, 2010)	• There should be private parking lots with a preference for disabled people. • The main entrance door opens automatically, and there is a doorman responsible for opening the door, which is operated manually. • The reception desk has been lowered to accommodate wheelchair access for guests.

	• There are public restrooms equipped for guests with a wheelchair. • One or more on-site restaurants equipped to host wheelchair users. • The hotel elevators are large enough to fit wheelchair guests and one companion with luggage. • The hotel pool has a self-operated lift for wheelchair users.
Power, Lighting and Convenience (Morris, 2017; Darcy, 2010)	• The guest room door opens without resistance or opens automatically. • The guest room includes a power switch that manages all lighting features near the bedside. • Power adapters are near the bed (e.g., on top of the bedside), and accessing them does not require moving any furniture. • There is a self-serve laundry.
Bathroom Features (with roll-in or bathtub shower) (Morris, 2017; Darcy, 2010)	• Grab handles are correctly positioned around the toilet and the shower. • The wall-mounted spray or water control unit is located next to the shower seat or on the opposite wall if the shower is 36" by 36". • There is a stable shower seat, whether built-in or portable, that is securely attached to the bathtub and the roll-in shower. • There is a portable shower water sprayer in the bathtub. • There is a call button in the bathroom. • There is an adjustable magnifying mirror.
Accessibility in Sleeping Area (Morris,2017; Darcy, 2010)	• A room near the elevator. • The distance from the floor to the top of the bed mattress must be not more than 24 inches and not less than 19 inches. • If there is only one bed in the room, a wheelchair can easily access both sides. If there are two beds in the room, there should be enough space between them for a wheelchair. • There is sufficient width in the guest bedrooms for a wheelchair that can rotate 360-degrees or T-turn. • There is an intercom that is easily accessible.

Results and Discussion

Participants' Position

Data was collected in person after meeting the sample hotel managers and supervisors, as shown in Table 2. 30.8% of participants were sales and marketing managers and front office supervisors. While 25% of them were front office managers, only 15.4% were hotel managers.

Table 2: Participants' Position

Position	No.	Percentage
Hotel Manager	2	15.4
Marketing and Sales manager	4	30.8
Front office manager	3	23
Front office supervisor	4	30.8
n 13		

The Distribution Of Hotel Rooms And Parking Lots For Pwds
Table. 3 illustrated the distribution of hotel rooms and parking lots for PwDs of the study's sample. Based on the collected data, it was estimated that 6813 hotel rooms were available in the sample hotels. The total number of rooms designated for PwDs is only 162, which is only 2.6% of the total number of rooms. Meanwhile, out of 2396 hotel parking lots, only 129 were designated for PwDs. That is 5.4% of the total number of available parking lots. Those percentages areundoubtedly very small.

Table 3: The distribution of hotel rooms and parking lots for PwDs

Total Hotel Rooms	PwDs Rooms		Hotel Parking Lots	PwDs Parking Lots	
No.	No.	%	No.	No.	%
6813	162	2.6	2396	129	5.4

The Distribution Of The Availability Of Services For Pwds
Table 3 shows the answers of the sample hotels as well as the arithmetic mean. According to the study results, the Accessibility in the Sleeping Area factor had the highest response rate, which is indicative of the availability of services for the disabled in hotel rooms. There were 57 available responses in total, and only 4 responses were both not available and somewhat available, with a mean score of 2.8. Bathroom features (with a roll-in shower or bathtub) are the second factor, which is related to accessibility features in hotel rooms. From the total responses, 69 were available, 5 were not available, and 4 were somewhat available, with a mean score of 2.7.

The third factor was Reservation and Booking, which relates to the hotel website's information about room size and all the services that the hotel offers to PwDs. Out of the total responses, 44 were available, 5 were somewhat available, and 4 responses were not available, with a mean score of 2.7. The fourth factor was "power, lighting, and convenience," which is related to guest room facilities offered to the disabled. Out of the total responses, 42 choices were available, 1 was somewhat available, 9 answers were not available, and the mean score was 2.6.

Table4: The distribution of responses and mean score

Factors	No. of questions	Responses						Mean
		Available		Somewhat		Not Available		
		f	%	f	%	f	%	
Reservation and Booking	4	44	84.6	5	9.6	3	5.8	2.7
Location and Transportation	4	23	44.2	9	17.3	20	38.5	2.6
Accessibility of Public Areas	7	43	47.3	15	16.5	33	36.3	2.5
Power, Lighting and Convenience	4	42	80.8	1	1.9	9	17.3	2.6
Bathroom Features	5	69	88.5	4	5.1	5	6.4	2.7
Accessibility in Sleeping Area	6	57	87.7	4	6.2	4	6.2	2.8
n 13								

Additionally, the fifth factor was Location and Transportation, which was related to the hotel location, wheelchair taxis, etc. Responses were 23 available, 9 somewhat available, and 20 answers not available, resulting in a mean score of 2.6. However, the lowest factor was Accessibility of Public Areas, which is related to the accessibility of hotel public areas such as doors, elevators, and so on. Among the total responses, 43 choices were available, 15 were somewhat available, and 33 were not available; a mean score of 2.5 was obtained.

Conclusions and Recommendations
Due to the aging population, the number of disabled visitors is also increasing as a market sector. Besides, the fact that these individuals are loyal clients and frequently travel with a companion during the low seasons, has made them an interesting segment for accommodation facilities. Their preferences include catering facilities, accessible rooms, adequate parking places, and access to accommodations without obstacles. Therefore, accommodation establishments must strive to meet the demands of this segment of customers. The results of the study revealed that a large proportion of the investigated hotels have provided disabled services and facilities in terms of tangible facilities (i.e. public toilets, accessible rooms and special equipment for PWD such as wheelchairs). Moreover, the majority of the accommodation facilities provided to disabled visitors were related to bedroom facilities and bathroom accessories. However, facilities such as the number of parking lots, transportation facilities, and the accessibility of public areas were neglected. Thus. the study offers a detailed checklist that hoteliers can use to assess the facilities that they offer to PwDs in order to make their hotels accessible. The suggested recommendations for hotel managers on how to enhance PWD services and facilities include:
1. The hotel should provide a sufficient number of guest rooms and parking lots, sign them with disabled signs, and provide wide access aisles near the lobby.
2. The counter should be divided into two levels for disabled guests.
3. All public areas and toilets should have a sufficient number of barrier-free and accessible toilets.
4. Hotel doors for PWD rooms should be wide enough and easy to open.
5. Food and beverage areas should have wide spaces for people in wheelchairs.
6. Hotels' employees should be knowledgeable about how to communicate with disabled guests.
7. Hotel staff should give disabled guests priority check-in/out.
8. Hotel should consider the feedback of disabled guests.

Limitation and Further Research
The study was limited to international five-star hotel chains in Cairo to be easily accessed and investigated. However, it is suggested that more future researches would be conducted to include different hotel categories and other governorates in Egypt.

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جاهزية وسائل الإقامة لتوفير تجربة سياحية ميسرة في القاهرة، مصر

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المستخلص

تعتبر السياحة الميسرة واحدة من أكثر الموضوعات المعاصرة في السياحة والتي تهدف إلى تمكين العملاء ذوي الإعاقة من التنقل وأداء الأنشطة بحرية مثل الأشخاص غير المعاقين. وفقا للأبحاث السابقة، فإن عدد الزوار المعاقين آخذ في الارتفاع بسبب ارتفاع سن السكان. لذلك، يستكشف البحث السياحة الميسرة ويلقي الضوء على متطلبات الزوار المعاقين في مرافق الإقامة. ويهدف البحث إلى الكشف عن جاهزية وسائل الإقامة بالقاهرة بمصر لتقديم الخدمات للزوار ذوي الإعاقة. نظرًا لأن الفنادق هي أكثر أنواع الإقامة شيوعًا على مستوى العالم، تركز هذه الدراسة على الفنادق بدلاً من أنواع الإقامة الأخرى. تم استخدام تقنية قائمة التحقق لجمع البيانات الأولية. وشملت العينة 13 سلسلة فنادق دولية من فئة الخمس نجوم في القاهرة. كانت النتائج مرضية من حيث سهولة الوصول في منطقة النوم، الحمامات، والحجز، الإضاءة، وعوامل الراحة. ولكن لا يوجد عدد كافٍ من غرف النزلاء ومواقف السيارات المتاحة للزوار المعاقين، بالإضافة إلى بعض التحديات المتعلقة بالموقع ووسائل النقل وسهولة الوصول إلى الأماكن العامة. وبالتالي، تقدم الدراسة مجموعة من التوصيات لتحسين الخدمات والمرافق للأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة في وسائل الإقامة.

الكلمات الدالة: السياحة الميسرة، الإقامة، الأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة ، والسياحة الخالية من العوائق.

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