

# Constraints That Prevent Tour Firms from Serving Physically Impaired Tourists in Kenya

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## Abstract

The number of people living with disabilities is increasing. It is projected that by the end of 2020, there will be over 1.2 billion people living with disability. Notwithstanding, accessibility provisions of this population remains few. Studies reveal that, many tourism destinations have not adequately provided facilities, information for physically impaired tourists. This study therefore sought to know the constraints that face tour firms from the providing for physically impaired tourist by sampling 104 tour firms and agencies in Kenya. A QUAN-QUAL approach was used to investigate this phenomenon. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings of this study reveal that there are a myriad of constraints that tour firms face including the following: The inclusion of dimensions of access, particularly for vision, hearing impairments; Operationalizing information in access, accuracy, detail, format, and presentation dimensions; Inclusion in organizing personalized trips for physically impaired tourists; The inclusion of tourism access information in generic marketing; Destination accessibility; Linkages between transport, the natural and built environments (attractions/parking/activities/accommodation/services/natural areas e.t.c); Availability and cost of hiring attendants/skilled guides who can handle physically impaired tourists; Costs of adapting transport systems for physically impaired tourists. These findings will facilitate, policy planning, programming and implementation of policies that will see an increased uptake of accessible tourism in Kenya.

**Keywords:** Accessible Tourism/Disabled tourism, physically impaired tourists, Impairment, Disability, Universal design

**DOI:** 10.7176/RHSS/9-18-07

**Publication date:** September 30<sup>th</sup> 2019

## 1 Introduction

To enhance a positive tourist experience, a basis for tourism business sustainability, the tourism industry must be keen on all the areas that give value to it. Luiza (2010) highlights accessibility as one of the key areas of sustainable tourism. Accessibility is a fundamental facet for responsible and sustainable tourism policy. It is both an incomparable business opportunity and a human rights imperative (Darcy & Buhalis, 2011). That notwithstanding, it is important to realize that accessible tourism does not benefit the impaired alone, but everyone.

## 2 Demand for accessible tourism

According to WHO (2018), there are over 1 billion disabled people in the world. Together with their families, it is estimated that a third of the world's population is directly or indirectly affected by disability. This population commands over \$1 trillion of disposable income annually. Studies have projected that the number of people living with disabilities will rise because of the ageing population and the increasing number of chronic diseases. While the numbers increase, there is a need to keep an emphasis on providing equitable products, services, and experiences for all. The current emphasis on accessibility and inclusion has brought forth increased exploration to concepts underpinning the emergent disabled tourism segment which consist of; tourists who have wide-ranging levels of accessibility needs (Miller & Kirk, 2002). Developing accessible tourism products for the physically impaired tourists' (a niche market) is a milestone in ensuring accessibility for all. Accessible tourism for all does not focus on providing alternative access for impaired tourists, but rather seek to pursue the creation of environments that are universally designed. The concept of accessible tourism is the core of universal design principles. These principles include; equitable use; flexibility in use; simple and intuitive use; perceptible information; tolerance for error; low physical effort; size and space for approach and use. The scope of application of universal design in infrastructure and services makes it a requisite for destinations to give emphasis on tourism information, transportation, architectural environment, tourism activities, accommodation and food service. The design also put staff training as a central element in addressing the needs of physically impaired tourists. The training is vital to reduce accessibility deficiencies by promoting disability awareness, customer service and care to minimize barriers. Well trained staffs are able to; perceive and address physically impaired tourists needs; provide better assistance; better communication; good customer care; and to provide complete information (Norain, Siti, Taha, & Maslina, 2008). Even with this understanding, studies indicate that the accessible tourism market has been discriminated by the travel and tourism industry. Studies have found out that over 500 million people living with disabilities do not take holidays because many of the available tourism

offers are not accessible. This study sought to establish the constraints that prevent tour firms from serving physically impaired tourists in Kenya.

### 3 Methodology

The study adopted a QUANTI-QUAL research design. The study's research instruments included an observation checklist and a self-administered questionnaire. The study's was done in Nairobi and Mombasa. The study targeted Tour firms since they play a critical role in the hospitality and tourism service chain. From a population of 307 tour firms pulled from Kenya Association of Tour Operators, a sample of 104 tour firms was proportionately selected. The study used purposive sampling technique to target one management employee from each of the sampled tour firms. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

### 4 Findings

To determine the constraints that prevent tour firms from serving physically impaired tourists, a descriptive statistic was run (see table below). The study investigated 8 factors under the constraint variable. These factors included: (i) Inclusion in organizing personalized trips for physically impaired tourists- var1; (2) Availability and cost of hiring attendants/skilled guides who can handle physically impaired tourists- var2; (3) Inclusion of dimensions of access, particularly for vision, hearing impairments- var3; (4) Provision of alternative communication technology/assistive devices- var4; (5) Costs of adapting transport systems for physically impaired tourists- var5 ;(6)Operationalizing information in access, accuracy, detail, format, and presentation dimensions- var6; (7) Inclusion of tourism access information in generic marketing- var7; (8)Destination accessibility; Linkages between transport, the natural and built environments (attractions/parking/activities/accommodation/services/natural areas- var8.

#### Descriptive statistics for constraints that prevent tour firms' from serving physically impaired tourists

	Var1	Var2	Var3	Var4	Var5	Var6	Var7	Var8
N	94	94	94	94	94	94	94	94
Valid	94	94	94	94	94	94	94	94
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	3.5213	3.2979	3.6064	2.8830	3.0213	3.5319	3.4681	3.3511
Std. Deviation	.88874	.94845	.81936	1.02502	1.02631	.85134	.90044	.95835
Skewness	-1.052	-.711	-1.189	.362	.201	-1.063	-1.167	-.687
Std. Error of Skewness	.249	.249	.249	.249	.249	.249	.249	.249

Factor mean score close to 1 represents a low mean in a 5 point likert scale (where 1 = Strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neither, 4=agree 5=strongly agree)

The investigated factors expect factor 4 scored high means ( $\bar{x}$ = (var1)3.52513; (var2) 3.2979; (var3)3.6064; (var4) 2.8830; (var5) 3.0213; (var6) 3.5319; (var7) 3.4681; (var8) 3.3511) respectively. This implies that there were a number of constraints that prevented most of the tour firms from serving physically impaired tourists. This implication is cannot conclusively explain the moderate mean for provision of alternative communication technology/assistive devices. It was therefore imperative to further investigate the factors and to establish the distribution of the data points. This would help to accurately explain the implications of the variables. To this end descriptive statistics (percentages and frequencies) were run.

**Constraints that hinder tour firms' from serving physically impaired tourists' frequency table**

		Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neither agrees/disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)	Cumulative (%)
i)	Inclusion in organizing personalized trips for physically impaired tourists	1.1	20.2	7.4	68.1	3.2	100
ii)	Availability and cost of hiring attendants/skilled guides who can handle physically impaired tourists	1.1	30.9	5.3	62.8		100
iii)	The inclusion of dimensions of access, particularly for vision, hearing impairments		18.1	6.4	72.3	3.2	100
iv)	Provision of alternative communication technology/assistive devices	1.1	52.1	7.4	36.2	3.2	100
v)	Costs of adapting transport systems for physically impaired tourists		46.8	8.5	40.4	4.3	100
vi)	Operationalizing information in access, accuracy, detail, format, and presentation dimensions		21.3	6.4	70.2	2.1	100
vii)	The inclusion of tourism access information in generic marketing	2.1	20.2	7.4	69.1	1.1	100
viii)	Destination accessibility; Linkages between transport, the natural and built environments (attractions/parking/activities/accommodation/services/natural areas e.t.c)	1.1	28.7	6.4	61.7	2.1	100
	Valid N (listwise) 94						

#### 4.1 Inclusion in organizing personalized trips for physically impaired tourists

In trying to establish the constraints (if any) that tour firms face in inclusion in personalizing trips for physically impaired tourists, the study recorded a mean of  $\bar{x}=3.52$  and a standard deviation of  $SD=0.88874$ . From the frequency table above, 71.3% (68.1%+3.2%) of the respondents found it challenging to organize personalized trips for physically impaired tourist. 21.3% (1.1%+20.2%) of the respondents never saw inclusion in organizing personalized trips for physically impaired tourists a major constraint to accessible tourism. Still, 7.4% of the respondents were not decided on the factor. It is evident from the distribution of these percentages that a majority of tour firms agreed to be facing constraints relating to inclusion in organizing personalized trips for physically impaired tourists.

#### 4.2 Availability and cost of hiring attendants/skilled guides who can handle physically impaired tourists

As to whether the availability and cost of hiring attendants/skilled guides who can handle physically impaired tourists was a challenge, the study recorded a mean of  $\bar{x}=3.2979$  and a standard deviation of  $SD=0.94845$ . This mean was moderately high. From the percentages in table above 62.8% (slightly above average) of the respondents agreed that availability and cost of hiring attendants/skilled guides who can handle physically impaired tourists was a constraint they faced. 32% of the respondents never saw it as a challenge to find and hire skilled guides to handle physically impaired tourists. A few (5.3%) of their tour firms were undecided on whether/not the factor under study was a constraint to accessible tourism. These findings imply that many tour firms faced challenges in relation to finding and hiring skilled attendants. This score could either mean that skilled attendants were scarce or hiring one could mean extra overhead costs.

#### 4.3 The inclusion of dimensions of access, particularly for vision, communication impairments

The factor of inclusion of dimensions of access for vision and communication impairments scored a high mean of  $\bar{x}= 3.6$  and a standard deviation of  $SD=0.81936$ . The percentages of respondents who agreed; those who disagreed; and those who were undecided that Inclusion of dimensions of access, particularly for vision,

communication impairments was a constraint they faced in accessible tourism were; 75.3%(72.3%+3.2%), 18.1%, and 6.4% respectively. From these findings, it can be implied that a majority of tour firms saw it a challenge to integrate dimensions of access, particularly for vision, communication impairments.

#### **4.4 Provision of alternative communication technology/assistive devices**

This factor recorded a moderately low mean ( $\bar{x}=2.8330$ ) and a standard deviation of  $SD=1.02502$ . From the findings, it is evident that a moderate percentage (53.2%) of tour firms did not find it a challenge to provide alternative communication technology/assistive devices. It also evident that some tour firms (39.4%) found it challenging to provide alternative communication technology/assistive devices for physically impaired tourists. A few respondents could neither agree/disagree that the aforementioned factor was a constraint to accessible tourism. These findings imply that the number of tour firms who did not find this factor a constraint is as significant to those who found it a constraint. There is also a possibility that some tour firms were not aware of the aforesaid technologies and therefore never considered it a challenge.

#### **4.5 Costs of adapting transport systems for physically impaired tourists**

The costs of adapting transport systems for physically impaired tourists variable had a moderately high mean of  $\bar{x}=3$  and a standard deviation of  $SD=1.02631$ . The corresponding percentages for those who considered and those who did not consider costs of adapting transport systems for physically impaired tourists a constraint were 72.3% (70.2%+2.1%) and 21.3% respectively. From the findings, it can be said that, to many of the tour firms, the costs of adapting transport systems for physically impaired tourists was a constraint.

#### **4.6 Operationalizing information access, accuracy, detail, format, and presentation dimensions**

The constraint factor of operationalizing information access, accuracy, detail, format, and presentation dimensions recorded a high mean of  $\bar{x}=3.5$  and a standard deviation of  $SD=0.85134$ . This mean represented 46.8% of those who disagreed; 44.7% (4.04%+4.3%) of those who agreed; and 8.5% of those who were undecided that operationalizing information access, accuracy, detail, format, and presentation dimensions was a constraint. This implies that there were an almost equal number of tour firms who agreed to those who disagreed that this factor was a constraint.

#### **4.7 The inclusion of tourism access information in generic marketing**

As per the recorded high mean score of  $\bar{x}=3.5$  and standard deviation of  $SD=0.90044$ , it is evident that tour firms found challenges in the inclusion of tourism access information in their generic marketing endeavors. This is evident from comparative percentages for those respondents who agree to those who disagreed to be facing constraints relating to the Inclusion of tourism access information in generic marketing. The number of respondents who agreed that the aforementioned factor was a constraint was high at 70.2% (69.1%+1.1%) compared to 20.2% (those who disagreed). It can, therefore, be implied that a majority of tour firms find it challenging to integrate tourism access information in generic marketing. This further implies that tour firms had scantily integrated access information for physically impaired tourists to their generic marketing mediums.

#### **4.8 Destination accessibility; Linkages between transport, the natural and built environments (attractions/parking/activities/ accommodation/services/natural areas)**

This dimension scored a mean of  $\bar{x}=3.35$  and a standard deviation of  $SD=0.95835$ . The corresponding percentages for those who disagreed to those who agreed that this factor was a constraint to accessible tourism were 29.8% (1.1%+28.7%) and 63.8%(61.7%+2.1%) respectively. This implies that a majority of tour firms saw it a challenge to find accessible destinations, attractions, accommodation services, and natural areas for their physically impaired tourists. This factor is more of an extrinsic challenge to what tour firms have done to make their facilities (tour vans/buses) accessible. There is a possibility that some tour firms were accessible (adapted facilities-tour vehicles, accessible info, skilled employees). However, there was a disconnect between them and the destinations (inaccessible attractions/parking/activities/accommodation/services/natural areas).

### **5 Discussion**

A possible explanation to the constraint in destination accessibility (var8), inclusion in personalizing trips for physically impaired tourists (var1), and Operationalizing information in access, accuracy, detail, format, and presentation dimensions (var6), is the fragmented nature of tourism elements in the service chain. Accessible tourism experience for physically impaired tourists is enhanced if the complete service chain is included. Isolated offers of individual players in the service chain fail when other providers in the customer path are not integrated when preparing for physically impaired tourists. Coordination and harmonization of individual tourism elements in the customer service chain is very important (ADAC, 2003). This is the reason why physically impaired tourists need to make a significantly greater amount of pre-planning to take on travel than

the non-impaired. It further explains the reason why destination management organizations including tour firms are challenged when all-inclusive tour packages are to be designed. Also, it is solely hard for tour firms to create a comprehensive accessible tourism product alone. Future studies should, therefore, consider investigating constraints in the entire service chain rather than isolating one service provider in the chain (tour firms) to be representative. A possible explanation to the high mean for the constraint of obtaining skilled attendants (var2) is that tourism industry as a whole has not seen the significance of accessible tourism, and thereby failing to equip their staff with requisite skills. It is evident in other scholarly works that the level of understanding and qualifications of tourism service providers is lacking to address the needs of physically impaired tourists. There is an insistent need to put emphasis on instilling tourism service providers with knowledge on accessibility through training. A possible explanation for the constraints related to information access (var3 and var7), particularly for vision, hearing impairments is that; tour firms are not aware of the different dimensions of access. This could be as a result of lack of a shared understanding of what represents access and disability by tour firms. It is also possible to explain this scenario to lack of knowledge about accessible tourism and thereof inadequate skills to integrate dimensions of access to mainstream tourism.

## 6 Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings of this study reveal that there were many constraints that prevented tour firms from serving physically impaired tourists. These constraints include:

- The inclusion of dimensions of access, particularly for vision, hearing impairments.
- Operationalizing information in access, accuracy, detail, format, and presentation dimensions.
- Inclusion in organizing personalized trips for physically impaired tourists.
- The inclusion of tourism access information in generic marketing.
- Destination accessibility; Linkages between transport, the natural and built environments (attractions/parking/activities/ accommodation/services/natural areas e.t.c).
- Availability and cost of hiring attendants/skilled guides who can handle physically impaired tourists.
- Costs of adapting transport systems for physically impaired tourists.

This finding can be useful to tour firms in designing accessible packages for physically impaired tourists. This finding is equally important for tour firms to help them explore the means of packaging and availing marketing information that is accessible to all. Nevertheless, this finding will help policymakers in crafting policies and legislation that will create accessible destinations and encourage the uptake of accessible tourism in a sustainable manner. Further, understanding the information needs of physically impaired tourists will enable destination marketers to come up with marketing initiatives that will facilitate the uptake of accessible tourism. Destination marketers such as KTB should work together with tour operators to identify attributes which influence physically impaired tourists' choice of accessible destinations. This will enable them to craft effective targeting and positioning strategies for accessible offers in the tourism industry/destinations.

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