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CHAPTER 1

THE MEANING OF ACCESSIBLE TOURISM

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»When I was born, I was diagnosed with a cleft palate, which made our family life a little challenging during the first five years or so. This disability prevents one from eating normally or speaking correctly until it is fixed. My parents decided to give me the most simple name there was in case I would not be able to talk. In time, after surgeries and speech therapy, I did learn to eat and speak. However, this experience and stories my mother has told me about travelling to a bigger city to go to a special hospital makes me understand how it must feel for people who, in one way or another, are excluded from everyday experiences. I remember eating white bread. I do not know if it was the first time in my life, but it was still quite memorable. My father had cut the edges off so I would not hurt myself. It was probably the best thing ever. Learning to read, before going to school, was another unbelievable experience and this too was, directly or indirectly, due to my disability and speech therapy«.

The quote is a personal insight on how inclusion can be experienced. It provides an example of the fact that many of us face barriers both in our daily lives and in leisure time at some point of our lives (e.g. Darcy and Dickson, 2009) even if the condition is not permanent. According to Darcy and Dickson (2009, p. 32), it is estimated that 30% of the population have access issues at some stage of their lives. Before we experience this kind of situation or someone close to us

does, we might not realise how important it is to be included and to have access to the same experiences as any other person. From this viewpoint, inclusion is - more than anything - a feeling, an experience. Tourism as an industry is focused on providing experiences. Pine and Gilmore (1998) see experience as a multidimensional phenomenon. On one side there is passive participation and, on the other, there is active participation, where the customer participates actively in creating the experience. (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, p. 101.) However, there are customers that are excluded from these experiences since they are not able to take part in them at all.

Inclusion and exclusion are subjective experiences, which means that if someone experiences exclusion, the experience is genuine (see UN 2016a, p. 22). Inclusion also refers to an activity. Tourism as an activity is increasingly seen as a necessity rather than a luxury. McCabe and Diekmann (2015, p. 194) write that tourism might not be considered as a human right, but as a social right. Consequently, to be excluded from taking part in tourism would mean that the person is denied a significant part of everyday life. Consequently, the need for tourism inclusion creates demand for accessible tourism environments and services.

This chapter discusses the meaning, importance and future of accessible tourism. The chapter is structured as follows: First, different terms, concepts and definitions are discussed concerning accessible tourism. Further, the results of a Delphi study implemented in Finland are presented, and the use of the future-oriented Delphi method in the field of Accessible Tourism is discussed. The chapter is produced within the project 'From Accessible Tourism to Accessible Hospitality', which is funded by the European Union, Programme for Sustainable growth and jobs 2014 - 2020, European Regional Development Fund (ESF) (ESVI 2017).

TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Accessibility is a part of tourism quality and sustainability, since it supports social sustainability through inclusion. Indeed, the United Nations World Tourist Organisation (UNWTO 2016a) has defined accessible tourism for all as both a human right and a business opportunity. According to UNWTO, "[...] any tourism product should be designed irrespective of age, gender and ability. and with no additional costs for customers with disabilities and specific access requirements." (UNWTO 2016a.) Thus, it is fair to say that accessibility, especially

in tourism as a global forefront industry, is connected closely with our common future.

Indeed, accessibility has gained increasing attention and visibility in the field of Tourism. This is due to the fact that, especially in Western countries, the importance of inclusion is increasing. This is due to people's changing values, which is also reflected in the Service sector. In addition, for instance in Finland, legislation requires equality to be taken into consideration when designing and conducting services (Finlex 2014).

The increasing interest in inclusive services is also seen in the growing number of different terms and concepts that refer to accessibility in tourism. Accessible Tourism (the most common), Inclusive Tourism, Barrier-Free-Tourism, Easy Access Tourism and Universal Tourism are examples of terms used in academic discussion (Darcy & Buhalis, 2011a, p. 10). The concept of tourism for all is used widely in national and regional web pages (eg. Tourism for All UK), as well as among private and third sector (known as NGOs) (TourismForAll; UNWTO, 2016b). Tourism for all is similar with the concept of Design For All (DFA) (see, e.g., DfA Europe 2017). The Design for All Europe website declares that DFA makes analysis of human needs and aspirations and puts the data into use, thus including people in the design process. (DFA Europe 2017). Harju-Myllyaho (2018) questioned the concept by asking if, in practice, it could be that, at best, this means design for most.

All different terms and concepts discuss the same theme, but from slightly different viewpoints. Furthermore, they all have the same goal: Inclusion. However, most of them are inclined to restrict accessibility to physical and communicational aspects, though accessibility has a number of other dimensions relating to social, cultural, economic and political aspects (eg. Darcy & Buhalis, 2011b, p. 27; Jutila, 2013, pp. 4–5; Oliver, 1996, p. 32).

Social accessibility refers to equality, participation and attitudes. A positive attitude and the desire to serve every tourist can remove physical barriers or barriers in communication significantly. 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. (Darcy & Buhalis, 2011b, p. 27; Oliver, 1996, p. 32.) Awareness and reverence of the habits of different cultures and religions makes tourism culturally accessible. A welcoming attitude towards minorities and

ethnic groups is part of cultural accessibility too. Cultural accessibility also refers to the sub-cultures, such as rainbow tourists and other minorities, that place the members in such positions that can lead to discrimination (Harju-Myllyaho 2018). Economically accessible tourism 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. For example, the Finnish passport is claimed to be one of the most valuable in the World (Statistics Finland 2017), but, in many other countries, the situation is quite different. Thus, tourism is not politically accessible for many nationalities. (Edelheim, 2013, p. 93; Harju-Myllyaho & Jutila, 2016, pp. 35-36.) The need to address the different dimensions of accessibility will even increase in the future.

Based on their holistic and future-oriented approach, Harju-Myllyaho and Kyyrä (2013, p. 16) suggest the notion of accessible hospitality, a welcoming attitude towards others and willingness to serve all kinds of customers, as a basis where other aspects of accessibility in tourism are integrated. Hospitality in this context refers to an attitude and general behaviour towards others rather than to an industry. Accessible hospitality gives fresh insight by providing a broader understanding of accessibility; travellers' needs and wishes are taken into account regardless of their background or personal characteristics, such as culture or sub-culture, social minority, sexual orientation, age or a special mental or physical need. (Harju-Myllyaho & Kyyrä, 2013; Harju-Myllyaho & Jutila, 2016.) This approach also considers the question of who gets to be the guest and under what conditions, discussed by Germann Molz and Gibson (2007, p. 8). Thus, it connects the discussion of hospitality to the question of power relations (see Höckert 2015, p. 94-98).

FUTURE OF ACCESSIBLE HOSPITALITY

Here, we present viewpoints on how accessibility in tourism is seen in the future by various experts. The case concerns Finland, a Welfare State with a high social security level, but the perspectives could be applied elsewhere as well. How accessibility should be enhanced in Finland now that tourism is growing is, nonetheless, very interesting. More specifically the case concerns the following questions: 1) What knowledge and knowhow is needed in furthering accessible tourism in the future in Finland and how can we gain this knowhow? 2) Which political, economic, socio-cultural, technological and ecological factors (driving

forces) impact the development of accessible tourism in the future? 3) How can accessibility be studied and promoted by utilising expert knowledge, namely by using the Delphi method?

The aim of speaking for those who cannot talk for themselves, guides futures research, (see Masini 1993, p. 8), which means that it includes strong emphasis on values. Accessible hospitality requires being always one step ahead, since the global and local changes will bring new customer groups (Harju-Myllyaho & Kyyrä 2013) and hosts to the field of Tourism, changing the way tourism is consumed and produced. Thus, accessible hospitality will benefit greatly from future research methods.

One of the well-known and widely used methods in the field of Futures Research is the Delphi method. For instance, it has been used in forecasting the technological development. In practice, the method is used in gaining insights from a panel of experts concerning a specific theme. The central idea of the method is anonymity, which ensures that the other members of the panel are not influenced by the opinion of a single member. The method is also based on iteration. Hence, the members of the panel have the possibility to specify their opinion, or even change their opinion on the grounds of new information. (Hiltunen, 2013, p. 134-135.) The Delphi method is familiar in Tourism and Hospitality research (e.g. Ziaabadi, Malakootian, Mehrjerdi, Jalaei & Boshrahadi 2017; Zhang 2017; Hsiao 2016; Dawson, Stewart, Johnston & Lemieux 2016; García-Melón, Gómez-Navarro, & Acuña-Dutra, 2011). In addition, the method is used in studying Accessible Tourism (Darcy, Cameron & Pegg 2010).

In this case study, the anonymity of the Delphi expert panel ensured a way of gaining a) Information from various viewpoints and b) Rigorous data. The panel was established by using a matrix based on a multidisciplinary approach. The multidisciplinary viewpoint was systematised by using PESTE categories (Political, Economic, Socio-cultural, Technological, Ecological), which are often used in Futures Research to identify different driving forces that change our society. Informants from both public, private and third sectors were involved.

Kuusi (2014) states that the purpose and the context of the study can impact the nuances of the method relatively freely, even though it requires certain features. (Kuusi, 2014.) In this study, the choice was to conduct a two-phase Delphi to a closed group of experts included in the matrix of experts. The aim of the

Delphi-study was not to gain a consensus, but rather to gain different perspectives and viewpoints that would form interesting contradictions or complete one another. Even though the liberty to form the method was taken to suit the focus of the study, it does not fail to fulfill the criteria of the Delphi method.

The Delphi panel was framed to contain approximately 50 persons from Finland according to the matrix in Table 1. One third of the invited experts accepted the invitation to join the panel.

Table 1: Experts in the panel

	Political	Economic	Socio-cultural	Technological	Ecological
Public sector	Educational Institutions, Ministries, Municipalities				
Private sector	Companies, regions, tourism marketing companies, destinations				
Third sector	Associations				

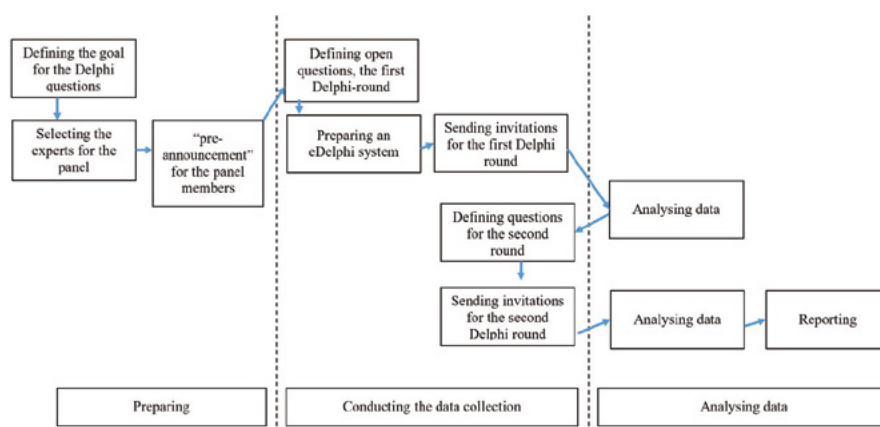
At the first round of the panel the panelists were first asked to answer four open questions without seeing each other's answers and comments. The answers were published for others to see only at the end of the first round. The fact that only few comments were given after the earlier comments were visible to all panelists, affects iteration and the interactivity of the panel. It is necessary to be aware of the effects of these kinds of decisions when using the Delphi-method.

The data from the first round of questions was analysed for the purpose of compiling the questions for the second round. The second round of the study consisted of ten structured and multiple choice -questions. Thus, the themes that were brought up by the participants in the first round formed the basis for the questions in the second round. Picture 1 demonstrates the different phases of the Delphi study we used. The different phases were affected by the specificity of the subject and the combination of the closed panel.

Already at the first phase, the panel brought various insights for the possible futures of Accessible Tourism in Finland. On a general level, the panelists saw

that diverse information is needed to guide the development of Accessible Hospitality. This draws back to the multidisciplinary nature of Accessible Hospitality (Harju-Myllyaho & Kyyrä 2013; Harju-Myllyaho & Jutila 2016), which was the initial starting point of the research. Indeed, enhancing Accessible Hospitality requires knowhow that cannot be provided with a unidimensional approach.

The panelists emphasised the importance of communication and dissemination. Thus, according to the panel, the knowhow of accessible communication is one of most significant issues in the future of Accessible Tourism. Also, knowledge about the diverse dimensions of accessibility, as well as knowhow to meet all kinds of customers, were stressed. To gain this knowledge, the panelists pointed out the importance of getting accessibility as part of all Tourism Degrees, but also complementing and targeted education were seen as significant.



Picture 1: Study process

As to the driving forces impacting the development of Accessible Hospitality in future, increasing knowledge of its importance, necessity and potential for tourism businesses were stressed by the panelists. This indicates that evaluating and understanding the economic and social potential of Accessible Tourism are important issues and, thus, they should be emphasised, as has been done by Eichhorn (2014). This potential relates to both new startups and existing companies alike, since new companies can create new services to provide more accessible services, and the existing companies can, for instance, utilise this target

group to improve the low seasons. Technological development was seen as an important factor as well: The possibilities to improve accessibility through technology, but also the challenges that increasing use of technology brings. Different kinds of sharing economy platforms challenge accessibility in a number of ways, for example: Technological development is one of the most influential megatrends along with globalization, change in economic order and climate change, and all these are sure to have an impact in Accessible Tourism and Tourism in general. (Sitra 2017; Prime Minister's office 2017). Concerning technological development, a panelist writes:

"In addition to socio-economic issues, possibilities, inclusion, active participation and self-fulfilment will play a part in developing Accessible Tourism. Also, technological development will have an impact in developing aids. Safety will be an important issue in the future." - Panelist A

Analysis of the panel's comments show that the future of Accessible Hospitality depends highly on general societal development and attitude towards minorities. Thus, how important are accessibility and inclusion seen in society:

"Municipalities' accessibility strategies and their realization also has a connection to the progress of Accessible Tourism in the future. How the municipality supports living, built environment and mobility, social accessibility and accessible communication." - Panelist B

From this viewpoint, the third sector, such as Human Rights Associations and associations for people with disabilities, are valuable, because they bring visibility to the issue. In addition, municipalities and tourism companies were seen as important in promoting accessibility. In this sense, Accessible Hospitality is also political. The political viewpoint to accessibility is indeed important, not just to enable tourism to different nationalities (Edelheim, 2013, p. 93; Harju-Myllyaho & Jutila, 2016, pp. 35-36), but also to enable participation for people who would otherwise be excluded from the society and some of its activities that have become quite trivial for some. Tourism is one of those activities that would ensure a more active and inclusive society. This gives political accessibility as a novel and stronger standing point.

As for the use of the Delphi method in studying Accessible Tourism from the futures' perspective, the method is certainly suitable for that purpose, but

requires careful planning and implementation. In the case an online platform called eDelphi was used, which helped moderators significantly to organise the study. The matrix used (see Table 1) was beneficial when recognising experts in different fields and, thus, the viewpoints were quite versatile. Also, panelists themselves saw that diverse information is needed to guide the development of Accessible Tourism. However, this study disclosed some issues that particularly need to be taken into consideration when using the Delphi method in the context of Accessible Hospitality.

The number of experts who accepted the invitation to join the panel was 18. In terms of open questions, this number provides important and relevant information, as panelists represented different sectors and fields of society. Instead, regarding the multiple choice questions in the second round, the low answer rate affects the validity of the results. Extension from a national to an international panel might have brought more participants and even more diverse viewpoints to the panel. Further, scheduling is an important factor as well. Compact research with a shorter timeline might have been beneficial in order to get more participants for the panel. Nevertheless, based on this study, it is arguable to say that in the field of Accessible Tourism, the Delphi method can provide versatile information in general, but deeper insights would also require other methods.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The case study from Finland showed on the one hand that developing Accessible Tourism benefits from multidimensional viewpoints provided by a multidisciplinary group. On the other hand, it is fair to claim, that Accessible Hospitality requires cooperation between different instances. According to the case, an expert panel such, as the one in this Delphi study, can act as a valuable tool in developing Accessible Hospitality. The Delphi panel provides diverse viewpoints and positions, in this way helping to understand the multidimensional and complex nature of Accessible Hospitality. Thus, this method can be recommended as a way of gathering data, but, above all, constituting a framework and directions for further researches.

Primarily the case serves as a reference for forthcoming studies. In the future, it would be necessary to study the social impact of Accessible Tourism, since it has become quite clear that Accessible Tourism and societal development go hand in

hand. Strategic development, as well as regional and municipal development, serve the development of Accessible Hospitality, and vice versa. Thus, on one hand, developing accessible services for tourists can lead to more accessible services for the locals. On the other hand, accessible services for the locals can be beneficial for the tourism industry as well. Hence, the role and visibility of accessibility in different strategies would be important to analyse in prospective studies. This is also important due to the fact that absence from strategies will, consequently, lead to challenges in development and acquiring resources and funding.

Above all, communication should be seen as a top priority in terms of Accessible Hospitality. In the future, it would be useful to provide the tourism companies with the means to improve their accessible communication. This demands versatile and high-quality research about the topic, as well as better knowledge about dissemination of the research.

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