



10 Semester Project – Master thesis

Title

**Exploring the tourists' perceptions of accessible tourism
Sibenik (Croatia) Case Study**

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Abstract

The increasing number of tourists who travel every year and with the expectation that the trend of traveling will continue in the future requires that tourist destination adapt and constantly develop, in order to fulfill the needs of all tourists. Tourists with disabilities, specifically for this paper tourist in a wheelchair, present great opportunity for tourist destinations to develop their tourist offer and to implement equality for all tourists. It is crucial to raise the awareness of all stakeholders to adapt and develop a tourist destination for tourists with special needs. The intention of this paper is to deepen the knowledge about the accessibility and about the barriers with which tourists in a wheelchair are dealing with. This paper analyzed the accessibility of small historical city Sibenik, which in recent years has become a very popular holiday destination. For the purpose of this paper, the researcher observed and evaluated different aspects of accessibility which are pointed by scholars as the biggest obstacles with which wheelchair users tend to struggle when visiting tourist destination, to be able to understand what has been done in the city of Sibenik to ensure the conditions for full enjoyment of destination for all people. The analysis of this paper is based on qualitative and quantitative methodology, by conducting the interviews and questionnaires with tourists in a wheelchair which have visited Sibenik, direct observation by the researcher, photographic records and secondary data found online. The researcher analyzed the accessibility of four themes (Hotels, Restaurants, Tourist Attractions, and Public Infrastructure). Each of those themes has sub-themes that are divided into physical barriers, information barriers and human barriers. All these aspects give a full picture of Sibenik's accessibility for wheelchair tourists. The obtained data led the researcher to the conclusion that overall, Sibenik is not prepared and accessible for wheelchair users from any aspect. Even though there are positive aspects, in general, Sibenik is far away from calling itself 'accessible destination'. There are too many physical, information and human barriers that interfere with the independent use of wheelchair users, although it can be seen that there is some awareness of local parties that those issues need to be dealt with.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Tourism is one of the biggest growing industries in the world and for many countries the main industry. As it is stated by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), for many destinations and many countries, tourism is a central economic driver for socio-economic development (Roser, 2017). Every year records increase of people who are traveling and it is becoming a trend among people.

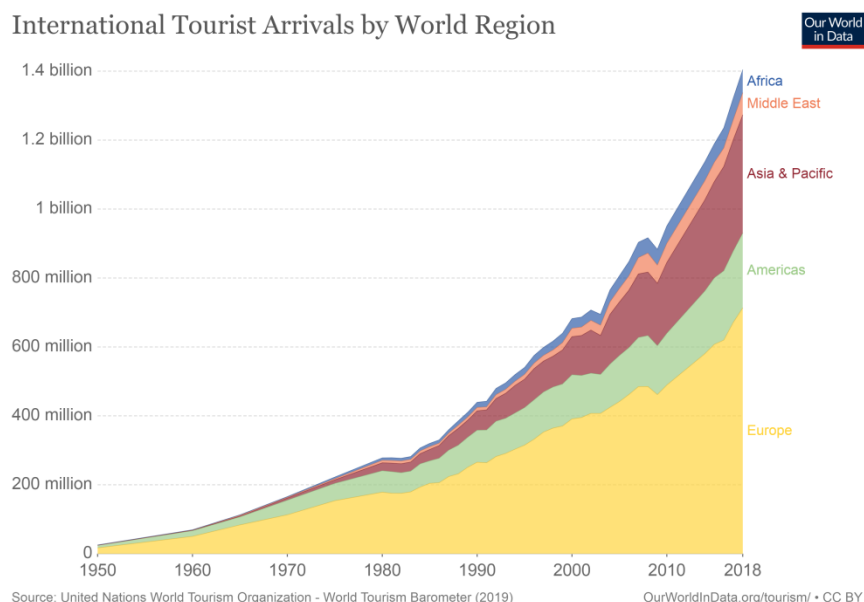


Image 1: "Arrivals by world regions", Accessed on 24. February 2020; Available at: <https://ourworldindata.org/tourism>

As it is possible to see on the graph above, from the Second World War, the number of tourists' arrivals records constant growth. With the growth of tourism, there is bigger pressure on tourist destinations to develop their facilities. Traveling is everyone's right, and for this to prove true, tourist destinations must adapt to every type of visitor as no one should feel discriminated against because of their physical or psychological condition (Eichhorn et al., 2008). As Umbelino (2009) states "It is a commonplace to mention that, in the provision of tourist services, all clients are special. Everyone has individuality, everyone has tastes and its own demands" (Ibid, p.21).

According to the 'UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities', a disabled person is defined as "those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an

equal basis with others"(United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, 2006, p. 3). Accessible tourism allows people who have some type of disability (mobility, hearing, vision, etc.) to independently and with dignity enjoy the tourism products, services, and environment (Darcy & Dickson, 2009).

As there are many types of disabilities, this paper **will be focused** on tourists who have problems with **mobility**, meaning, tourists who are **wheelchair** users. By including all types of disabilities in the same research paper, complexity would increase and the paper would become more general. Different disabilities present different barriers for disable persons when traveling (Freeman & Selmi, 2009).

The tourists in the wheelchair, the same as any other tourist wants to enjoy the services and facilities of a tourist destination without having to worry about any restrictions. Therefore, the tourist in the wheelchair needs help and support from the tourism organizations and tourism destination. To be able to receive all types of tourists, destinations should adapt to them and develop accordingly. Otherwise, destinations that do not constantly develop will be in the background of tourism in the future. Nowadays, more than ever, destinations are forced to look for new and creative ways to maintain and attract new customers (Hudson and Ritchie, 2009). Fontes and Monteiro (2009) state that people with disabilities are leaving their homes attracted by the same motives and interests as other tourists. Traveling not only provides pleasure for itself but also allows that the tourist relives the joys of the journey and that at the same time make its personal and social fulfillment.

Global tourist is more experienced and picky. He/she is well educated and informed with high expectations from traveling. By traveling to other destinations, a tourist seeks to run away from everyday life, with the goal of relaxing and refilling the batteries (Moutinho, 2005). Therefore, traveling is an asset, to which everyone is entitled (Ibid). However, according to Wang & Cole (2014) people with disabilities are experiencing a lot of difficulties, and in many examples, regulations made for disabled persons are not always followed. Because of those difficulties that they are experiencing, very often disable persons are restricted in their travel patterns (Yau et al., 2004), therefore, tend to travel less than people without disability problems (Huh & Singh, 2007).

According to Lynn Minnaert et al (2011), it is necessary to establish tourism that is accessible to all, meaning, to implement so-called "social tourism", which is aimed at vulnerable social groups such as people with disabilities, the elderly and infirm, or children and families with lower social status. "Social tourism initiatives aim to offer tourism experiences that are already accessible to a

majority of persons, to groups who are excluded from them, usually for financial or health reasons.” (Ibid, p.403).

It is essential for people with disabilities to have access to infrastructure and adequate access to all attractions. Without meeting the needs, disabled person is limited in enjoying the tourist product and offer of a tourist destination. The term '*tourism accessible to all*' means that tourist experiences can be enjoyed regardless of their difficulties and their possible physical or mental impairment (Darcy & Buhalis, 2011). According to Bergier et al (2010) and Stumbo et al (2011) with eliminating the existing barriers for disabled people, they would be more motivated to travel and their quality of life would be improved.

Providing appropriate ways/strategies for creating a barrier-free environment should be in the interest of all tourism organizations (Kim et al., 2012) especially now, because of the constant rise of tourists from year to year.

1.2 The challenge

On these grounds, as already mentions in the section above, this research project will be focused on analyzing accessibility in a tourist destination for the tourists in wheelchairs. Particularly, small historical city Sibenik (Croatia) has been chosen as a research focus because it offers valid cases considering that Sibenik has many attractions, monuments, and cultural heritage which are hardly accessible for tourists in the wheelchairs. As well, an additional reason why Sibenik was chosen as the focal point of this paper is that the researcher has lived most of his life in Sibenik, and as a tourist professional, has observed that many tourists with mobility problems (wheelchair) are struggling. Not only that they are struggling with visiting attractions and cultural heritage, but as well having issues entering restaurants, busses, hotels, etc.

Some of the hotels and most of the restaurants in Sibenik are opened in the old historical buildings which are built a few hundred years ago. That is an as well interesting fact because some of the buildings are cultural heritage, so bigger reconstructions are not allowed.

Due to the inaccessibility of tourist facilities in the Republic of Croatia, tourists with disabilities often feel unwanted. But just like other tourists, they can and want to be potential users of tourist services. The Republic of Croatia is recognized as a top tourist destination, but from the eyes of people with disabilities, it is considered unregulated. Ministry of Tourism in Croatia confirms the fact that tourism is not adapted to persons with disabilities. Therefore, there are very few tourist facilities and amenities in Croatia for persons with disabilities. More and more custom destinations

are gradually being redesigned to meet the needs of people with disabilities, but access to many parts of the cities, many hotels and restaurants are still presenting problems. The legislation mandates the need to ensure unhindered access and the movement of persons with disabilities, but most facilities still contain a number of obstacles, both within themselves and their immediate surroundings.

At a time when the economic crisis hits the country, tourism professionals could rely on this type of research and decide whether or not it would be a good bet to modify or expand their target audience, in the sense of increase revenue. A positive change would increase tourism competitiveness and sustainability in Croatia not only with regard to international tourism but also domestic tourism.

"There are an estimated 650 million persons living with disabilities in the world today. If one includes the members of their families, there are approximately 2 billion persons who are directly affected by disability, representing almost a third of the world's population. Thus, persons with disabilities represent a significant overlooked development challenge, and ensuring equality of rights and access for these persons will have an enormous impact on the social and economic situation in countries around the world" (United Nations, 2008, p.1).

Adaptation of tourist facilities is required to accommodate those tourists in their needs. Unfortunately, there is no program to encourage the development of special interest tourism in Croatia. Therefore, all responsibility and initiative in adaptation fall on the companies and destinations themselves, which should plan a new market segment for people with disabilities.

Following this line of thought, it would be expected that all Croatian entities were already aware of the benefits that the adaptation of the tourism offer could bring to the country. In fact, several scholars claim that investments in accessible services and infrastructures, however small they may be, translate into large profits at the social and economic level, increasing the sustainability of tourist destinations (Lassnig et al., 2008).

1.3 Problem formulation

This specific research work developed in this thesis intends to deepen the knowledge of the market constituted by foreigners' visitors with reduced mobility - namely those who are traveling in a wheelchair. The objective of this paper is to meet visitors with mobility difficulties, identifying their needs and expectations, and to critically analyze an installed set of inappropriate habits and practices, which continue to be followed by conformism, disinterest and/or lack of imagination. On

the other hand, this paper wants to give a voice to some players in the tourism process, from the perspective of the offer, whose performance will have a great impact on the satisfaction of these types of visitors and contributing to the city's accessibility. Through the crossing of these two approaches, the researcher intends to reach a consensus on what is urgent to modify and point out some suggestions that will allow improving the direction towards developing Sibenik as an accessible destination.

Before proceeding with the literature review, the researcher would like to clarify the choice of basing the research on visitors with motor disabilities, particularly those who travel in a wheelchair. It is mainly due to a sampling issue, as the evidence indicates that the number of visitors with motor disabilities is, in general, much higher than the set of all other tourists with disabilities, according to statistics presented by the FMET study (2004), which classified 70.7% of this type in this category of tourists. Also in a study by Buhalis et al (2005), when referring to the dimension of the accessible market in Europe, the number of people with motor disabilities exceeds by far any other disabilities. The same can be verified both by the researcher's observation throughout his professional practice as a tourism worker, as well as through information from travel agents and tourist information professionals. Furthermore, it is these visitors who demand from tourist destinations a greater capacity for physical adaptation, which may be more difficult and costly.

The aim of this paper is to ***explore the accessibility of tourist destination Sibenik (Croatia), for tourists in the wheelchair.*** This paper will investigate and get a better understanding of what are difficulties of tourists traveling in the wheelchair in the case of Sibenik (Croatia). The researcher decided to write about this topic because during his career as tourism professional he witnessed many difficult and uncomfortable situations for tourists in wheelchairs. As well, with this paper, the researcher wants to raise awareness of the problems with which tourists who are wheelchair users, are dealing while traveling.

Research Question:

What are the main barriers for tourists in a wheelchair when visiting the city of Sibenik (Croatia)? How could accessibility be improved in Sibenik?

Accordingly, objectives of this paper will be analyzed through research methods (qualitative & quantitative) and techniques (interviews, questionnaires and researcher observation) in the city of Sibenik (Croatia), to focus on a sequence of aspects, questions, and proposals related to foreign visitors who travel in a wheelchair.

Objectives of this paper are:

- 1. Identify the barriers which directly and indirectly involve the interaction between the tourist area and the tourists in a wheelchair.*
- 2. Identify the level of accessibility for people in wheelchairs in the case of the city of Sibenik (Croatia).*

To reach these objectives, the researcher tends to identify the conditions offered (or not) by the city of Sibenik to these visitors with regard to the physical environment, to identify the conditions offered to them by the city of Sibenik in its human environment, giving relevance to the relationship between the visitor and the agencies, receptionists, guides/companions, etc, and to identify the importance of information prior to travel.

1.4 Significance of the project

The analysis of Accessible Tourism in Sibenik (Croatia) is extremely difficult, not only because it has only recently begun to value people with disabilities with the help of specific laws and measures in Croatia and even in Europe, but also because of the scarcity of existing literature on this topic.

The increase in studies on *Accessible Tourism* in Croatia could contribute to the motivation for the creation of new affordable tourist quality offers, building and expanding a new complementary market niche within the scope of Croatian Tourism. This research work is therefore motivated by this need to systematize information about the practices and ideas existing in the country. Analysis of this type may be beneficiary for many since the creation of accessible destinations will not only help the destination financially with increased revenues but will also encourage a change in mentalities in the face of discrimination and marginalization of a group of people with special characteristics that have been forgotten by an oppressive society. This society forgets that disabilities are characteristics that not only arise at birth but may also appear over time, affecting the entire population, whether in the event of an accident or even during old age. It is intended that instead of continuing to assess disability as pathology, the focus is shifted to the social, economic, cultural, and political obstacles that society itself poses to the individual.

This research paper has a huge potential for the contribution of valuable information for the development of tourist destinations. The finding can help tourist destinations in educating their tourist professionals and increase of tourist offer. Understanding what customers need is an essential factor in the development of the destination. As well, it will encourage more people in the wheelchairs to travel. Therefore, this paper will contribute to the scientific and societal point of view.

2. Literature Review

In researches like this, it is important to clearly define the concepts that constitute the backbone of research and it would not be possible to speak of **Accessible Tourism** without first defining what accessibility is. It is possible to see in the literature review that accessibility has undergone a great evolution, possibly even to say trivialized, but in fact, it proves to be very complex when analyzing it.

2.1 Definition of Accessibility

The concept of accessibility has been changing and enriching itself, becoming increasingly complex. Ceasing to be fixed from a physical perspective and now also covering an economic, social, psychological point of view. In order to know the definition of accessibility, researcher searched the word accessibility on the Internet, where it was defined as practice for creating environments and services to be usable by disabled persons (Eichhorn & Buhalis, 2011).

Much more modern and comprehensive definition includes the concern not only of displacement, that is the physical act but also with the use of products, services, and information, so that everyone has the possibility to access everyone aspects of current life, participating fully in the life of the community. For Junca (1997, p. 17), accessibility is generally defined as: "the ability of the built environment to offer security and autonomy to anyone who uses it, regardless of their sensory or motor limitations/deficiencies."

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities said that disability is an "evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (CRPD, 2006, p.1). Persons with disabilities are those who have "long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (Ibid, p.4).

Regarding the physical dimension, accessibility must include a set of technical factors that will facilitate the mobility of all citizens in general, particularly those who have their mobility temporarily or definitively conditioned or reduced. As already mentioned, it's not just the physical accessibility that needs to be taken into account. According to Eichhorn & Buhalis (2011), there are three types of barriers to participation in tourism: **physical barriers** - many authors identify an inaccessible environment as the most important barrier for people with disabilities; include

inaccessibility in transport, accommodation and attractions; **human barriers** - personal or society; lack of **information** - an inability to provide correct and reliable information about accessibility. These three types of barriers are very challenging, while still remaining continually neglected (Ibid).

From the economic point of view, in order to have accessibility, policies and strategies must be developed allowing all those who have financial difficulties to overcome them, so that they are able to participate in the various activities inherent in life. This economic dimension of accessibility is strongly related to the idea of inclusion, thus taking us to the social dimension, strongly related to *Tourism for All* (Hjalager, A., 2007). The social dimension must ensure that everyone, despite their condition and social class, can have access to the various activities that are part of the life of the community, including tourism. For this reason, this concept of social tourism appears in many countries (Heinen, 2005). Due to the complexity of the concept and based on the different types of deficiencies or limitations, Darcy proposed (1998) to differentiate the term access in three categories:

- **Physical access:** involving people with reduced mobility;
- **Sensory access:** related to visual and hearing impairment;
- **Communicational access:** related to the difficulties with the written word, not only people with cognitive difficulties but also people from other cultures can be included here.

In 1996, the European Concept for Accessibility (ECA) was created in the European Community, based on the initiative of several countries, led by the Netherlands, which aimed to draw attention to the definition of accessibility, whose concept diverged in different national spaces. The intention was to unify conceptions of accessibility because, as a study by Richter and Richter (1999) show, the neglect of establishing standardized levels for individuals with disabilities poses ethical dilemmas, and related to health, safety challenges. ECA, which aims to help understand and develop various matters related to accessibility, emerges as a working tool. A guideline that does not imply cultural standardization and uniformity, allowing “to respect the functional requirements of accessibility, maintaining the distinct characteristics of each culture and the customs of the different population groups” (ECA, 2003, p. 18). According to ECA's recommendations, accessibility has to be considered as a horizontal issue, with clear binding standards and norms, issued by the European Community, that oblige the construction industry and related enterprises to accept and adopt the principles that form *Design for All* (Ibid, 2003).

In a document published in 2003 by the European Union (Ibid, 2003), it is stated that this guideline should be applied to all the built physical environment, that is, to the environment created

or modified by a man so that everyone can have access to it. As Eichhorn & Buhalis (2011) refer to, this *environment* can be private or public. In the private sector, it often tends to see the laws for the implementation of accessibility as an inconvenient issue of additional expenditure. The public sector will have a greater tendency to enforce the Law and, at least in some cases, it will also have more financial availability for this to happen. Therefore, in this division between public and private, there will be differences in the application of the concept, which will cause differences in the application of accessibility rules and different timings in that application. In this sense, the European Concept of Accessibility (WTO / ACS, 2015) provides the principles and criteria for a correct application of Universal Design, a concept that, currently, cannot be separated from the concept of Accessibility.

2.2 Universal Design

Universal Design was developed in the United States and Europe, also called “*Design for All*” (Ostroff, 2001). It is based on respect for different human standards and the inclusion of all people; for this reason, it currently also find the designation of Inclusive Design (Umbelino, 2012). Sometimes *Accessible Design* is still mentioned, but this concept proves to be limiting because it seems to indicate an appropriate design for people with disabilities, while Universal Design is really intended for everyone (Story et al, 1998).

Universal Design or, in the other words, *Design for All*, can be defined as “the intervention in environments, products, and services so that everybody is able to participate in the creation of our society, providing him/her with equal opportunities to take part in economic, social, cultural and leisure activities. Furthermore, enabling all users to access, use and understand the various parts of the environment independently, irrespective of their age, gender, abilities or cultural background” (ECA, 2003, p.23). The concept had its genesis in the need to respond to the requirements of a significant percentage of the population - people with disabilities or some condition of loss of mobility. As Story et al. (1998) state, two World wars combined with the improvement of medicine which is extending the average life expectancy, have increased the number of people with special needs. In a simplified way, *Universal Design* is a human-centered model where people with disabilities are seen as citizens, as customers. The concept asserts itself more and more: “*Design for All* must be a guarantee of security, so that future generations will enjoy, entirely and in the same way, a favorable physical environment, built taking everyone into account” (ECA, 2003, p. 23). For authors like Story et al. (1998), it should be born in mind that we cannot see people with special needs as a single large population group. On the contrary, it deals with multiple small groups, since each disability or type of disability creates different needs.

Yet, many countries around the world do not have laws, building codes and accessibility standards which would lead towards a framework for developing accessible tourism (ESCAP, 2008). Without those fundamental factors and till disability is on the agenda of the country's government and private sector, strategically there is no way to create a sustainable program for the development of accessible tourism destinations (Darcy et al., 2010). "Universal design has become a central concept in the development and understanding of accessible tourism. *Universal Design* is a paradigm that extends to concepts of continuous pathways, access and mobility, and barrier-free environment to incorporate intergenerational planning that recognizes the nexus between the aging, disability and the continuum of the ability of people over their lifespan" (Ibid, p.81). According to Darcy et al (2010), *Universal Design* has the potential to significantly contribute to social sustainability. "Social sustainability occurs when the formal and informal processes, systems, structures and relationships actively support the capacity of current and future generations to create healthy and livable communities. Socially sustainable communities are equitable, diverse, connected, democratic and provide good quality of life" (Baron & Gauntlett, 2002, p.4).

One of the first definitions of Sustainable Development is found in the Brundtland Report - (2007), in which it is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (p.1), additionally to that "what is needed today is a new era of economic growth - growth that is strong and, at the same time, socially and environmentally sustainable" (p.1). In addition to economic growth, which is a natural objective of any economy, it has to be taken into account aspects of social cohesion and preservation of the environment. Tourism is an activity with a very significant economic impact. However, despite all the advantages it brings, it can also carry risks associated with an abnormal consumption of resources (Franzoni, 2015). Hence the need for all this growth to be strategically managed in order for this impact to be positive, in 2004 UNWTO adopted the principles of sustainability for the development of tourism, creating the concept of sustainable tourism. According to the UNWTO, the concept of sustainable tourism can be defined as: "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" (EU GUIDEBOOK ON SUSTAINABLE TOURISM FOR DEVELOPMENT, 2012, p.1), thus incorporating in the concept of tourism the three dynamics prevalent in the concept of sustainable development. With regard to environmental aspects, sustainable tourism must take into account the optimal use of environmental resources and conserve heritage and biodiversity; in socio-cultural aspects, it must preserve cultural heritage, community values and the promotion of relationships between different cultures. In economic terms, it should

contribute to the alleviation of poverty, and promote socio-economic benefits for all stakeholders (Ibid).

2.3 Accessible Tourism

In 1980, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) declared tourism as a fundamental right and a key vehicle for development, alerting at that time to the social reality of this phenomenon. That was the first time in history that term tourism was associated with the term accessibility (Jimenez Casas, 2004). This was only possible because, over the decades, conditions established for people with disabilities have been accepted and helped by the community, so that many aspects of society were developed in order to guarantee their rights. This idea was further reinforced by the declaration of 1981 as the '*International Year of People with Disabilities*' (Ibid). At the time, the concept of accessibility to tourism was interconnected for the first time, underlining that the entire population has the right to enjoy tourist activities, being today a right recognized both at national and international levels, contributing to citizenship, citizens' well-being and quality of life (Ibid).

Although *Accessible Tourism* is a relatively recent area of scientific research, this field of study has already been presented under various designations, which reflects well the difficulty that has been found in defining it. As stated by Darcy & Buhalis (2011), in the various studies presented on the experiences of tourists with disabilities, the designations range from "disability tourism (tourism for the disabled), easy access tourism (easy access tourism), barrier-free tourism (barrier-free tourism), including tourism (inclusive tourism), universal tourism (universal tourism) and, finally, accessible tourism" (p. 10).

"Accessible tourism enfeebles people with the success requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments. This definition is inclusive of all people including those traveling with children in prams, people with disabilities and seniors" (Darcy & Dickson, 2009, p.34).

The "European Accessibility Concept" (ECA, 2003) stresses the need to apply universal and inclusive design to the built environment. The Concept associates several adjectives to the built environment that could function as a brainstorm of the word accessibility. It reveals that an accessible space must be respectful, safe, healthy, functional, aesthetic and understandable. In this last adjective, it already recalls the importance of access to communications, information and culture, being essential the use of simple, clear and perceptible information to anyone (Ibid).

The phenomenon of *Accessible Tourism* has its origin in a very distant past, but it is only now beginning to be defined as a true object of study. Accessible tourism offers citizens independence through products, services and environments that fulfill a universal design. In addition, ENAT - European Network for Accessible Tourism identifies points worthy of analysis and review by all tourist destinations, namely, destinations without barriers due to the use of infrastructure, equipment, transport, activities, exhibitions, attractions, communication and accessible information, as well as highly specialized personnel (Luiza, 2010).

Umbelino (2012) mentions that *Accessible Tourism* does not emerge from specific resources, nor is it based on some people with special interests, leaving its classification as a tourist product aside. Accessibility, which is the main characteristic of Accessible Tourism, being a transversal concept to the various aspects of society, should not be sold by itself as a tourist product but as an integral part of something more comprehensive, as is the case of urban tourism, cruise tourism or nature tourism. For this reason, Eichhorn, et al (2007, p. 16) state that "the attractiveness of the destination should be the motivation of the trip and not the level of accessibility of the services".

Several authors such as Darcy & Buhalis (2011), Figueiredo et al (2012), and Darcy (1998) consider *Accessible Tourism* as a market segment. But the authors also argue that it does not present itself as a common market segment and if we decide to designate it in this way, we will always have to consider that it will be a sui generis market segment because the people who belong to it are not grouped by their interests and motivations, as is usual in a market segment (for example, dark tourism or religious tourism), but because of the special needs they present. And even at that level, the differences are big. For this reason, authors such as Burnett and Baker (2001) note that within the population of people with disabilities, there are different market segments and that, consequently, tourism marketing strategies must take into account the differences between the various groups concerned.

In *Accessible Tourism*, although it is possible to identify customers, they are unlikely to present themselves as a homogeneous group, which calls into question the significant dimension. On the other hand, Prescott (2012) states that a marketing action aimed only at these customers could easily raise issues of segregation. Also, the natural tendency to group these people by their needs may lead to a discriminatory situation, contrary to all efforts made towards their integration and equality.

It can be said that visitors who fall into *Accessible Tourism* are spread through the most diverse tourist activities and present the most different motivations, having as their only common point the fact that they need special conditions. Even at that level, their needs are very diverse. As

reported by Eichhorn et al. (2008, p. 18) "people with the same disability have (...) different levels of functionality" and, for this reason, these same authors refer that "personalized information is a requirement".

Authors like Darcy & Buhalis (2011) call attention to another important aspect of *Accessible Tourism*, which is the fact that it is mobility, and not a disability, which is presented as one of the main elements for the study of this phenomenon. Each visitor will have a different way of being confronted with possible physical barriers, as their mobility, within the same group of disabilities, can be very different.

In addition to congenital or acquired disabilities, permanent or temporary, the increase in the elderly population itself implies a growing number of visitors with reduced mobility (Fontes et al., 2012). The aging process necessarily causes some physical deterioration, which may force the older tourist to have to resort to auxiliary means of travel, such as a wheelchair or scooter (Prescott, 2012). These tourists want to continue to enjoy their days because they are either regular tourist since their youth and they want to continue to be so, or because they have not been. For Bi, Card and Cole (2007, p.207). "the level of functionality of people with disabilities has an impact on their travel experience and (...) their needs vary depending on their level of functioning".

In addition to *Accessible Tourism* concept, a more comprehensive concept one was born, called *Tourism for Everyone* (combining accessible tourism, senior tourism and social tourism), which, following a universal design, specializing the offer, tries to create opportunities at the physical, practical and economic level in tourism products with the purpose of satisfying a greater number of clients, regardless of their age, their social class or any limited physical, sensory or mental function (Alles, 2010). Thus, the number of people traveling with special needs has been increasing rapidly, and it is verified that it requires material and technological conditions that allow them to move easily and with convenience. It turns out to be a new form of travel for these tourists and those who accompany them, which will certainly imply some changes in habits and needs related to the trip (Card et al, 2006). The term inclusion and its meaning in a diverse society are thus very useful and imperative in this analysis. According to the Macmillian dictionary, Inclusion is defined as: "The action of including someone or something in a group. They believe that all people should feel that they are included in society, even if they lack some advantages" (p.1). Inclusion stresses the need to create equal access opportunities for all individuals. Following this line of thought, Erwin (1993, p. 1) states that "The true essence of inclusion is based on the premise that all individuals with disabilities have a right to be included in naturally occurring settings and activities with their neighborhood peers, siblings, and friends ". This feeling of belonging and of valuing every human being is also highlighted

by Miller and Katz (2002, p. 43) in their definition of inclusion, seen as “(...) a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best”.

In 2015, the World Tourism Organization (WTO / ACS), in its ‘Manual for *Accessible Tourism for All*’, refers to the importance of collaboration between the public and private sectors in terms of tourism, establishing, specific areas of action for each of them. According to WTO / ACS (2015, p. 27), “the public sector is responsible for creating and improving laws, including accessibility in all plans, encouraging and providing support for initiatives related to accessibility; while the private sector is responsible for complying with legislation, training professionals, putting into practice the principle of non-discrimination of the client and providing complete and reliable information”. The collaboration between these sectors, in parallel with the fulfillment of these functions, will allow for a better knowledge of reality, which, in turn, will lead to laws being made taking into account the different needs (of demand) and interests (of supply), adapting them if reality is better, which will also lead to its easier fulfillment (Ibid). Accessible Tourism, like any other type of tourism, depends on the correct response of supply to demand (Eichhorn et al., 2008).

This is a call to attention to the need to abandon passive attitudes that have developed over time, both on the part of supply and demand, in order to move to a more active posture, more in line with the new inclusion paradigm, that is, full integration into society of people with disabilities, which gives them rights but also obligations (Shaw & Veitch, 2011).

There is the economic importance of Accessible Tourism, since, of the 127 million Europeans who would benefit from greater accessibility at all levels (Buj, 2010). The European Disability Forum itself estimates that in the European Union about 70% of people with disabilities are able to participate in tourist activities, but 1/3 do not do so effectively due to issues of lack of accessibility (Freeman & Selmi, 2009). It should be noted that the immaturity of this type of tourism is generally pointed out in several countries, as a consequence of discontinued policies and short-term actions by the most varied entities worldwide (Buhalis et al., 2012).

It should also be noted that the good social practices that this niche market imposes may cover more than a portion of the world population. If the percentage of elderly people (17.1%) is added to that people with disabilities (15% to 20%), a representation of about 32% of the world population is obtained (Giannakouris, 2008).

Tourist destinations “should internalize a more holistic approach (...) as they do for other market segments” (Daruwalla & Darcy, 2005, p. 565). This holistic approach meets the systemic perspective which should involve all components of the tourism product, from making the decision,

to travel, to returning home. The systemic perspective interprets the total tourist experience and involves not only the physical aspect of the offer but also the availability of adequate information and the human resources prepared to welcome visitors. To reach this level, it is necessary to develop a different way of looking at disability and to see accessibility, which translates into what Kastenholz et al. (2012) call *Accessibility Culture*. Also, Fontes et al. (2012) refer that, in addition to material interventions, on the basis of the success of *Accessible Tourism*, we find the affirmation of the *Culture of Accessibility*, because that is the only way to verify the full acceptance of tourists with disabilities.

The *Accessibility Culture* presents itself as a fundamental strategy: Accessible Tourism depends on the implementation of accessibility both at the physical level, through an adaptation of public spaces and buildings, as well as at the human level, that is, the preparation of tourism agents and the society, in general, to receive customers with special needs (Kastenholz et al., 2012).

Westcott (2004) argues that all personnel who interact with tourists with disabilities should receive specific training, so that they can receive them with courtesy and naturalness, this good treatment being the best resource of a tourist destination. For Shaw & Veitch (2011, p. 170), the "education of personnel involved in tourist services" is one of the factors that most enable the development of Accessible Tourism. It must be understood that due to the privileged contact of these professionals with the tourist and their behavior, the good or bad experience of the trip will largely depend. These professionals allow to overcome, or at least to circumvent, some of the barriers that are put in the tourist practice. Thus, Yau et al. (2004) refer that the guides, the tour drivers, the hotel receptionists are important elements of this constellation of service providers.

2.3.1 Access to tourism equipment, infrastructure, goods and services

Depending on their degree and the reaction forms of each individual, the various inhibitors may condition, or even prevent people with reduced mobility from participating in the tourist phenomenon. These inhibitors are present in different spheres, so we can divide them "into intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural inhibitors" (Gassiot et al., 2018, p.49). Freeman & Selmi (2009) identified these barriers as being intrinsic, interactive and environmental (sociological).

Intrapersonal inhibitors are related to psychological aspects and to the individual's physical or cognitive functioning. According to Gassiot et al. (2018), in the various scientific studies, elements such as personality, motivations, feelings and emotions, personal fears, individual beliefs and previous tourist experiences are considered to belong to this sphere.

Interpersonal inhibitors (Ibid) result from the individual's interaction with their social context, with service providers, with strangers or even the lack of company to participate in tourist activity. This type of inhibitor, which results from the sociocultural process in which the individual is inserted, translates into both behavioral and informational barriers, which Darcy (1998) and Eichhorn & Buhalis (2011) speak to us about.

Finally, Gassiot et al (2018) mention structural inhibitors as the most debated physical ones, which can be found in terms of infrastructure, equipment and transport. There are also social barriers that arise from the way in which society, in general, interacts negatively with the disabled and from the lack of training of staff that eliminates the possibility of creating bonds and loyal customers; economic barriers, which arise from dependence on government subsidies or even the lack of employability for those with disabilities, and finally the communication barriers, resulting from the lack of viable information on the internet and in the media, which damage the pre-travel experience, increasing fears and insecurities. Because they are associated only with aspects external to the individual, these inhibitors will be more easily located and eliminated, and which in turn are the ones that have been working on the most lately, namely through the elimination of physical barriers. Gassiot et al. (2018) consider that people with physical disabilities are the ones that are most affected at different levels of the tourist service.

McKercher et al. (2003), identified a series of exogenous obstacles that can inhibit travel, limit options or reduce satisfaction. Such obstacles include: architectural barriers, such as stairs, inaccessible bathrooms, inaccessible hotel accommodations, among others; barriers such as uneven paths, tree roots and other external obstacles; transport barriers, especially in the provision of local transport, including cars, buses and taxis; legal barriers, when rules or regulations prohibit people with disabilities from bringing the necessary equipment with them; communication difficulties, both at origin and destination; attitudinal barriers, due to negative attitudes of service providers; information barriers due to inaccuracy of data on the accessibility of the site.

Most studies on accessibility focus on the issue of physical barriers and assessing the level of accessibility of infrastructure, equipment, goods and tourist services (Eichhorn et al, 2011). Physical barriers are those that are most directly linked to accessibility. A physical barrier is a condition of the physical environment that restricts or complicates the access, movement or participation of individuals seeking to use recreational areas or facilities (Bullock and Mahon, 1997). There was a need to reform them and rethink all those that are under construction today, in order to benefit all citizens in a universal environment. The objective not to lose sight is always freedom, security and inclusion, and to reach that is necessary to eliminate architectural barriers, implement visual

signaling on the public areas and public roads (Eichhorn et al, 2011). That includes parking spaces, lowered sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, ramps, etc (Ferreira & Sanches, 2007). Freeman & Selmi (2009) state that due to spaces where improvements are almost impossible, as is the case with several historical sites, the change of which causes reluctance on the part of the general public, the existence of specialized personnel could make all the difference. Both the public and the tourism directors themselves are grappling with this issue. If, on one hand, implications for Tourism may arise from the alteration of a historic place in order to increase access and the tourist's own satisfaction, on the other, it is questioned whether, acting in this way, to what extent they will be to protect the cultural, natural, spiritual or historical resources of that place (Ibid). The obstacles created by architectural barriers are one of the main reasons for preventing participation in leisure. These deprive disabled tourists not only of mobility, but also of the ability to use existing resources. These are preponderant in the case of accessibility of accommodation, transport, recreational areas, sports areas, public buildings, etc. Although progress is being made in reducing barriers to general travel mobility, a global perspective of tourism is needed for people with disabilities (Eichhorn et al, 2011).

Sendi & Kerbler (2009) consider that it is risky to build accessible and specialized hotels for people with disabilities due to the possibility of being seen as disabled-people ghettos, in a spatial exclusion and social segregation and, on the other hand, Kastenholz et al. (2012) say that it can bring a more human image to a company, increase its social reputation and give it a competitive advantage over others. Burnett and Baker (2001) have similar problems, highlighting the rejection by several disabled people with regard to accessible places, due to the need to want to feel normal. On the other hand, they assume that many so-called normal consumers would feel uncomfortable due to the increase in disabled customers in their destination of choice, despite attempts at acceptance and mutual help.

Thus, preventing any risk, the solution they present is the creation of "*smart buildings*", which function almost like neural networks, where each tourist element is a link that is interconnected to other links, in order to create a competent network that offers to the user a support system for all aspects of their life, opting for modernization, comfort, safety, the introduction of new technologies and accessibility for all (Ibid).

One example could be a successful case in the hotel industry. The *Scandic Hotel chain*, spread across Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Germany, takes into account issues related to accessibility. This chain of hotels follows a checklist with 110 points considered crucial to be able to affirm that its Hotels are prepared to receive the most varied public. They state that at least 81 of the 110 points can be found in all hotels and that the 110 points are imposed and applied in the creation

of new buildings (SCANDIC HOTELS– THE WORLD’S BEST HOTEL CHAIN WHEN IT COMES TO ACCESSIBILITY, 2015).

Image 2. reveals the first subject dealt with, in this case, parking and entrance, and respective points to be noted. Due to the extension of the table, it was decided to put only the first theme, but there are also areas of reception, lobby, easy access point, elevators, staircase, wardrobe, corridors, conference rooms, auditorium, living room, cafeteria, bath in common areas or rooms, shower area, directional signage, rooms, among others.

Number	Guest need/expectations	Mandatory	When reconstructing New building	Remarks
PARKING & ENTRANCE				
1	<input type="checkbox"/> Accessible parking, ideally 2 spaces, each at least 3.6 metres wide.	X		If there is a car park
2	<input type="checkbox"/> Accessible parking must be clearly marked with the wheelchair symbol.	X		
3	<input type="checkbox"/> Additional signage adjacent to bays * For help or assistance, call reception.	X		
4	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear illuminated and delineated path between parking and entrance.	X		Wheelchair accessible
5	<input type="checkbox"/> Access ramps at change of level, with maximum slope gradient of 1:12, at main entrance to the hotel and the parking location.	X		
6	<input type="checkbox"/> Main entrance door to have a minimum width of 800 mm clear.	X		
7	<input type="checkbox"/> Low or no threshold at the entrance door.	X		
8	<input type="checkbox"/> Night time door bell accessible from wheelchair. With sign and illuminated.	X		Height 1200 mm
9	<input type="checkbox"/> Door openable with "automatic push plate", height 1200 mm.	X		If not automatic
10	<input type="checkbox"/> Clearly signed directions if the accessible entrance is not at the hotel's main entrance/ building.	X		
11	<input type="checkbox"/> Distance to entrance recommended maximum of 25 meters.		X	
12	<input type="checkbox"/> Contrast markings – used in all public indoor areas.		X	

Image 2. - Scandic Checklist; Accessed on 06.March 2020; Available at

https://www.scandichotels.com/contentassets/a2327cec7ae4488ca8da1e8c223669bf/scandics-accessibility-standard_en.pdf

Its standard accessibility was created with the help of disabled guests and members of organizations being implemented in each country taking also into account the applicable legislation. They are proud to have managed to create sustainable hotels, friendly to the environment and the user.

Looking at transport, most researchers believe that there are still several reforms to be taken into account in order to improve the integration of different individuals in the same tourist space. For example, by eliminating access restrictions, whether on foot, by motorcycle, car, bus, train, metro or even by plane (Marshall et al. 2009) for any user, regardless of visual, hearing, intellectual, height or mobility.

In the case of Slovenia and Serbia, an action program for people with disabilities was created, which started in 2007, in which one of the objectives was to guarantee access to the transport network through legislation (Sendi & Kerbler, 2009; Popovic, et al., 2009). The passenger transport network was analyzed and the conclusion was reached that accessibility was poor since, in the subway or train stations, numerous flights of stairs, as well as narrow doors, were visible. With regard to communication within these spaces, there were communication barriers due to inadequate signaling, absence of audible signals, irregular updating of information to, for example, have access to information about transport arrival times and imperceptible information, by size or color letter (Ibid). These authors emphasize that in the metro or train stations it is essential to increase lifts, carpets and escalators, benches, widening channels, audible and visual information, tactile signs on the pavement to facilitate the entry and exit of passengers.

In addition to physical barriers, many other constraints limit the touristic experience of people with disabilities. Eichhorn et al. (2008, p. 2) present a study on information barriers, which prove to be very important, and say that "all changes in the physical environment will not bring benefits (...) if the indispensable communication is lacking information about them". Information barriers present themselves as determining inhibitors, because "the travel planning of people with disabilities is usually characterized by a more detailed search for information" (Buhalis et al., 2005, p. 22). Regarding the sources of information that this public uses the most, Buhalis et al. (2005) state that word of mouth information, travel guides and the Internet are the three most sought after sources.

In the study by Neumann and Reuber (2004), 70.6% of respondents with reduced mobility indicated that information are a crucial factor when preparing the trip. Other authors have also been carrying out studies in order to perceive which the main sources of information that people with reduced mobility use:

- Opinions/recommendations from friends (Buhalis et al., 2005; Darcy, 2006; Neumann & Reuber, 2004);
- General / specific tourism publications (Buhalis et al., 2005; Neumann & Reuber, 2004);
- Travel agents/tour operators (Buhalis et al., 2005; Neumann & Reuber, 2004);
- Internet (Buhalis et al., 2005; Neumann & Reuber, 2004);
- Tourist offices (Buhalis et al., 2005);
- Word-of-mouth (Buhalis et al., 2005; Darcy, 2006);

- Organizations of people with reduced mobility (Buhalis et al., 2005).

All information must be adapted and oriented according to the type of reduced mobility and accessibility levels. Therefore, the lack of information is, as can be seen through the literature review, one of the barriers that most influence the decision-making process, and that has a strong impact on the global tourist experience (Lee et al. 2010).

However, information about accessibility is harder to find (Miller and Kirk, 2002). For that, it is enough that a communication sharing strategy is properly adapted to the needs of the accessible market segment, using clear and effective communication, mainly in providing information about the accessibility conditions present in the tourist activity site. The study by Michopoulou and Buhalis (2013) states that people with disabilities share many of the behavioral patterns of other travelers. However, they are differentiated during the process of preparing for the trip, since their options are much scarcer than an ordinary tourist. For this reason, they tend to need more information at each stage of travel planning (Ibid). The expectations of these individuals are thus formed by the information obtained in the pre-trip phase (Ramona et al., 2008). Coelho et al. (2015) agrees that the information made available before moving and during the leisure period influences the social inclusion of the individual with disabilities, since an informed person is not only able to argue, but also to propose alternatives and encourage change, for the effective practice of tourist activities.

In the case of the tourism industry, the use of the internet as a resource for obtaining information gains greater relevance given the nature and characteristics of products and services. Eichhorn et al. (2008) speak of the great potential of the Internet, which, in addition to allowing information transmitted through a channel aimed at the population in general, thus avoids stigma or segregation, also enabling an easy sharing of experiences. However, these authors draw attention to the fact that the sites must themselves be accessible, in addition to presenting correct and updated information about accessibility, which is not always the case. The case of the internet, the accessibility and viability of tourist information, are needs that affect any type of disability, being able to limit travel options and negatively influence the choice, since this is the first interaction between tourist product and consumer. Perhaps because of this, the information obtained online is one of the pillars of the accessible tourist experience (Michopoulou and Buhalis, 2013). In this way, online information allows tourists more security during the decision-making process (Cox et al., 2008). The big problem is found not only in the scarcity of information that leads tourists to waste a lot of time in search, causing disinterest but also in the lack of perception on the part of the creators of tourist websites about the different information needs of tourists, as well as in the base of information that does not follow the customer's need due to the infeasibility of the source or the lack of regular updates (Eichhorn, et al., 2007). According to Eichhorn et al. (2008, p. 4), "without

sufficient information regarding accessible destinations, these people (...) will stop traveling". For this reason, people with disabilities are found in tourist destinations where not even physical barriers have been properly eliminated.

The presence of a website on the internet is increasingly essential for tourist organizations, as it makes it stand out in the market since consumers prefer to search for references on the internet before traveling (Fernández-Villarán, 2007).

According to the study by El-Gohary, H. (2012) these are the key points for creating information for accessible tourism:

- Be aware that the disabilities are not all the same and that even two people with the same type of disability can experience it differently.
- Do not hide information about accessibility and, on the contrary, make it available with the rest of the information. There should be a clear link on the website's homepage for information of this nature.
- Provide sufficient details and without a negative charge so that customers can decide on the suitability of the facilities.
- Get feedback from visitors to understand what kind of information is critical.
- Include images of accessible equipment/facilities.
- Include people with disabilities in marketing and advertising, with intrinsic positive messages.

Often, and associated with the lack of information, there is a feeling of prejudice, which causes interactive barriers, namely attitudes towards visitors with reduced mobility, to negatively influence the trip. Sometimes service providers themselves do not know how welcoming people with reduced mobility due to the lack of training in this area (Packer et al., 2008).

The lack of adequate and specialized service is proving to be a new issue for which the tourism industry should start to worry (Muller, 2012; Rhodda, 2012). It is known that in tourism the reception to a visitor is one of the crucial factors for a positive tourist experience (Muller, 2012). The truth is that human resources are not trained to receive this specific audience. Communication is not effective and no links are established, removing proximity tourism, which is so much sought after today. Social interaction is an important component of the tourist experience, therefore, several scholars suggest the creation of training programs in order to enrich the industry and expand the quality and competence of services, products and goods that will strongly influence the evaluation of the product (Freeman & Selmi, 2009). Freeman & Selmi (2009, p. 479) allude to the existence of a concept called "Beautism" that could explain the negative reaction by those who are not disabled. Its

definition implies "prejudice against a beautiful person normally declared by another physically attractive person in order to hide his own defects".

In a study that allowed comparing at what levels barriers were felt, both for visitors and service providers, Card et al. (2006), based on the study carried out by Takeda and Card (2002), present a model (Image 3) based on four axes, which analyzes the attitudinal and accessibility barriers in four sectors of the tourism system: accommodation, restaurants, attractions and transport.

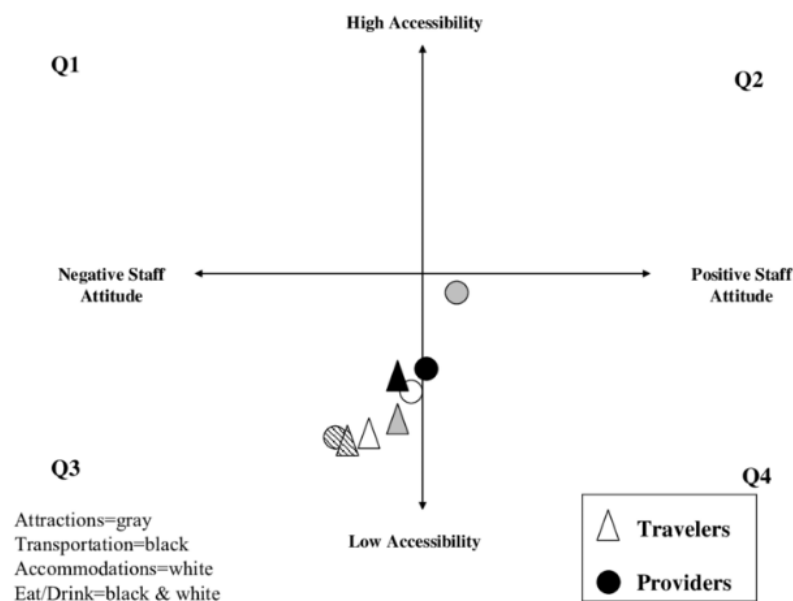


Image 3 - Attitudinal and accessibility barriers in four tourism sectors: comparison between of Travelers and Providers (Card et al., 2006, p. 172)

Tourist attractions are those in which negative attitudes on the part of service providers are least felt. However, the ideal would be for all sectors under study to be in quadrant number two, however, this scenario was not verified, remaining all in quadrant number three, that is, with a low level of accessibility and with negative attitudes. According to Turco et al. (1998, cited by Takedo & Card, 2002), this scenario may result from the fact that staff training is insufficient or due to their sensitivity and awareness of people with reduced mobility. This ideology is in line with that advocated by Saarinen (2006) and Muller (2012) who refers to the need for greater training for those who operate in the offer of tourism goods and services, in order to be able to give concrete and reliable answers to visitors with more detailed information needs.

In the article published by Neumann (2012), the author refers to the good practices already implemented in Germany. This refers to the existence of qualified courses whose main audiences are

tourism professionals. Implemented in some states of the country, the study plan aims at addressing good practices in accessible tourism, as well as watching films about them.

If the whole set of interactive barriers presented so far negatively influences the course of the tourist experience, the lack of travel agencies and specialized tour operators increases the uncertainty of an accessible and safe trip (Darcy, 2003). The little knowledge that these tourism professionals have about disabilities and the real needs of those tourists, as well as the existing offers in the destinations, results as the failure to support the customer before, during and after the trip.

Accessible Tourism depends on a strong commitment among several factors, such as the motivation to travel, the mobility of the tourist and all its relationship with the conditions of accessibility that tourist destinations present (Eichhorn et al., 2008).

Regarding the implementation of *Accessible Tourism* and the respective adaptation of tourist destinations, Prescott (2012, p. 129) says that "there is no consensus on the success formula to be used to develop a strategy for *Accessible Tourism*". But it is necessary to reflect on what is intended from that destination. In the development of an accessible tourist destination, it is important to decide to what extent you want to connect your image to the offer of accessibility. The issue is addressed by authors such as Kastenholz et al. (2012) who say that the accessible destination market has stood out as a good opportunity and that the provision of quality products and services at this level can provide a competitive advantage; but they also refer, on the other hand, that "building the image of the destination based on a competitive advantage such as accessibility can be dangerous" (p. 102). Such a competitive advantage is only in the short and medium-term because with the appearance of newly accessible destinations, competition is increasing and this advantage is dissipated. Subsequently, in this and other matter related to the tourist offer, sustainability can only be guaranteed based on quality assumptions, and not only in the difference.

For the authors, Bi et al. (2007), basing the tourist offer on accessibility can constitute an added value and a differentiating factor, in the first phase, but there is also a risk of that destination being tied to the idea of accessibility for the future, which may alienate other audiences. Afterward, visitors with special needs will be the first to not want to be in affordable vacation ghettos. This will always be a difficult balance to achieve, but one that is essential for the success of accessible tourism. Urban tourist destinations seem to have some advantage over others in the formulation of an accessible tourist offer strategy, based not only on the variety of its resources but also on the installed infrastructure and the other activities that take place there (Jansen-Vereke & Lievois, 2001).

A director of a Canadian agency, in a study carried out on the response quality of Accessible Tourism, "If the person has difficulties in their daily life, they will encounter the same difficulties in

travel, but they will be amplified because of the unfamiliarity of the physical surroundings” (Freeman & Selmi, 2009, p. 478). These obstacles are at the heart of a very delicate matter for tourism because, as Lee et al. (2010) say, they can significantly reduce the pleasure of traveling, as well as increase a negative self-image in the tourist himself, who will feel helpless and dependent. Especially for this portion of the population, Tourism could bring multiple benefits to your health and well-being, offering an enriching experience.

2.3.2 Tourism and levels of accessibility

In the relationship between the person with a disability and the means of transportation used, it will be of great importance for the establishment of the various levels of accessibility that exist. A three-tier accessibility graduation is customary, presented in a Use IT / ASPH publication entitled “Bruxelles en fauteuil” , from 2001, which results from a study carried out by a group of young people, themselves wheelchair users on the accessibility of Brussels. In this study, three levels of accessibility are presented, to which different colors have been assigned, in order to facilitate the visualization of accessibility maps.

1. Full accessibility - a place accessible to wheelchair users, even without the help of third parties;
2. Medium accessibility - a place accessible to wheelchairs, provided with the help of third parties;
3. Minimum accessibility - place accessible only to people who have the ability to walk independently.

The three levels of wheelchair accessibility are shown in the following table:

LEVEL	TYPE OF ACCESSIBILITY	COLOR	DESCRIPTION
1	Accessible	Green	It assumes unrestricted access to a person in a wheelchair, both manual like electric.
2	Accessible with companion	Yellow	It implies the need for someone to help overcome any small obstacles; it is almost inaccessible to most electric chairs, which are very heavy To wake up.
3	Inaccessible	Red	It does not allow access to someone to move in a wheelchair, be it manual or electrical.

Table 1., The different levels of accessibility; Accessed on 16. April 2020, Available at:

<http://www.bruxellesenfauteuil.be/docs/RolstoelplanFRweb.pdf>

Here, level 3 is correctly pointed out as inaccessible, since, by definition, the classification was designed for users who travel in a wheelchair; the different colors allow an immediate visual distinction, since they correspond to the colors of the traffic lights, perfectly identifiable by everyone. And, thus, a good working tool in the analysis and categorization of the different areas of a tourist destination.

There is an urgent need to promote accessibility by removing barriers, so that Accessible and Inclusive Tourism can develop. Being accessibility closely related to Universal Design, such tourism development will only be possible through the dissemination and application of its principles.

2.4. How to create an accessible tourist destination?

Tourism and accessibility are deeply interconnected concepts. As Darcy (1998) points out, in the case of tourists with reduced mobility, accessibility becomes even more important, due to the various limitations they face in moving and overcoming possible obstacles. And it is not just a question of whether or not accessibility is given, since the very variety of interpretations that this concept has is also problematic, which causes great differences from one country to another. As stated by Buhalis et al. (2010), the variation in accessibility standards between different countries can cause annoyances and inconveniences, especially with regard to tourists with disabilities.

When relating accessibility to tourism, this paper will consider the existence of three different dimensions, which are presented to us by Eichhorn and Buhalis (2011):

1. **The physical dimension**, as the lack of access automatically implies an insurmountable barrier. This dimension is directly linked to the infrastructure that presents itself in a tourist destination.
2. **The human dimension**, as human action is fundamental with regard to tourism, and the negative attitudes that sometimes remain constitute a behavioral barrier difficult to detect and overcome.
3. **The information dimension**, which is essential to attract tourists and even more tourists with disabilities. This information barrier is surmountable through all communication technologies existing today. Everything goes through a question of awareness of the importance that has the transmission of complete and correct information about a tourist destination.

So, in order to create an accessible destination, several fundamental aspects need to be considered and combined with each other in order to provide a total tourist experience. The tourist experience presents itself as a chain in which all the elements are interrelated so that they complement each other and there are no flaws (Lee et al.,2010). These guidelines are mirrored in

terms of legislation, which guides this whole process, enabling the practice of accessible tourism, as shown in the following figure:

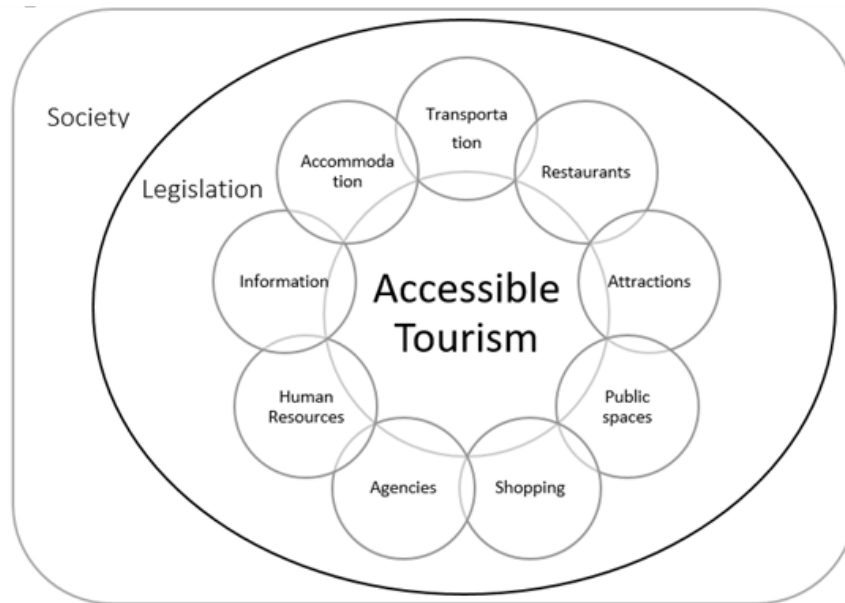


Image 4. – Chain of elements for creating of Accessible destination (Self-made)

As Buhalis et al. (2010) argue, the creation of accessible tourist destinations should take into account not only the needs and interests of tourists but also the interests and capacities of companies, which adapt themselves in order to provide an accessible offer. Thus, a balance is sought between tourism supply and demand. Like Vila et al. (2015) refer to, *Accessible Tourism* has to be seen not only from a social point of view, but it must also be seen as economically interesting. Researcher dares to affirm that only in this way there can be an active involvement of tourist agents, who will not limit themselves to routinely applying legal requirements but will advance in the search for economically rewarding solutions, applying the law and even surpassing it (EESC - European Economic and Social Committee, 2004).

It is an evolutionary process, which initially passes through the fulfillment of the fundamental rules of accessibility and taking into account a systemic approach to tourism, because the realization of the accessibility of the tourist destination will only be possible through a systemic approach, through which the sectorial and transversal dimensions of the territory are considered (Fontes et al., 2012)

According to “Guidelines for the implementation of a Customized Accessible Tourism Programme” (2019), which agrees with Eichhorn and Buhalis (2011) view, to create Accessible

Destination, tourist destination should involve all necessary components which are summarized in Table 2:

The physical dimension	The human dimension	The information dimension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Accommodation · Transport (Local transports, taxis) · Sidewalks · Terminals · Toilets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Training of tourism professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Information about destination · Advice

Table 2: Summary of necessary components for Accessible Destination (Self-made)

One of the points of interest in this table is that, in addition to the usual aspects and directly related to the tourist activity (information and advice, accommodation and transport), it also refers to services such as medical assistance and the provision of support equipment, which, although generally are not in the foreground of tourist activity offers. Any visitor may need medical help or support equipment. In the case of tourists whose health will tend to be weaker, the likelihood that this will happen is much higher and should be anticipated (Froyen et al, 2009).

The main characteristic of an accessible tourist destination will be the continuity of accessibility, but that does not mean that everything can, or should, be adapted soon. The creation of an accessible tourist destination goes mainly through the areas that may be most sought after by visitors and they will be the first to experience the benefits of adaptation. For Eichhorn and Buhalis (2011) they state that the lack of understanding of the economic interest of Accessible Tourism, on the part of private entities, prevents the correct implementation of the law. But there are still other constraints, such as the lack of technical solutions, the weak financial capacity, and still, many times, the simple lack of knowledge on how to apply the principles of Universal Design, generating adaptations that are not functional and only consume resources that could be applied better (Froyen et al, 2009).

Kastenholz et al. (2012) state that, when an Accessibility Plan is established, which is fundamental for the creation of an accessible tourist destination, its implementation must be progressive and count on the active participation of users for its evaluation to be continued. In order for an efficient approach to be made to improve accessibility in the tourism service chain, efforts should be articulated between different actors, between different stakeholders, including the state,

municipalities and public institutes and entities representing people with reduced mobility (Peixoto & Neumann, 2009).

According to Peixoto & Neumann (2009), the following table indicate the minimum criteria for accessibility in the tourism service chain.

A) Information

	Links in the service chain	Minimum criteria
Preparation / Information	Brochures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Accessible tourism" published in the main publications specialized in tourism - Include contacts of responsible persons or Internet page so that more information can be requested
	Internet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of a menu called "Accessible Vacations" - Accessible, clear and structured tourist information of the main tourist facilities and attractions in an "Accessible Holidays" menu.
	Face to face information	Employees responsible for providing the information must be prepared to communicate which infrastructures and activities are accessible
Arrival / departure / travel	Place of arrival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessible design of all areas of public access at train, bus and airport stations - Specialized transport service provided by tourist information services or companies in the sector
	Public spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existence of parking for people with disabilities - Accessibility of the main tourist attractions - Accessibility of public access infrastructures - Accessibility of tourist information offices
	The local public transport network	Accessible design of public transport networks in tourist destinations

B) Welcome

Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of affordable accommodation options in all establishments, for all forms of disability - Functional equipment - pragmatic solutions - Training and awareness of employees to the specific needs of the elderly and disabled people
Gastronomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of a sufficient number of dining spaces with accessible meal areas and sanitary facilities - Functional solutions - Training and awareness of employees to the specific needs of the elderly and disabled people

C) Leisure and culture

Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sensitizing cultural service providers to the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities - Ensure that tourists with disabilities will be able to enjoy the main attractions - Accessibility of cultural events - Provide guided tours for people with disabilities and guide training
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Leisure and Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessibility in tourist locations - Exact knowledge of accessibility or problems in existing locations and routes - Accessibility of all relevant leisure locations in the tourist destination
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D) services

Tourist Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessible tourist information offices - Staff training and awareness of the needs of elderly and disabled tourists - Appointment of managers with a strong awareness of needs of people with disabilities - Provision of services that help to eliminate existing barriers
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Table 3: Minimum criteria for accessibility in the tourism service chain; Peixoto & Neumann (2009).

3. Methodology

This chapter will explain all methodological choices made for this research paper. Before moving on with the description of the chosen methodologies, it is important to present some considerations about the methodology, in general, in order to justify the choices. The methodology corresponds to a set of procedures to be used to obtain knowledge and involves three fundamental aspects: The way of knowing; the way of planning and acting; The way of making/producing. Quivy and Campenhoudt (1992, p. 23) also refer that “the methods are nothing more than particular formalizations of the procedure, different paths designed to be more adapted to the phenomena and domains studied”.

The methodology is a very important part of any research paper as it is the application of the methods that, through its specific processes and techniques, guarantees the legitimacy of the knowledge obtained; without method, there is no constitution of scientific knowledge. It was based on this concept that the researcher selected and articulated various techniques for collecting and analyzing information in an integrated research strategy. The researcher tried to make it capable of organizing research practices in order to make them fully adequate to the objective of the paper, thus guaranteeing the legitimacy of the conclusions that were reached.

3.1 Philosophy of science

The Philosophy of science will present a philosophical paradigm chosen for this paper. As Creswell (2013) points out, “*paradigms are a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study*” (p. 35). According to literature, there are four paradigms: *post-positivism*, *constructivism*, *transformative* and *pragmatism*. These four paradigms differ from each other in the terms of ontology, epistemology and methodology. Therefore in the following sections, it will be clarified the methodological choices. The paradigm chosen for this paper is social constructivism. Choosing social constructivism means that this paper will be based on experiences of tourists in the wheelchairs and on the observations made by the researcher. To be able to understand what the barriers are for tourists in the wheelchairs, the researcher needs to ask those tourists about their experience while traveling. As well, it is necessary to investigate how tourism professionals deal with the tourists which are wheelchair users.

"Through close examination of individual experiences, phenomenological analysts seek to capture the meaning and common features, or essences, of an experience or event. The truth of the

event, as an abstract entity, is subjective and knowable only through embodied perception; we create meaning through the experience of moving through space and across time” (Starks & Trinidad, 2007, p.1374).

3.2 Ontology

Ontology presents the view on the world’s reality. It “*raises basic questions about the nature of reality and the nature of the human being in the world*” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; in Levers, 2013; p. 2). As the paradigm for this paper is constructivism, its reality is subjective, meaning it has many different interpretations. According to Rhodes and Wilson (2010, p. 33), “...the world is not seen as an objective reality that is inert and external to people’s actions, lives, and beliefs. Instead, the reality is something groups and individuals construct and live through. The reality, in other words, is not an experience that is common to all, but a subjective, meaning - infused set of worlds that are sculpted by human initiative, perception, and values.” As opposed to the constructivist, the positivist separates themselves from the phenomenon that is studied as the positivist considers there is only one concrete reality, meaning they see it through a “one-way mirror” (Krauss 2005). Constructivism adopts relativism as there are more realities and are in people's minds (Guba, 1990). Relativism ontology seems most suitable for this paper as the objectives of the researcher are to explore the perception of the tourists (traveling in the wheelchair) in the city of Sibenik (Croatia).

3.3 Epistemology

Epistemology answers in the question “*what is the nature of the relationship between the knower (the inquirer) and the known (or knowable)?*” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; p. 108). Therefore, to be able to define how the reality is defined, the researcher takes a subjective perspective, whereas participants of the interviews and questionnaire together with researcher are fused into a single entity, generating findings through the co-creation of interactions between the two parts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Never the less, in order to make the research credible and not biased, it is important the researcher stays objective as much as possible (Bryman and Clarke, 2008).

3.4 Qualitative and Quantitative research method (Mixed method)

This paper follows a ***mixed research method, where both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used***. According to Bryman (2012), there is still a strong controversy about the use of such a technique; but, since the 1980s, it has been asserting itself among academic communities. This same author states that, by integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods

in a single project, one can obtain “a better understanding of a phenomenon than if just one method had been used.” (Bryman, 2012, p. 624). However, this technique must be well designed and oriented, taking into account that, in the end, the results should always be more than the sum of the parts. The researcher believes that this methodology will allow, through the combination of the qualitative and quantitative paradigms, a more in-depth view of the facts.

In this paper, questionnaire surveys were used and applied to the study population. These **questionnaires** are representing the main **quantitative** technique used. 27 questionnaires were carried in the period from 27. January till 15. March 2020 with tourists and visitors of the city of Sibenik. The researcher considered that these surveys would allow him to characterize wheelchair visitors who come to Sibenik, as well as allow him to further understand their travel habits and the assessment they make of the city of Sibenik, as an accessible tourist destination.

But, as previously mentioned, in this work researcher mainly use **qualitative** research.

1 - **The Interview** was perhaps the technique privileged by the researcher in this work. As stated by Secor (2010), this technique does not aim to make generalizations about a population, but rather to make known the way events and practices are experienced, in certain contexts. Bearing in mind the constraints of the sample, the researcher considered that this was the technique that best-suited the goals of this paper. The interview allowed the researcher, mainly, to know the experiences of the visitors and their relationship with certain tourism professionals, such as receptionists. It was also used with regard to travel agents and restaurants.

2 - **Participant observation**: in the case of direct observation, it is undoubtedly one of the simplest, but most important, techniques in fieldwork. In this case, it allowed the researcher to detect many of the particularities of the object of study, such as the symbiosis between visitors and their companions, or to estimate the number of visitors in wheelchairs arriving at Sibenik, and also to assess several relevant aspects existing in Sibenik with regard to accessibility, both in terms of the physical and human offer.

In carrying out this study, in addition to the primary sources already mentioned, secondary sources were also used, for example, national and international literature on tourism, in particular, on Accessible Tourism, and articles from the local portal who's themes were about the accessibility of Sibenik.

3.5 Data Collection

After deciding on the methodology to be used, it was time for the researcher to go out in the field and apply the chosen methods. This section will show how the researcher applied those techniques and the difficulties with applying it.

3.5.1 Questionnaires

Mathers et al (2007) state that one of the best tools for conducting quantitative data are questionnaires. Combined with other research tools, it gives a larger amount of data. To be able to collect data from questionnaires, the researcher has distributed questionnaires among hotels, tour guides, and some restaurants. As the researcher was not being able to be in two places at the same time, he was considering that this is the best way to collect a bigger amount of data. Even though some hotels and tour guides did not approve it, with an explanation from the researcher that this project is for development of tourism for those who need our help, most of them accepted to participate in offering questionnaires to guests which are in wheelchairs.

Questionnaire for this paper consist of 20 questions. Questions are giving answers on what are motivations and interests of the guests who are traveling in a wheelchair. As well, they are giving their subjective opinion about Sibenik as an accessible tourist destination and what could be improved. The questions can be separated into two sections: the first section gives answers on more general questions about participants' disability and motivation to travel. On the other hand, the second part of the questions focuses on participants' experience of Sibenik as an accessible tourism destination.

As it is possible to see in the Appendix 2., the questionnaire consists of ten questions with YES/NO answers, six questions with multiple answers, two questions with the rating (from 1 to 5, 1as negative and 5 as the most positive), and two open questions. The researcher made the questionnaire as simple as possible and not so much time taking. He decided to make it like that because of his previous experiences, in which participants refused to participate because questionnaires were taking too much time.

3.5.2 Interviews

For this paper, the researcher has chosen to use interviews as a tool for collecting qualitative data. Specifically, semi-structured interviews because they are "flexible, accessible, intelligible and, more important, capable of disclosing important and often hidden facts of human and organizational behavior" (Sandy, 2011, p.246). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) state that interviews are by far the best tools for collecting qualitative data.

All 10 interviews for this paper were conducted face to face (in person) with tourist which were visiting Sibenik and tourism professionals who work in Sibenik. The advantage of this type of interview is in the fact that the interviewer to have easy access to a range of communication skills, meaning, verbal as well as non-verbal. The researcher is able to notice body language and gestures of the participant. That is giving the opportunity to the researcher to ask additional questions based on given answers (verbal or non-verbal). All interviews were recorded, translated (as some interviews were conducted on Croatian) and transcribed. When sampling the participants, factors like the country from where participants are coming, or how many days participants have been in Sibenik were not in the main focus of the interview. The main focus was to find out their experience of Sibenik as an accessible tourist destination. On the other hand, participants who are tourist professionals of the city of Sibenik were included to get a wider picture of the phenomena as they give experience from different angles. To be able to conduct valuable insights, participants had to speak English.

All the participants were approached directly and explained for which reason interviews were conducted. The researcher conducted 10 interviews and each of them lasted for approximately 20 minutes. In the list under, it is possible to see the information of the participants.

• Robert	53 years old	Tourist	Germany
• Mark	49 years old	Tourist	Austria
• Katrine	45 years old	Tourist	Denmark
• John	68 years old	Tourist	UK
• Ivan	71 years old	Tourist	Australia
• Fabian	/	Tourist	Switzerland
• Ana	/	Travel agent	Croatia
• Mehmet	/	Hotel GM	Croatia
• Dino	29 years old	Hotel Receptionist	Croatia
• Andro	/	Restaurant owner	Croatia

All the interviews that were conducted were recorded with the mobile devices to make sure that all the data is properly conducted and to avoid any misunderstanding. From the ethical perspective, all the participants have been asked for the consent and approval of recording for the purpose of this paper. All 10 interviews were transcribed and it is possible to find them in textual form as Appendix 1. Seven interviews were conducted on the English language, while the rest was conducted on the Croatian language. Therefore, the researcher translated three interviews from Croatian to English. The researcher hasn't included in the transcripts irrelevant disturbances like a laugh, repeated words, etc. As well, mistakes in spoken English were corrected by the researcher.

3.5.3 Researcher observation

Additional "tool" that was used for this paper is researcher observation. The researcher went around the city (in the period between 27th January and 15th March) to places that are most visited by tourists. The researcher took photos of the city. All the photos were focused on the accessibility (sidewalks, stares, public toilets which are equipped for people with disabilities, etc...)

The researcher conducted a telephone survey in order to find out how many of hotels actually had adapted rooms, how many existed per unit and what types of adaptation they had in the toilet (bathtub, shower or roll-in shower), in order to be able to estimate the total offer.

3.6 Thematic analysis

The analysis method chosen for this paper is thematic analysis. It is one of the most common methods used for analyzing of gathered data (Guest, 2012). This method includes thematic coding, finding patterns and themes in the data (Spencer et al., 2014). Braun and Clarke (2006) claim that the thematic method "*provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis*" (p.78). In other words, the main strengths of this analysis method are that it is very flexible and not restricted as some other methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which is very important due to the explorative character of this paper. In the case of this paper, from the data gathered, the researcher has identified four relevant themes:

- Hotel barriers
- Restaurant barriers
- Tourist attraction barriers
- Public infrastructure barriers

All four themes are divided into smaller sub-themes. Each theme was divided into physical barriers, information barriers and human barriers. The researcher believes that those themes present crucial aspects that will give an answer to the research question of this paper and reaching the objectives.

3.7 Trustworthiness of the paper

As Connelly (2016) states, when the research papers are evaluated, trustworthiness/credibility is considered a very important element in every research. It is considered as an instrument with which the researcher persuades the readers of the paper that the finding of the research is worthy of their attention (Nowell et al., 2017). Trustworthiness/credibility is seen as a

criterion that shows that the conducted research is credible and believable. Polit and Back (2014 in Connelly, 2016) consider credibility as the most important factor which shows the true value of the paper. Taking this into in mind, the researcher has a responsibility to provide evidence to the readers that shows the truth behind the research. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), measures to address credibility are longer engagement, respondent validation, persistent observation and method triangulation. The researcher tried to reach longer engagement by making longer interviews which would give a better overall picture of Sibenik as an accessible tourist destination. All interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes. As already mentioned before, all the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The researcher persistently observed the most popular tourist places in the city of Sibenik which is documented with photos made by the researcher. Regarding method triangulation, the researcher conducted interviews, questionnaire and personal observation.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Roth (2005) considers that ethics, when writing research papers that includes participants, is an important matter. It is important that ethical considerations are taken from the beginning of the research, and throughout the development of the research paper (Halej, 2017). It increases the validity and accuracy of the paper. When conducting the interviews, the researcher needs to assure *confidentiality*, *informed consent* and *privacy* of the participants (Orb et al., 2001). Therefore, to make sure that this paper is written in an ethical way, the researcher respected confidentiality by not using the participants' full names or names of the companies they work for. All participants have granted the researcher with permission to be recorded for the purpose of this paper. Regarding the questionnaire, participants were not asked for their names or any of their personal information.

3.8 Limitations

Limitation 1: Due to the current situation (COVID 19) in the world, considering the complexity of the phenomena analyzed, the researcher thinks that the size of the participants is small. As at the time of writing this paper world is in a pandemic situation, Croatia was on the lockdown. It resulted that the researcher was not able to conduct a number of interviews he planned, was not able to conduct more responses on the questionnaires, and as well was not able to have a closer observation of some physical barriers around Sibenik.

Limitation 2: Even though, number of tourists in a wheelchair is constantly growing, research experienced challenges finding tourists in wheelchairs, which is as well connected current situation in the world and the fact that time of conducting this research was off-season in Croatia.

Limitation 3: The fact that the researcher speaks only Croatian and English, presented as a challenge, as not all tourists speak English.

Limitation 4: Considering the complexity of the research topic, the fact that the researcher was doing it alone can be seen as a disadvantage, as he was not able to be in more places at the same time. Having more researchers could result in conducting a bigger amount of data. As well, the researcher's inexperience could be seen as a limitation, especially because of the unusual situation happening in the world at the time of conducting the research. The researcher's inexperience presented a challenge, as he had issues finding ways to conduct more data, to make sure his paper is more credible.

Limitation 5: Transcribing the interviews can be seen as a limitation as it was one of the most time-consuming activities.

Limitation 6: Due to the personal tragedy in the researcher's family, at the time of writing this paper, it can be considered as a limitation, as it took valuable time which could be used for better analyzing of the studied topic.

4. Analysis

In the analysis phase of the data obtained, in order to encompass the complex reality of Accessible Tourism, the researcher did not want to fail to consider the advantages of comprehensive methodologies defended by Tully (2006) which involves a systemic and complex analysis where the identified variables are simultaneously causes and effects. The researcher emphasizes the fact that in the analysis, the central question is not the definition of an immensity of statistically representative subjects, but a small dimension of socially significant subjects (Massieu, 2001), where representation is not sought statistics, but through social representation. This paper analyzes the potential problems/challenges that may arise during the stay in the city of Sibenik for tourist in the wheelchair, in the light of their opinion and opinion of the tourism professionals working in Sibenik. The themes that structure this analysis are based on the data that has been collected by interviews, questionnaires, researcher's observation and secondary data found online. Moreover, all the data will be analyzed and discussed with the theory from the literature review section. As already mentioned in the methodology section of this paper, hotels, restaurants, tourist attractions and public infrastructure will be analyzed by following Eichhorn and Buhalis' (2011) model which includes *physical barriers*, *information barriers* and *human barriers*. Firstly the researcher will present what is accessible destination according to participants of interviews and questionnaires conducted for the purpose of this paper. By analyzing those themes divided by *physical barriers*, *information barriers* and *human barriers*, the researcher will give an overall picture of Sibenik as an accessible destination and it will point out directions in which Sibenik more or less needs to develop to become accessible for all types of tourists. Themes mentioned above are covering all elements from image 4. of this paper except 'Transportation' and 'Shopping' as the researcher was not able to conduct enough relevant data. In image 5, the researcher presents the structure of themes for this paper. Developing tourist destinations to be more accessible for tourists in the wheelchair directs the destination one step closer towards sustainable and authentic tourist destinations, as the majority of destinations do not give so big attention to tourists with disabilities. It is important to point out that even though those themes are analyzed separately, they intertwine with each other and only together can make tourist destinations accessible.

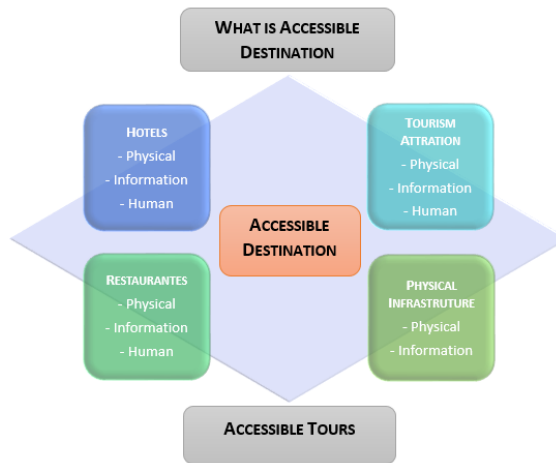


Image 5. - Structure of the themes (Self-made)

4.1. What is an accessible destination?

For Katrine, the accessible destination is *“a place where we can move around without problems, because we want to see interesting things, just like other tourists. It is boring to arrive at a location and not be able to enter. I come in because my husband has muscles! But other people cannot.*

(Appendix 1, Katrine).

As can be understood from her words, the main fact that could fulfill the experience in the destination would be a developing destination without physical barriers. As pointed out by Eichhorn et al (2008) and Prescott, M. (2012), tourists in the wheelchairs want to feel like any other tourist, meaning to avoid the term: 'us (disable tourists) – them (normal non-disable tourist)'. On the same question, John and Ivan (Appendix 1) give the same answers as Katrine. They want to feel like every other tourist and enjoy all the places.

Accessible tourist destination *“...is the one that assures me that I will have no trouble getting to the places and where we can both go to the same places without any difficulty. And very important, the bathrooms are adapted and signposted.” (John, Appendix 1).*

“...A place where we do not realize that we are in a wheelchair and where those who accompany us do not have to suffer to take us to the main tourist spots. Where hotels have adapted rooms and we can circulate everywhere.” (Ivan, Appendix 1)

On the other hand, John and Ivan pointed out as well the importance of accommodation and bathroom (public and hotel) as an important factor in their ideal tourist destination which agrees with Darcy & Daruwalla's (2005) point of view. What can be concluded from that data above is that

all three interview participants give more importance towards structural inhibitor, meaning infrastructure as mentioned by Gassiot et al (2018).

As Eichhorn and Buhali's (2011) model doesn't consist only of physical barriers, but also information barriers and human barriers, some of the interview questions were pointed in those directions.

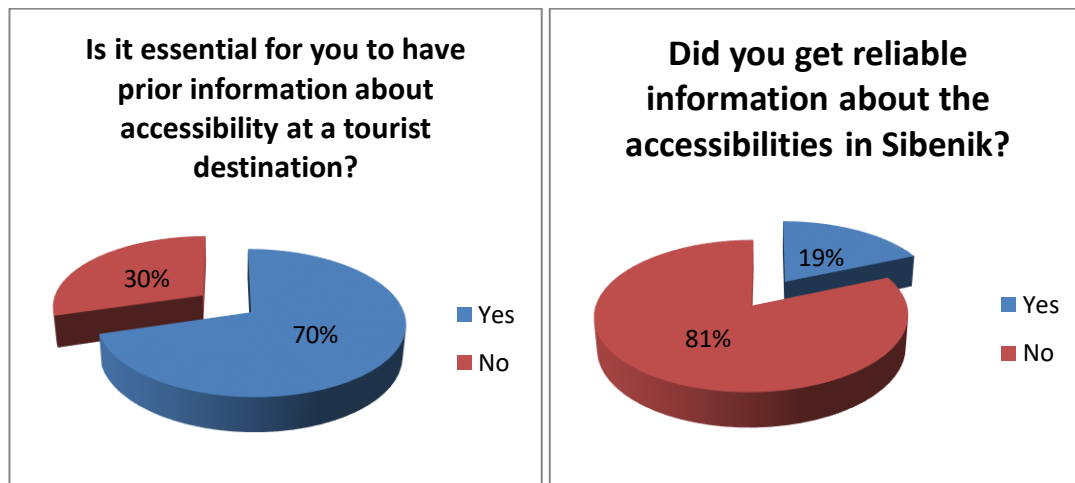
Robert states that for getting a better tourist experience: *"I would like to find more concrete information before I go. Even with the Internet, the information does not appear. Some hotels do not provide accessibility information. For example, it would also be interesting to know which museums are accessible so that we can program. The thing I miss most is the information about accessibility. Even for them it is important, as they could have more visitors."* (Robert, Appendix 1).

Mark claims *"...sometimes the information about accessibility does not appear or is not complete, for example, if I go to the booking to book a hotel, usually afterwards I send an email or call to find out details about accessibility. We must also be aware that the concept of accessibility is very broad. Sometimes they do not pay attention to the several important points as if there are steps, if the door width is sufficient or if the bathroom is properly adapted. Before, I was also concerned with the surrounding areas, if it is steep and what type of floor it has... I gave up on obtaining information from the agencies, because on the part of tour operators there is a great lack of concern or sensitivity towards someone in a wheelchair."* (Mark, Appendix 1.)

John points out that *"...reliable information would be very important, only we don't always find it. Often if we want to see things we have to take a risk. It would be really good to have reliable information."* (John, Appendix 1.)

From the information barriers perspective, all three interview participants from above see lack of it when deciding to travel to some destination which contradicts Eichhorn et al. (2008) claim that information about accessibility in tourist destinations is a requirement and not option. As Michopoulou and Buhalis (2013) state, a tourist with disabilities share similar behavioral patterns like other tourists, but they are differentiated during the process of preparing for the trip since their options are much scarcer than an ordinary tourist. For this reason, they tend to need more information at each stage of travel planning. This is one of the aspects that are influencing tourists (in a wheelchair) decision process when choosing a holiday destination. According to the study of Neumann and Reuber (2004), 70.6% of participants included in the study indicate that information is a crucial factor when preparing for a trip. Data conducted by the questionnaire for this paper shows the same result as Neumann and Reuber (2004). It shows that for 70% of participants having

information about destinations accessibility is essential (Graph 1). Having that in mind, 81% of questionnaire participants said they didn't find reliable information's about Sibenik's accessibility (Graph 2). If taken into consideration Eichhorn et al. (2008) claim that without information, people in a wheelchair will stop traveling, Sibenik cannot expect growth of tourists who are wheelchair users.



Graph 1, Is it essential for you to have prior information about accessibility at a tourist destination?; 27 participants; (Appendix 2)

Graph 2, Did you get reliable information about the accessibilities in Sibenik?; 27 participants; (Appendix 2)

Katrine points out that knowing if the destination is attractive to her is based on the information about accessibility. Those words show that if the destination doesn't have information, some of the tourists will not even give the opportunity to that destination, even if it is accessible.

"...(general) information about this place, as I usually see it on the Internet to find out if it interests me..." (Katrine, Appendix 1)

In this way, online information allows tourists more security during the decision-making process (Cox et al., 2008).

Last, but not least important factor according to Eichhorn and Buhalis's (2011) model, human barriers are as well mentioned by participants of the interview as a barrier they often dealt with. According to (Bi et al, 2007, p. 206.) " negative attitude towards people with disabilities constitutes the most limiting barrier that can be found (...) these being the most difficult barriers to overcome." Often, there is a feeling of prejudice, which causes interactive barriers, namely attitudes towards visitors with reduced mobility, to negatively influence the trip. Sometimes service providers themselves do not know how to welcome the people with reduced mobility due to the lack of training in this area (Packer et al., 2008).

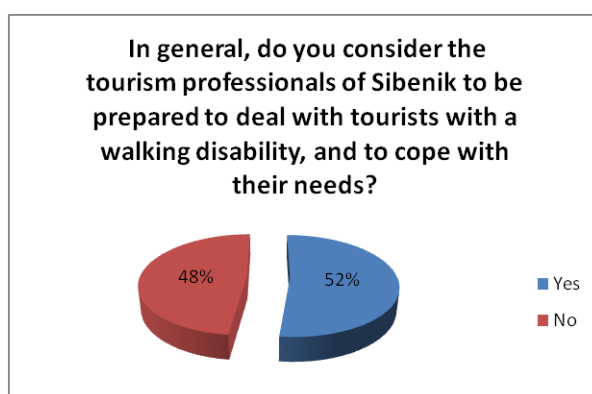
During his traveling in different countries, Mark has experienced that *“...restaurants are noted that are not very sensitive. They do not show great enthusiasm in receiving us. I need food to be cut and in several restaurants, when I ask for it, they bring me everything stirred up with an unappetizing aspect.”* (Mark, Appendix 1.)

From Mark's words, the researcher concludes that the lack of adequate and specialized service is proving to be a new issue in tourism (Muller, 2012; Rhodda, 2012). It is known that in tourism the reception to a visitor is one of the crucial factors for a positive tourist experience (Muller, 2012). The truth is that human resources are not trained to receive this specific audience.

While in the other hand, Katrine points out how educated staff can make the travel experience on a different level: *"We had two people all the time taking care of us and although it was very tiring, it was wonderful. I never thought it was possible to make this trip."* (Katrine, Appendix 1.)

From the experiences of Katrine and Mark, education and sensitivity can make the experience of the tourists in a wheelchair unforgettable. Either unforgettable in a positive way or on negative as in the example of Mark.

Social interaction is an important component of the tourist experience, therefore according to Freeman & Selmi (2009) the creation of training programs in order to enrich the industry and expand the quality and competence of services, products and goods that will strongly influence the evaluation of the product. Participants of the questionnaire are more leaning towards an answer that tourism professionals in Sibenik are prepared to deal with disable tourists than not, as indicated with graph 3.



Graph 3, In General, do you consider the tourism professionals of Sibenik to be prepared to deal with tourists with walking disabilities, and to cope with their needs?; 27 participants ;(Appendix 2)

As it is possible to see from the expectation of tourists in the wheelchair about factors that accessible destinations should have (Table 4.), it can be concluded that people in the wheelchair

experience difficulties with barriers everywhere, parking lot, shopping malls, restaurants, hotels, and generally just by moving on the streets (Bi et al., 2007). Even though over the last years, many physical barriers for people in wheelchairs are reduced, there are still a lot of areas and tourist attractions that are inaccessible for wheelchair users (Smith, 1987).

Tourists in the wheelchair are motivated by different factors to travel, the same as every other tourist. Even though they are in a wheelchair and they have special needs, they can be motivated by beaches, historical monuments, museums, or attending festivals or some sport even, etc. (Kassean et al, 2013). The tourists in the wheelchair are leaving their homes attracted by the same motives and interests as other tourists. Table 4, clearly shows that ‘*very important*’ and ‘*extremely important*’ factors when choosing holiday destination are safety (62,9%), followed by accessibility in general (59,2%), friendliness/hospitality of people (55,5%) and information about destinations accessibility (51,8%). These four factors ideally fit Eichhorn and Buhalis's (2011) model which claims that an accessible destination should eliminate physical, information and human barriers, which will result in accessible tourist destinations.

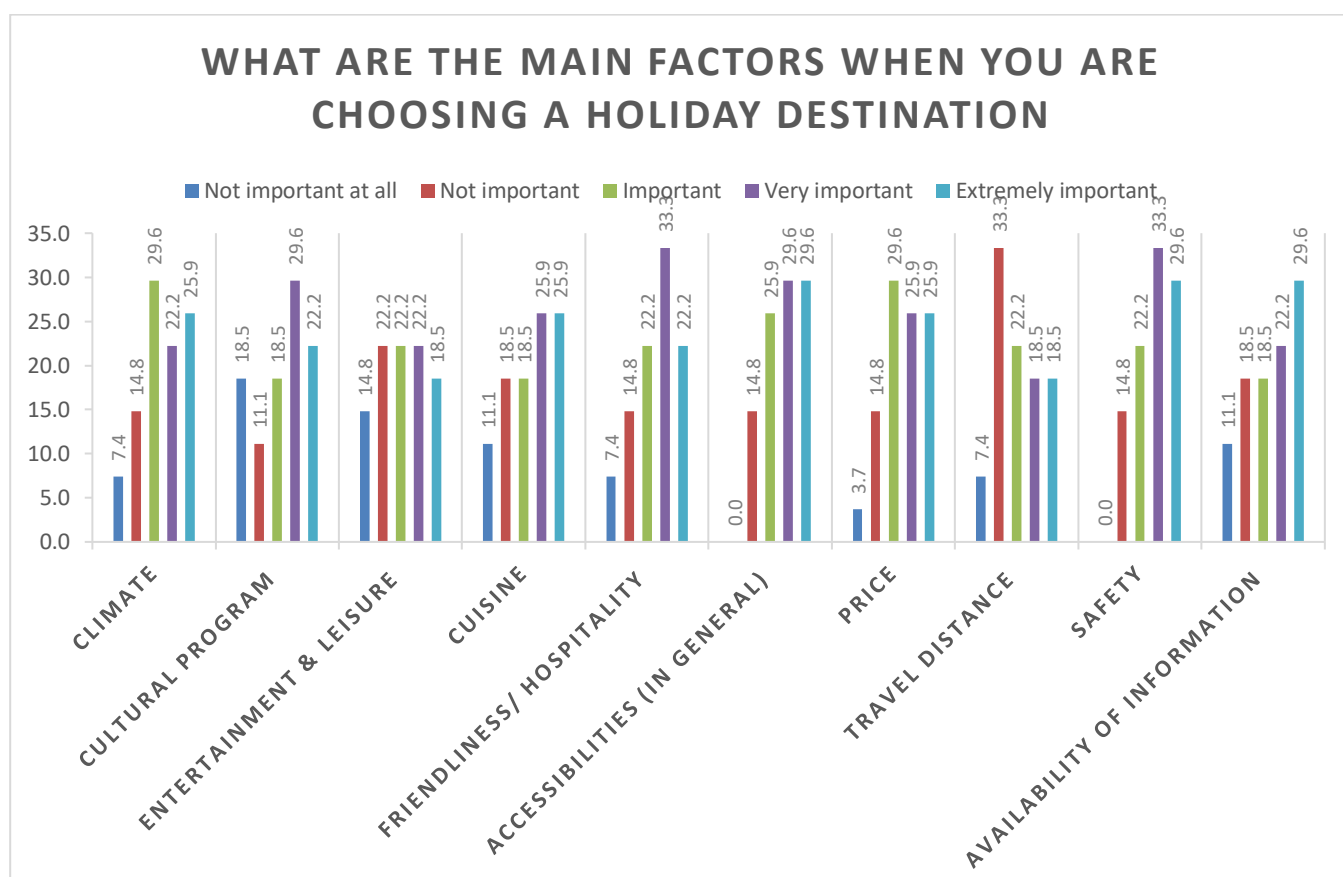


Table 4; Question 4. From the questionnaire; What are the main factors when you are choosing a holiday destination?; 27 participants; (Appendix 2.)

Even though they are motivated to travel by different motivators (Table 5.), it is highly unexpected that tourists in the wheelchair will choose a destination which doesn't provide them accessibility, safety, information and hospitality (Table 4.)

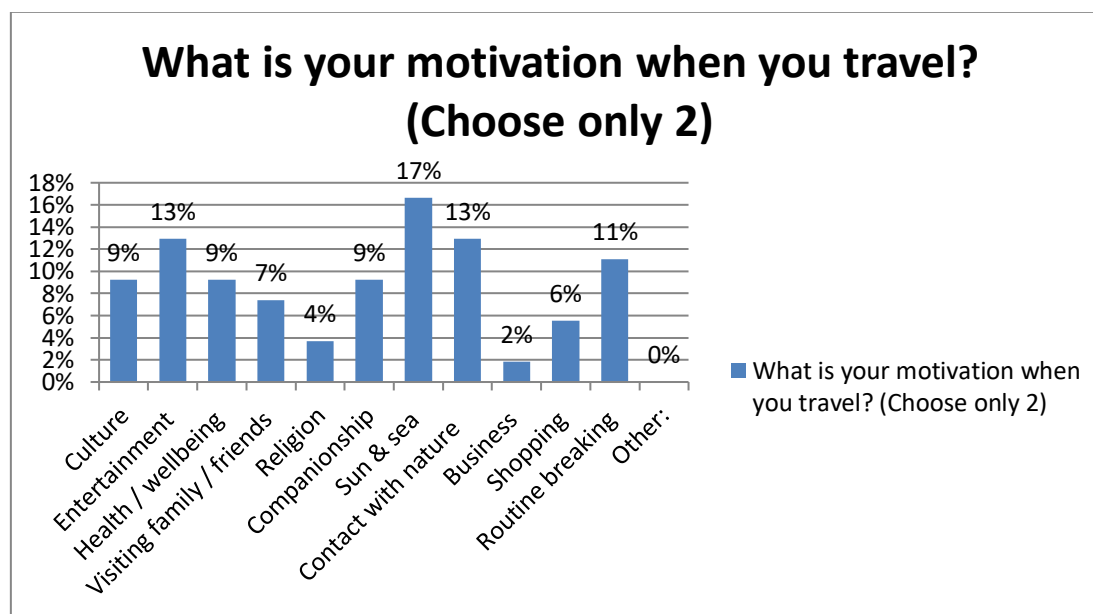


Table 5.; Question 5. From the questionnaire; What is your motivation when you travel?; 27 participants (Appendix 2.)

4.2. Hotels

As accommodation presents huge importance to wheelchair users as it is in many cases their base, the researcher firstly decided to analyze barriers that tourists in wheelchair tend to deal with in the hotels. As already mentioned, it will be divided into physical, information and human barriers. The researcher contacted hotels in Sibenik to see how many of the hotels have disabled rooms and results were highly unsatisfying. As well, the researcher analyzed their official sites and "Booking.com" to analyze information about accessibility for disabled tourists. The results are presented in Table 6.

<i>Hotels</i>	<i>No. of rooms</i>	<i>Accessible rooms?</i>	<i>Information about accessible rooms on the official site</i>	<i>Information about accessible rooms on Booking.com</i>
Hotel Panorama	36	No	-----	-----
Hotel Jadran	57	No	-----	-----
Heritage Life Hotel	17	No	-----	-----
Hotel Bellevue	53	No	-----	-----
King Kresimir Hotel	7	No	-----	-----
D Resort Sibenik	73	Yes	No	Yes

Amadria Hotel Andrija	243	No	----	----
Amadria Hotel Ivan	372	Yes	No	No
Amadria Hotel Jakov	326	No	----	----
Amadria Hotel Jure	384	Yes	Yes	No
Amadria Hotel Niko	220	No	----	----

Table 6; List of hotels in Sibenik with a number of rooms, accessible rooms, and information about accessibility. – Self-made

As it is possible to see in Table 6., from 11 hotels in Sibenik (10 km surroundings) that were analyzed, only 3 of them have disabled rooms to offer. In a tourist destination which depends on the tourism industry, having 3 hotels with disabled rooms is clearly showing that not so much attention is given tourists in the wheelchair or any other disabled tourists that are in need of a special room. According to the Republic Croatia law regulations for accessibility (Appendix 3.), by Article 5, hotels with less of 50 rooms do not need to have disabled rooms and all with more than 50 rooms should have. Even though, lack of laws, policies, and measures about accessibility are often questioned (Rahim & Samad, 2010), the Republic of Croatia have the laws. From the hotels that are analyzed, 8 of 11 hotels, according to law, should have disabled rooms which obviously means that in many cases this law is not followed.

A hotel product that meets the need of a person with reduced mobility also meets the growing demand of senior customers. The question of the gradual increase in aging and its increasingly important role in economic development assumes itself as a business opportunity that cannot and should not be ignored in the tourism sector, as in all others (Ibid).

For the purpose of this paper, the researcher was allowed to observe accessibility factors only in one of these three hotels. From the observation, D-Resort Sibenik seems very well prepared for the needs of tourists in the wheelchair. On the entrance, D-Resort Sibenik respects all the regulations from Articles 10 (Ramp for the disabled people), 11 (Staircase) and 12 (Elevator) (Appendix 3). The only Article that was not fully followed was Article 31 (Reception) (Ibid). The reception was made a bit higher than the regulations are suggesting. Regarding the rooms and bathrooms, they ensured that all the regulations are followed by the book – Article 18 (WC), Article 19 (Bathroom) and Article 21 (Room) (Ibid). D-Resort Sibenik has only two accessible rooms that support the claim of Darcy & Daruwall (1999) in which it is pointed out that hotels don't have a sufficient number of rooms suitable for tourists with disability. Building hotels that are accessible brings a human image to the company, increases its social reputation and gives it a competitive

advantage (Kastenholz et al, 2012). One of the good examples of hotels prepared to receive the most varied public is the Scandic Hotel chain, which is already mentioned in the literature review section.

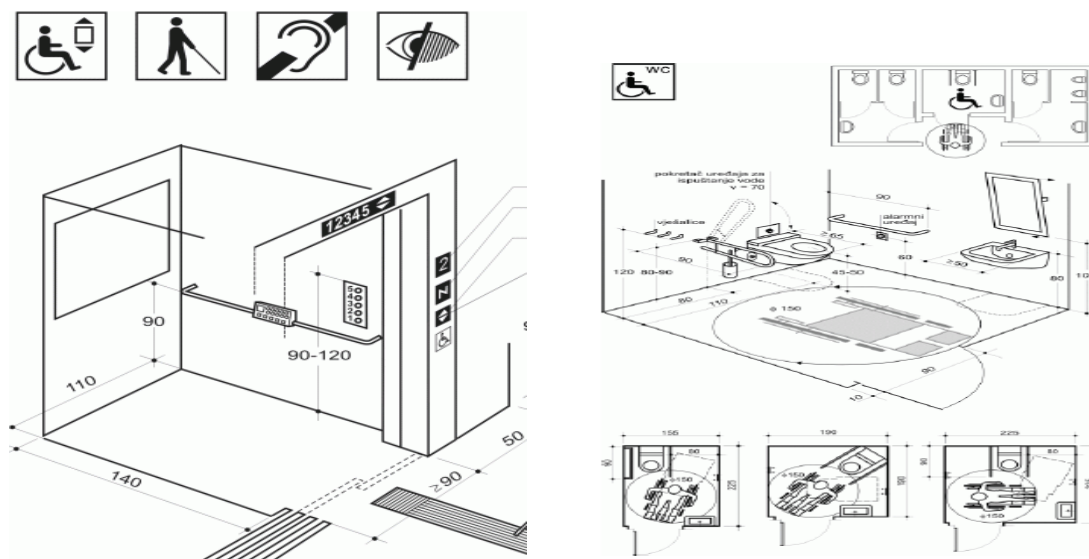


Image 6. & 7. – Accessible Elevator and WC; Accessed on 24.April 2020; Available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2005_12_151_2947.html

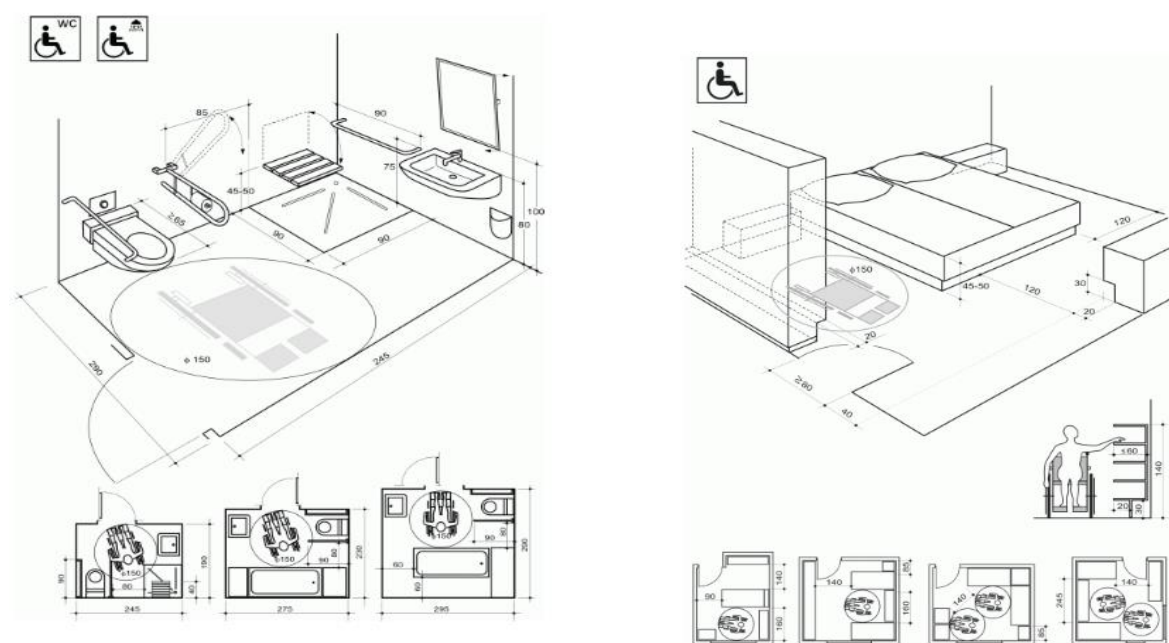


Image 8. & 9. – Accessible bathroom and hotel room; Accessed on 24.April 2020; Available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2005_12_151_2947.html

Regarding the information about accessibility for tourists in the wheelchair, El-Gohary (2012) points out that information about accessibility should not be hidden, but on the contrary, they should be available with the rest of the information with clear images of accessible equipment/facilities. There should be a clear link on the website's homepage for information of this nature. The researcher analyzed the official site of D-Resort Sibenik and was not able to find any information about it, while on Booking.com (Image 10) it is clearly indicated that the hotel is equipped to welcome tourists in the wheelchairs.

Facilities of D-Resort Šibenik Great facilities! Review score, 9.4 [See availability](#)

Most popular facilities

2 swimming pools Parking Free WiFi Pets allowed Family rooms Bar

- Outdoors**
 - Sun terrace
 - Terrace
 - Garden
- Pets**

Pets are allowed on request. Charges may be applicable.
- Activities**
 - Live music/performance
 - Kids' club
 - Library
 - Bicycle rental (additional charge)
 - Table tennis
 - Children's playground
- Food & Drink**
 - On-site coffee house
 - Chocolate or cookies (Additional charge)
 - Fruits (Additional charge)
 - Bottle of water
 - Wine/champagne (Additional charge)
 - Special diet menus (on request)
 - Breakfast in the room
 - Bar
 - Restaurant
 - Great coffee!
- Internet**

Free! WiFi is available in all areas and is free of charge.
- Accessibility**
 - Emergency cord in bathroom
 - Lower bathroom sink
 - Toilet with grab rails
 - Wheelchair accessible
- Parking**

Private parking is possible on site (reservation is not needed) and costs EUR 10 per day.

 - Accessible parking
 - Electric vehicle charging station
 - Parking garage
 - Street parking
 - Secured parking
- Wellness facilities**
 - Swimming Pool
 - Swimming pool
 - Kids' pool
 - Fitness/spa locker rooms
 - Fitness
 - Spa/wellness packages
 - Spa lounge/relaxation area
 - Steam room
 - Spa Facilities
 - Beauty Services
 - Sun umbrellas
 - Sun loungers or beach chairs
 - Pool bar
 - Pool/beach towels
 - Plunge pool
 - Pool with view
 - Infinity pool
 - Outdoor pool (seasonal)
 - Outdoor pool
 - Hamman (Additional charge)
 - Hot tub/jacuzzi
 - Massage (Additional charge)
 - Spa and wellness centre
 - Fitness centre
 - Sauna
- Reception services**
 - Private check in/check out
 - Concierge service
 - ATM/cash machine on site
 - Luggage storage
 - Tour desk
 - Currency exchange
 - 24-hour front desk
- Entertainment and family services**
 - Kids' outdoor play equipment
 - Indoor play area
- Cleaning services**
 - Ironing service (Additional charge)
 - Dry cleaning (Additional charge)
 - Laundry (Additional charge)
- Business facilities**
 - Fax/photocopying
 - Business centre
 - Meeting/banquet facilities (Additional charge)
- Safety & security**
 - Safety deposit box
- General**
 - Pet bowls
 - Pet basket
 - Airport shuttle (additional charge)
 - Air conditioning
 - Non-smoking throughout
 - Shops (on site)
 - Heating
 - Car hire
 - Packed lunches
 - Soundproof rooms
 - Lift
 - Bridal suite
 - Family rooms
 - Facilities for disabled guests
 - Non-smoking rooms
 - Room service
- Languages spoken**
 - German
 - English
 - Croatian
 - Italian
 - Turkish

Image 10. – Facilities of D-Resort Sibenik (Booking.com); Accessed on 11.May 2020; Available at: https://www.booking.com/hotel/hr/d-resort-sibenik.en-gb.html?aid=356980;label=gog235jc-1DCAsoZUIQZC1yZXNvcnQtc2liZW5pa0gzWANouwGIAQGYAQm4AQblAQzYAPoAQGIAGoAgO4AofBj_YFwAIB;sid=711f24f482f542c89c1b55c586554cbd;dist=0&keep_landing=1&sb_price_type=total&type=total&#hp_facilities_box

Regarding the other two hotels which are equipped with disable rooms, duo to lock down (COVID 19), the researcher was not able to get access to the hotels. By analyzing their official sites and 'Booking.com', results show that both hotels do not have information about accessibility on booking.com, while only Hotel Amadria Jure indicated accessibility on their official site (Image 11). Lack of information about accessibility, as already mentioned in this paper will result that tourists in a wheelchair are not going to give opportunities to those properties, even if they have accessible rooms.

Amenities At Amadria Park Hotel Jure



Image 11. – Facilities of Amadria Park Hotel Jure Sibenik (Booking.com) ; Accessed on 11.May 2020; Available at: https://www.amadriapark.com/room_category/amadria-park-hotel-jure/

Amenities At Amadria Park Hotel Ivan

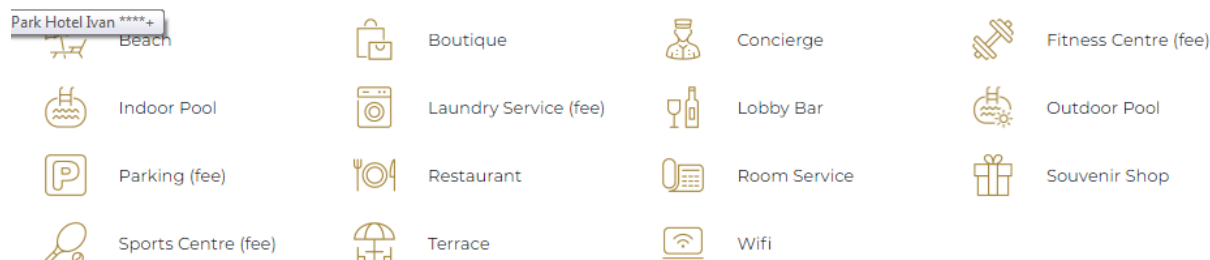


Image 12. – Facilities of Amadria Park Hotel Ivan Sibenik (Booking.com) ; Accessed on 11.May 2020; Available at: <https://www.amadriapark.com/hotel/amadria-park-hotel-ivan-ex-solaris-sibenik>

The researcher made an interview with one of the receptionists who work for many years in Sibenik. He agrees with claims made by academics (Darcy, 1998; Eichhorn & Buhalis, 2011; Gassiot et al., 2018) which point out there isn't enough information about hotel accessibility on the Internet.

On the question “Do you think the customer can easily obtain information about the accessibility of a hotel?”, Dino states: “No, this type of information does not appear on every hotel website, but there are many people who call us when making a reservation, and then we can better explain the conditions we offer. Being a new hotel, we have good access conditions with a ramp at the entrance, with a ramp to the elevator and our room is well adapted. Only the bar should have an access ramp,

mainly because it also serves as a breakfast room and has two steps. Sometimes, customers don't get good information. We have already had customers who came from other hotels in Sibenik, where they had made the reservation; but, because what they found on arrival was not what they had bought, and because the staff did not give them due attention, they decided to come here, because they had seen our that we are equipped with disabling rooms and, although it was more expensive, they stayed." (Dino, Appendix 1.)

Dissatisfaction with the accommodation is as well presented by Robert:

"The worst are the rooms. In general, the rooms are not well adapted. But this is worldwide. Most rooms have bathtubs and rooms for the disabled should not have bathtubs." (Robert, Appendix 1.)

On the other hand, some tourists in the wheelchair were satisfied with the rooms in the hotels in Sibenik:

"Room was big, doors were big enough to be able to pass. In general everything in the hotel was great." (Mark, Appendix 1.)

"...the hotel is good and the room is well adapted, although it is a little small; the problem is the bathtub because I need help to get in and out. If it was a shower it would be easier." Hotels are very important "...because it is my base, but sometimes I confess that I am careless and I have already traveled without booking an adapted room and then when I arrived there was no more because there are usually few of those rooms, but everything is resolved with willpower and help from those who accompany us. If you were traveling alone you would have to be more careful when booking the hotel." (Ivan, Appendix 1.)

As it is possible to see from the statements of Robert, Mark and Ivan, they have a different opinion of what is important to whom, meaning for Mark shows the importance of big room with enough space to pass, while in the other hand Ivan and Robert point out the importance of not having bathtubs in disable rooms. What the researcher wants to point out is that even though people have the same disability, they have different levels of functionality (Eichhorn et al (2007).

On the question why aren't there so many accessible rooms in the hotels, General Manager Mehmet answers:

"By the law, the size of this hotel requires one room which is fully equipped for disabled persons. Therefore, we only have one, but we also have others that are not legally prepared, but that can be

used by people with reduced mobility, provided they have a companion. They all have handles/bars in the bathtub and are spacious enough. Sometimes customers even prefer them to the room that is adapted." (Mehmet, Appendix 1.)

It can be concluded that from the perspective of hotel owners, some follow the law and develop the needs for disabled persons. In other cases, even though there is a law about accessibility for disabled persons, a lot of hotels ignore it without being in any way punished. As stated in the literature review, the public sector is responsible for creating the laws, while on the other hand, the private sector is responsible for complying with legislation (WTO/ACS, 2015).

On the question is there a demand for disable rooms, Mehmet answers:

"Sometimes. So it is not worth to us to adapt other rooms." (Mehmet, Appendix 1.)

Followed by question do hotels have these rooms just because of the law, Mehmet answers:

"No, there are people with difficulties who need this offer and a hotel must be able to offer it, but it is expensive for the hotel to proceed with the adaptation; not everyone succeeds and older hotels have great difficulties in making these adaptations. These rooms are not always profitable. Of course, if there were a huge number of guests requesting the disabled rooms, it is logical that hotels would start building them more. We have the hotel well adapted with ramps. Accessibility is available on all floors except the terrace. We took care that the breakfast buffets are not too high and there is space for circulation." (Mehmet, Appendix 1.)

By his answer, hotels would increase the number of accessible rooms if demand would be bigger, while in the other hand he as well stated that if necessary infrastructure and barriers would be eliminated, demand would increase which agrees with statements of Sendi & Kerbler (2009), Kastenholtz et al. (2012) and Lovelock (2010). As well their motivation for travel and quality of life would be increased (Bergier et al, 2010).

"If a tourist knows that there are conditions, he will come, but these conditions cannot be offered only at the hotel level, as the surroundings must be prepared; if not, having the rooms is useless. The client will not spend all the time at the hotel and when he leaves, he finds holes, cars parked on the sidewalks, etc ... This process of developing accessible tourism involves hoteliers and municipalities, and it must also be a matter of education: like recycling, which is taught to kids, awareness campaigns for these situations should also be carried out." (Mehmet, Appendix 1.)

What can be understood from Mehmet's statement is that efforts for creating accessible destinations should be articulated between different actors, between different stakeholders,

including the state, municipalities and public institutes, entities representing people with reduced mobility (Peixoto & Neumann, 2009), and not only hotels.

From the perspective of human barriers, the National disability strategy (1997) claims that all professionals who are dealing with disabled persons, in this case, tourists should have adequate training. Training is identified as one of the key components in providing a more user-friendly system (Ibid).

Robert pointed out that *"It is important..."*, followed by the claim that tourism professionals *"...know very little"* (Robert, Appendix 1.)

Receptionist Dino admits that in his long history working as a receptionist, he never had any training on how to deal and be more sensitive to tourists with disabilities.

"No, my training was life and I believe that it would be interesting to have training in the hotel industry to properly receive people in wheelchairs, because in hospitality there is generally no sensitivity, only things are done out of obligation. If by law it was not mandatory to have an adapted room, no one would think about it, and yet there are simple things that can and should be done to provide a better stay for different people." (Dino, Appendix 1.)

What can be learned from the statements of Robert and Dino, is that training for tourism professionals would be a very good idea, as tourism professionals do not get any training, except if mandate by law. Even though Dino states that in his long history of working as receptionist he never had any training, general manager Mehmet states that all his staff has passed through training how to deal with disabilities. (Mehmet, Appendix 1.)

4.2.1. Summary of analyzing Hotels

From the data collected regarding hotels in Sibenik, as presented above, it can be concluded that accessibility of the hotels in Sibenik towards tourists in a wheelchair is on an extremely low point. Firstly it is possible to see that majority of the hotels do not even have disabled rooms which are pure basic in accommodating tourists in the wheelchair. Even though there are regulations made by the government of the Republic of Croatia, hotels do not respect it which agrees with Wang & Cole (2014) statement that regulations made for disabled persons are not always followed, and as it seems governmental inspections do not give big importance towards those issues. As well, data shows that those hotels which have disabled rooms, didn't give so big importance towards informing their potential customers of their accessibility, even though, only sites which were analyzed were the

official sites of the hotel and web page Booking.com. As well, the researcher searched on World Wide Web (WEB) phrases about accommodation for disabled persons in Sibenik (for example; accommodation with disabled rooms in Sibenik, accessible rooms Sibenik, accommodation for wheelchair users in Sibenik, etc.) and haven't found so many options. The search showed that some private accommodations offer accessible rooms. Regarding the hotels, most of the hotels which have accessible rooms are more than 10 km distance from Sibenik. From the perspective of human barriers, the researcher concludes that even though some of the literature points out the importance of it, tourism professionals in the hotel industry are not so well educated in dealing with tourists in wheelchairs or any other type of disability.

4.3. Restaurants

The researcher analyzed the accessibility of 10 restaurants which are evaluated as Top 10 restaurants in Sibenik by Tripadvisor. The aspects that are analyzed are restaurants terrace, its accessibility inside the restaurant, does the restaurant have accessible toilets and is there any information about the accessibility of the restaurant.

Restaurant	Accessible terrace <i>A) Accessible without help B) Accessible with help C) Not accessible</i>	Accessible inside <i>A) Accessible without help B) Accessible with help C) Not accessible</i>	Accessible toilet? <i>Yes No Don't Know</i>	Information about accessibility (official sites) <i>Yes No</i>
Konoba Nostalgia	A	B	No	No
Pjat	A	B	Yes	No
Pelegriani	C	C	Don't Know	No
Restaurant Galerija	A	B	Don't Know	No
Bounty	A	C	No	No
Restaurant No.4	A	C	No	No
Restaurant Kavana Medulic	B	B	No	No
Buffet Simon	A	B	No	No
Konoba Gorica	C	C	No	No
Pub&Wine Bar Scala	B	B	No	No

Table 7; List of restaurants in Sibenik evaluated as Top 10 Restaurants – Self-made

As it is possible to see in Table 7, the terraces of six restaurants are accessible for tourists in the wheelchairs without needing anyone's help, while two restaurant terraces require the assistance

of other people. With the assistance of other people, the researcher implies that there are few small barriers like a few steps that would be easily overcome with assistance.

During his stay, John hasn't been inside of the restaurants, because he stayed only in the terraces and his experience was totally fine:

"..we only stayed on the terraces and there were no problems." (John, Appendix 1.)

From the restaurants that are analyzed, as possible to see in the images under (Image 13 & 14), terraces of Pelegrini restaurant and Konoba Gorica restaurant are not accessible, by which researcher means that there are too many barriers which are too much to overcome for the wheelchair users even with the assistance of other people (big narrow stairs; without ramps or any other equipment to assist movement in a wheelchair).



Image 13, Entrance to Pelegrini restaurant (Self-made)



Image 14, Entrance to Konoba Gorica restaurant (Self-made)

From the perspective of accessibility of restaurants inside (in case it is rainy or cold weather) not even one restaurant is accessible without needing help. In six of them, tourists can enter if they have assistance, as the biggest barriers are either one or two steps on the entrance. Four restaurants are not accessible even with assistance. Reasons are either because restaurants have too many stairs on the entrance without an accessible ramp or either because there is too little space inside.

Regarding accessible toilets in restaurants, only one restaurant has accessible toilets while for two restaurants researcher was not sure and for seven other restaurants, there weren't accessible toilets.

Ivan's statement that *"...we did not find restaurants with accessible bathrooms nor was there any indication of that."* (Ivan, Appendix 1.) clearly indicates how big barriers are restaurants without accessible bathrooms in Sibenik are for wheelchair users.

It is important to mention that researcher was not able to test all the regulations made by the Republic Croatia law regulations for accessibility (Appendix 3.), due to lockdown, which resulted in closing all the restaurants. Articles 23. indicates that restaurants with more than 80 seats need to have elements of Article 18. (WC) which was previously mentioned in the analysis of the hotels. As well, the distance between all tables, chairs and any other physical figure should be minimum 100 cm, floors should be made of a strong material which doesn't complicate the movements of the wheelchair, etc. (Appendix 3.).

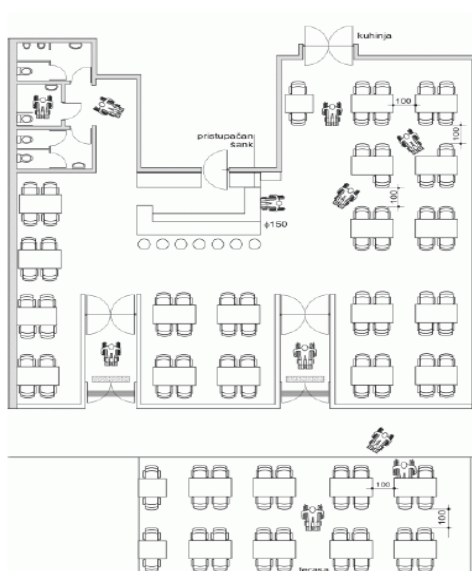


Image 15. – Accessible restaurant/bar; Accessed on 24.April 2020; Available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2005_12_151_2947.html

As the researcher was not able to enter the restaurants during the lockdown, researchers' knowledge about accessible toilets in restaurants is taken from researchers' previous experiences in those restaurants over the last five years. This fact tests the credibility of those data, as over the last five years there is a possibility some of the restaurants have built accessible toilets.

From the perspective of information barriers, as it is possible to see in Table 7., the researcher hasn't found any information on the official sites of the restaurants. Considering that information obtained online is one of the pillars of the accessible tourist experience (Michopoulou and Buhalis, 2013), combined with the fact that researcher was not able to find any information online about the accessibility of analyzed restaurants, results with a conclusion that restaurants in Sibenik don't give any importance towards wheelchair users.

Receptionist Dino claims he *"would not know to tell you now the restaurants, bars, shops, etc that have or have not accessibility for disable persons."* (Dino, Appendix 1.)

Restaurant owner Andro, sees the biggest problem in not having accessible restaurants for wheelchair users in complicated bureaucracy and expensive costs.

"It would be necessary to have a ramp on the entrance, but that presents the challenges as our entrance is directly going on the car road, so we are not able to make the ramp. Of course, a bathroom would also be needed; I usually advise you to use the ladies' bathroom, as it is bigger and will be easier to get in, but wheelchairs are always very difficult. It would be great to offer the necessary conditions, although by law the restaurant area does not oblige. It is not easy for us restaurant owners because mostly we are renting the place and landlords do not want to invest more money. So, it would be on me, which is big if, if my landlord would allow me." (Andro, Appendix 1.)

4.3.1. Summary of analyzing Restaurants

Regarding the restaurants, the researcher comes to the same conclusion as with hotel section. From ten restaurants that have been analyzed, in all of them, wheelchair users will be confronted with challenges. Some of them are possible to overcome, while some are very hard even if traveled accompanied by someone. From all ten restaurants, only one had an accessible bathroom. Even though restaurants with over 80 sitting places should have accessible toilets according to the Republic Croatia law regulations for accessibility, Andro (Restaurant owner, Appendix 1.) is not even aware of it.

"It would be great to offer the necessary conditions, although by law the restaurant area does not oblige." (Andro, Appendix 1.)

The commune of Sibenik is aware that restaurants are not very well accessible for wheelchair users. In February 2020, accessibility of restaurants and shopping centers was a hot topic at the meeting of Sibenik commune. The participants of the meeting were representatives of the City of Sibenik and the Sibenik Tourist Board (S.P., 2020).

"Insufficient accessibility to restaurants and trade facilities, especially in the city center is one of the problems of the city of Sibenik, defined by the configuration of the terrain." (Ibid, p.1).

As well, the commune recognizes the importance of disable tourists by claiming:

"It was also pointed out at the meeting that people with disabilities represent the largest minority group of tourists in the world, which consists of 650 million escorted passengers and are a great tourist potential for each country. An increasing number of people with disabilities from other countries want to visit Croatia, especially Dalmatia, with their friends and families. Therefore, the accessibility of catering and trade facilities, cultural facilities, and public sanitary facilities, especially in the city center, is an indispensable part of the offer of the City of Sibenik as a tourist destination." (Ibid, p.1)

The fact that the commune is aware of tourist potential that tourists in a wheelchair can bring to Sibenik as a tourist destination, is just the first step towards an accessible destination. But just talking about it without taking action is not helping neither tourists who are wheelchair users nor Sibenik as a tourist attraction.

4.4. Tourist attractions

The researcher analyzed Top 10 tourist attractions of Sibenik according to Tripadvisor. These types of attractions that were analyzed are under section of *Sights & Landmarks*. The physical part of attractions was analyzed by two factors: firstly - the fact 'are attractions accessible for wheelchair users' and secondly – 'do attraction have accessible toilets'. From an information perspective, the researcher tried to find information about the accessibility of restaurants online and by his personal observation.

<i>Sights & Landmarks</i>	<i>Accessible</i> <i>Ramps, elevators, etc</i> <i>Yes</i> <i>No</i> <i>Partially</i>	<i>Accessible toilet?</i> <i>Yes</i> <i>No</i> <i>Don't Know</i>	<i>Information about accessibility</i> <i>Yes</i> <i>No</i>
The Cathedral of St James in Sibenik	Partially	Yes	No
St. Michael's Fortress	Yes	Yes	Yes
National Park Krka	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dalmatian Ethno Village	Yes	Yes	No
Town Hall Sibenik	Partially	Yes	No
St Nicholas' Fortress	No	No	Yes
Barone Fortress	Yes	Yes	Yes
Church of Saint Barbara	Partially	Yes	No
Church of Saint Ivan	Yes	No	No
Church of Gospe van Grada	Yes	No	No

Table 8; List of Sights & Landmarks in Sibenik evaluated as Top 10 by Tripadvisor– Self-made

As it is possible to see in Table 8., tourist attractions are more adapted for tourists in the wheelchairs. Even though not all of them are fully equipped, in comparison with hotels and restaurants, tourist attractions have adapted their facilities towards disable tourists.

Six of the ten analyzed tourist attractions are accessible to tourists in the wheelchair, meaning there aren't any bigger challenges that tourists deal within an attempt to visit it. Those ones which have bigger stares or the infrastructure of the surrounding area is not adequate, those barriers are overcome by installed ramps and elevators.

Those attractions which are *partially* accessible, as Table 8. shows, are positioned between each other in a radius of 40 meters. There is three possible way to come to those attractions (Images 16,17,18), and only one is accessible for wheelchair users without needing help from anyone. The entrances to the Cathedral of St. James, Town Hall Sibenik and Church of Saint Barbara do not have any stares and are wide enough for wheelchair users to enter.



Image 16, (A WAY) Not accessible (Self-made); Image 17, (B WAY) Not accessible; Image 18 (C WAY) Accessible; Accessed on 15.May 2020 Available at <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/sibenik-museum.html>; Image 16 & 18 Accessible way (Self Made)

Photos above show that two ways have too many stairs for wheelchair users, and are not equipped with any ramps or elevators (Images 16,17), while the Image 18 presents the only way that is accessible for tourist in the wheelchair.

From the analyzed attractions, only one of them is fully non-accessible (Image 19). St. Nicholas' Fortress is still in the renovation process and is only accessible by boat.



Image 19, St Nicholas' Fortress; Accessed on 18.May 2020 Available at: <https://www.likealocalguide.com/sibenik/st-nicholas-fortress>

Even though, National Park Krka is accessible, to make a full tour of the park is not possible. The researcher took a tour and collected data which obviously shows that tourists in the wheelchair would have bigger struggles with some obstacles. Taking the tours around the park would be easier if accompanied by a person who can assist, but that would also be challenging.

As Fabian states; *“Krka is second most visited National Park in Croatia, but it is not well equipped for people in the wheelchairs.”* (Fabian, Appendix 1.)

The same is stated by Robert; *"National Park Krka was an impossible visit, because it seems like they were not even thinking about tourists with disability."* (Robert, Appendix 1.)

To prove the statements made by Fabian and Robert, the researcher did the tour around NP Krka and collected image data of challenges with which tourists in a wheelchair would confront (Images 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27,28).



Images 20 – 28; National park Krka – Inaccessible parts on a tour of NP Krka; Self-made

Overall, according to Robert, *“All historical monuments are very hard accessible. The Cathedral of St. Jacob is surrounded by stairs, so if a person is in a wheelchair and don't have anyone to help you, you are not able to see it. And that is the city's main monument. Similar is with other monuments.”*
(Robert, Appendix 1.)

Regarding accessible toilets, three attractions from ten analyzed attractions do not have access to accessible toilets. The Cathedral of St James and Church of Saint Barbara do not have their own accessible toilets, but Town Hall Sibenik, which is 20 meters from both attractions, has accessible toilets and is available for the visitors.

A similar situation is also with Dalmatian Ethno Village as it doesn't have their own accessible toilet, but have it available in the close surrounding as Dalmatian Ethno Village is part of a big hotel resort.

St. Michael's Fortress, National Park Krka and Barone Fortress have their own accessible toilets. Even though NP Krka has an accessible toilet, as it is possible to see on the image 32, the toilets are not adequately equated for wheelchair users. In the other hand, Church of Saint Ivan and Church of Gospe van Grada do not have accessible toilets and doesn't have any in the close surrounding.

From the information barrier perspective, four tourist attractions have information about their accessibility for disabled persons. One of them (St Nicholas' Fortress) doesn't have any accessibility for tourists in the wheelchair, but in comparison with other attractions that do not have accessibility, information about St Nicholas' Fortress is informing disable tourists that it is inaccessible. For this reason, tourists are able to see that information before they decide to go visit it. While on the other hand, inaccessible attractions that do not have accessibility nor information about it, make wheelchair users come to the spot to understand there will not be able to visit and explore it.

Know Before You Go

The only way to make it to the fortress is via the official boat tour from Sibenik Riva. The fortress is not yet accessible by a footpath from Sv. Nikola beach because the land entrance is under construction. The only entrance is the one from the sea.

Image 29, Information online about the accessibility of St Nicholas' Fortress; Accessed on 18.May 2020; Available at:
<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/st-nicholas-fortress>

As it is only accessible from the sea, tourists in the wheelchair are as well able to find information online that boat tours are as well inaccessible (Image 30).

Additional Info

- Confirmation will be received at time of booking
- Not wheelchair accessible
- Infants must sit on laps
- Infant seats available
- Most travelers can participate
- This experience requires good weather. If it's canceled due to poor weather, you'll be offered a different date or a full refund
- This experience requires a minimum number of travelers. If it's canceled because the minimum isn't met, you'll be offered a different date/experience or a full refund
- This is a private tour/activity. Only your group will participate

Image 30., Information about boat tours to St Nicholas' Fortress; Accessed on 18.May 2020; Available at: https://www.tripadvisor.com/AttractionProductReview-g608723-d17744323-Sibenik_St_nicholas_Unesco-Vodice_Sibenik_Knin_County_Dalmatia.html

All the facts mentioned in sections above of this paper in regards to St. Michael's Fortress, National Park Krka and Barone Fortress are possible to find online. Those information help tourists in the wheelchair to know what to expect if they decide to visit those attractions. Examples are given in the images 31, 32 and 33 under this paragraph.

At the fortresses

- Access for disabled persons

At St. Michael's Fortress, feel welcome to contact our Info point personel to access the higher levels of the fortress. From the entrance for disabled persons and using the elevator, disabled persons and the ones with walking disabilities can reach the stage level.

There is also the appropriate toilet on the premises.

At Barone Fortress, access to all levels of the fortress is possible for disabled persons and the ones with walking disabilities.

There is also the appropriate toilet on the premises. If locked, please contact the personel in Barone Shop (souvenir shop).

Image 31, Information about the accessibility of St.Michael Fortress and Barone Fortress; Accessed on 18.May 2020; Available at: <https://www.tvrdjava-kulture.hr/en/plan-your-visit/faq/>

Wheelchair Accessibility at Krka National Park

June 30, 2019 | By Laura | Posted in Split

Krka National Park is one of the most popular destinations in Croatia. Unlike the [Plitvice Lakes National Park](#), wheelchair accessibility at Krka is better designed. This guide will break down the areas that are- and aren't- suited for wheelchairs.

Note: Some of the links in this post are affiliate links. If you make a purchase, we'll make a small commission at no cost to you. This is how we continue expanding the content on A Piece of Travel, so we thank you for your support.

Accessible Entrances

As explained in detail in my post [Day Trip to Krka from Split: A Complete Guide](#), there are two main entrances to Krka National Park- Skradin and Lozovac. The best entrance for wheelchair accessibility at Krka is dependent on the season.

Image 32, Partial information about the accessibility of NP Krka; Accessed on 18.May 2020; Available at <https://apieceoftravel.com/wheelchair-accessibility-at-krka-national-park/>

Restrooms

The restrooms at Krka are a let-down.

Despite Krka National Park's attempt at promoting wheelchair accessibility by means of a marked path, their restrooms are not fully accessible.

A ramp leads up to the occasional restroom around the park; however, there aren't accessible stalls. Therefore, anyone unable to get out of their chair won't be able to use the restroom.

If you use the bathroom, be prepared to pay a 5 Kuna fee.

Image 33, Information about accessible toilets at NP Krka; Accessed on 18.May 2020; Available at: <http://www.np-krka.hr/stranice/informative-brochure/420/en.html>

4.4.1. Summary of analyzing tourist attractions

The researcher concludes that tourist attractions are on a good way on developing accessible infrastructure. Even though on almost every analyzed attraction there are some physical barriers, the data clearly shows that wheelchair users are given bigger importance than they are given by hotels and restaurants. Having in mind Freeman & Selmi (2009) statement that there are historical spaces where the improvements are impossible and in the other hand, having in mind that most popular attractions in Sibenik are mostly (but not all) accessible, points in the direction that tourist attractions in Sibenik are becoming wheelchair user-friendly places.

During the collection of the data for this paper, the researcher noticed that it is not accessible as some information online are suggesting.

Firstly, National Park Krka is only partly accessible as proven by the images 20 - 28. The images clearly show that wheelchair users can't or would have a big struggle on some parts of the park tour. As well, according to image 33, NP Krka has accessible toilets, but they are not fully equipped. Due to the limitation of this paper (COVID 19 situation) researcher was not able to analyze the toilets on NP Krka and its accessibility according to Article 18 (WC) of Republic Croatia law regulations for accessibility (Appendix 3.)

Secondly, even though St. Michael's Fortress and Barone Fortress have ramps and elevators on the fortresses, the researcher noticed that surrounding public areas (stairways, pedestrian

crossings, sidewalks) on a way to the fortresses are not always accessible. A similar situation is with other attractions. Accessibility of the public infrastructure will be analyzed more in detail in the following section.

From the perspective of information available online about the accessibility of tourist attractions, there is huge space for improvements as only some of the attractions have information about accessibility. As Miller & Kirk (2002) point out, information about accessibility are hard to find, which results with the dissatisfaction of tourists in a wheelchair since the information is the first interaction between tourist product and consumer.

4.5. Public infrastructure

From the perspective of public infrastructure, the researcher analyzed pedestrians, sidewalks, accessible public toilets and ways towards tourist attractions.

According to local citizens of Sibenik which are wheelchair users, Sibenik is totally inaccessible.

“Most public institutions are infrastructurally unsuitable for people with disabilities. By that I mean the approach, ie the ramp, which, if it exists, in most cases is not made according to the standards. ... there are rights of people with disabilities, but that in most cases individuals are not familiar with the issues and conventions, so it often seems as if people with disabilities have some special requirements, and in fact just want their rights to be fulfilled.” (Simundic, 2015, p.1).

What can be understood from the statement above is that wheelchair users in Sibenik feel discriminated against as their rights are not fulfilled. That statement is supported by Josip Blazevic, the president of the disability association which was interviewed in by the local web portal, who claims that wheelchair users are left to deal with problems by themselves (Sibenski portal, 2012).

According to his words:

“Being in a wheelchair and living in Sibenik or Knin, or the entire Sibenik-Knin County, is more than difficult. ... We may get to the door, but it doesn't go any further. When we buy shoes or a jacket, we have to try it on the street because we can't enter any store, and I won't even mention restaurants and cafes. A big problem for people with less mobility is the lack of toilets adapted for them, but also the abuse of parking spaces for the disabled, and cars parked on the sidewalk that prevents wheelchairs from passing. To get from Baldekin (Sibenik's neighborhood) to the city center I have to literally drive the wheelchair in the road where cars pass.” (Ibid, p.1)

As it is possible to see under this paragraph, images conducted by researcher show that there are a lot of examples in Sibenik where sidewalks and pedestrian areas are not properly built for wheelchair users, meaning the tourist in a wheelchair is not able to pass those areas by himself, but only with the assistance of other persons. Because of these situations, wheelchair users feel discriminated (Eichhorn et al., 2008).



Images 34. – 43. – Examples of sidewalks and pedestrians in Sibenik which are not accessible for wheelchair users (Self-made)

As it is possible to see, pedestrians and sidewalks on the images 34. – 43. look like they are constructed while ago and reconstruction is necessary. While on the other hand, pedestrians and sidewalks that are newly built are constructed to be accessible for wheelchair users, as it is possible to see on the following images.



Images 44. – 47. Examples of sidewalks and pedestrians in Sibenik which are accessible for wheelchair users (Self-made)

From two examples presented above, the researcher concludes that newly built pedestrians and sidewalks are wheelchair accessible, which shows the awareness towards accessibility, while in the other hand majority of pedestrians and sidewalks which are built a long time ago require reconstruction, especially in the old part of the city which is the most visited and biggest tourist attraction

In 2018, journalist Rudan (2018) of the local web portal 'Sibenski' made a test of the old town by being accompanied with Mrs. Rajic who has sixteen years old daughter Nika who is wheelchair use. Mrs. Rajic states that it is very hard to stroller through narrow streets of Sibenik which have a lot of staircases. She states:

"..our city is very problematic for people in wheelchairs. Uphill, downhill, then rocks, narrow streets ... For example, if a person in a wheelchair goes trough "Kalelarga" (name of the main street in the old city of Sibenik) where there are no barriers, comes to the Cathedral of St. James, you can't go down to the shore because the obstacles are the staircases. You can go back the same way, then around the garden along the main road and only then go out to the shore. It's about a kilometer. And that sidewalk around the garden is very steep and narrow, so a person cannot drive a wheelchair on their own. Not to mention how he would end up on the road with an electric wheelchair. So, without the help of another person, he can't go anywhere." (Rudan, 2018, p.1).

The statement of Mrs. Rajic is supported by the images presented under, which show that the old center of Sibenik is full of staircases, unavoidable barriers for all wheelchair users.



Images 48. – 56. Step by step route from 'Kalelarga' (the main street in the old city of Sibenik) to St. Michael fortress (Self-made)

St. Michael fortress has two entrances, the 'way' presented above (Images 48 – 56) (South entrance) and second way (North entrance). If they decided to take South entrance, tourists in wheelchairs will be disappointed. Firstly because of the barriers of staircases on every corner presented above in the images 48 to images 56, and secondly because the South entrance is not equipped with accessible tools (ramps, elevators, etc...). The north entrance, as already mentioned in the 'Tourist Attractions' section of this paper, is equipped with elevators and ramps, but the public infrastructure on the way to the fortress presents physical barriers to wheelchair users. The only possibility for tourists in a wheelchair to come till the fortress is by car, which automatically leads the tourist to deal with parking barrier as there are not so many parking places in the area (Image 57.).

PARKING

St. Michael's Fortress does not have parking area for a large number of vehicles. Therefore, the available city parking areas in the Fortress' vicinity are used. The nearest parking area is located beneath the Fortress on the north-western side, just behind the fire station. For group visits to St. Michael's Fortress, the large parking area located at the premises of the former TEF factory is used.

Image 57, Information about parking area next to St. Michael Fortress; Accessed on 19. May 2020; Available at: <https://www.tvrdjava-kulture.hr/en/plan-your-visit/how-to-reach-us/>

Regarding public infrastructure on the way to fortress Barone, accessibility for tourists in a wheelchair is impossible due to two narrow routes. The only way to come to Barone fortress is by car, as the narrow routes on the way to fortress do not have any elevators. As already mentioned in the 'Tourist Attractions' section of this paper regarding Barone fortress, when the tourist gets to the fortress it is fully accessible for the wheelchair users.

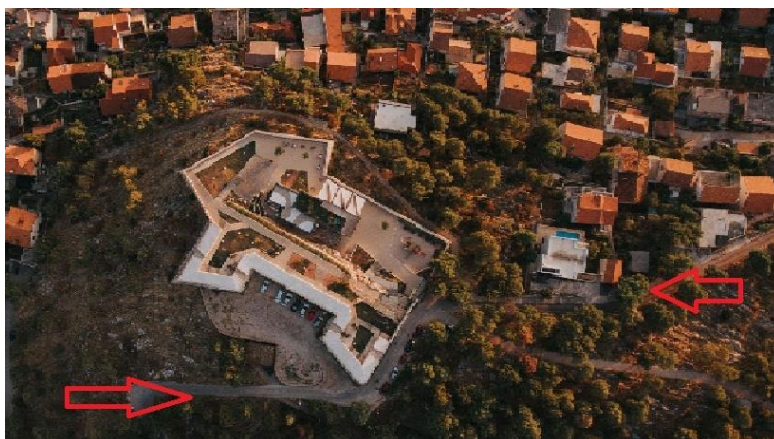


Image 58, Two routes towards Barone fortress; Accessed on 19. May 2020; Available at: <https://www.sibenik-tourism.hr/lokacije/barone-fortress/6/en.html>

The city of Sibenik has four public toilets around the city. All four of them have accessible toilets which are ideally equipped for wheelchair users according to regulations for disabled persons (Appendix 3.) Considering the popularity of Sibenik from a tourist perspective, the researcher considers that building a few more would make it much easier for the wheelchair users, especially because the restaurants and bars don't have accessible toilets. When searched for information about public toilets on WWW (World Wide Web), it is possible to find all four public toilets on the map. The issue with which tourists in the wheelchair could struggle is in the fact that it is not possible to find information's are those toilets accessible for wheelchair users.

To analyze the information regarding the accessibility of the city of Sibenik, the researcher used the mobile app 'wheelmap'. The mobile app gives all kinds of information for help tourists in a wheelchair.



Image 59, Mobile app 'wheelmap' logo;
Accessed on 21.May 2020 Available at:
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.wheelmap.android.online&hl=enfortress/6/en.html>

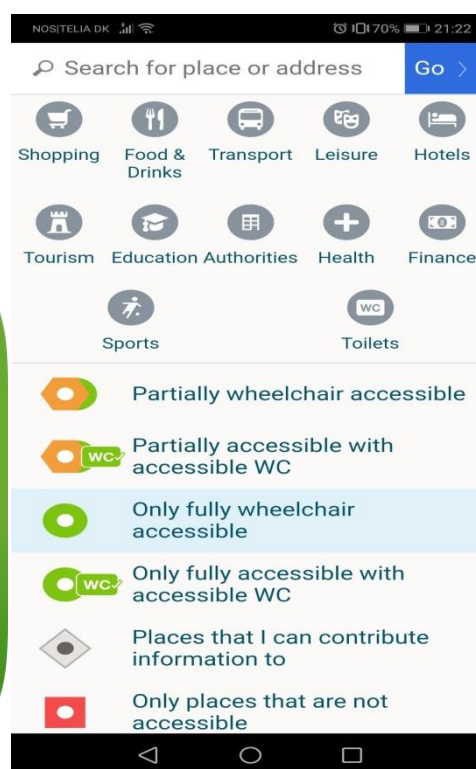


Image 60, Screenshot of Front page of
'wheelmap' app; Self-made

As it is possible to see on image 60, the mobile app gives a big range of options what tourist exactly need and which level of accessibility the specific spaces have. The researcher took Copenhagen as an example on the mobile app, and it is clearly presented on images 61 and 62 that

tourists have a lot of possibilities to find accessible toilets (either public toilets, in restaurants, bars, etc).



Image 61, Screenshot of available toilets in Copenhagen Centre on 'wheelmap' app; Self-made

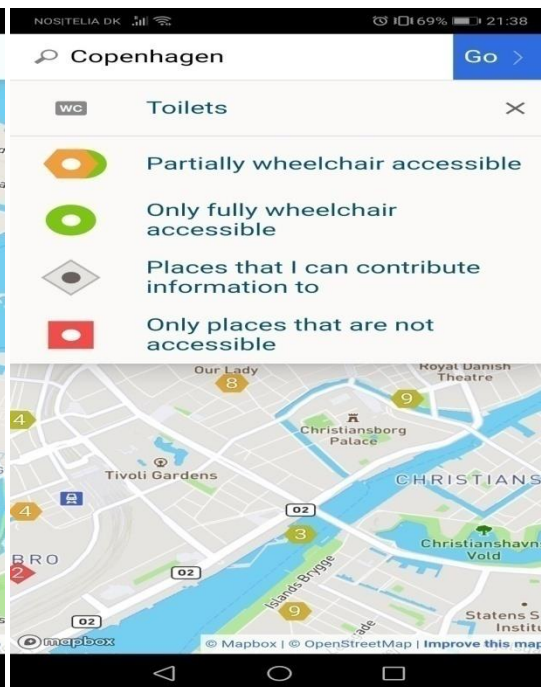


Image 62, Screenshot of available toilets in Copenhagen Centre (specified by levels of accessibility) on 'wheelmap' app; Self-made

In comparison with the information that are available about Copenhagen, Sibenik doesn't have enough information for wheelchair users. Regarding the toilets, the app shows only that there are four toilets, but it doesn't show are they accessible or not (Image 63).

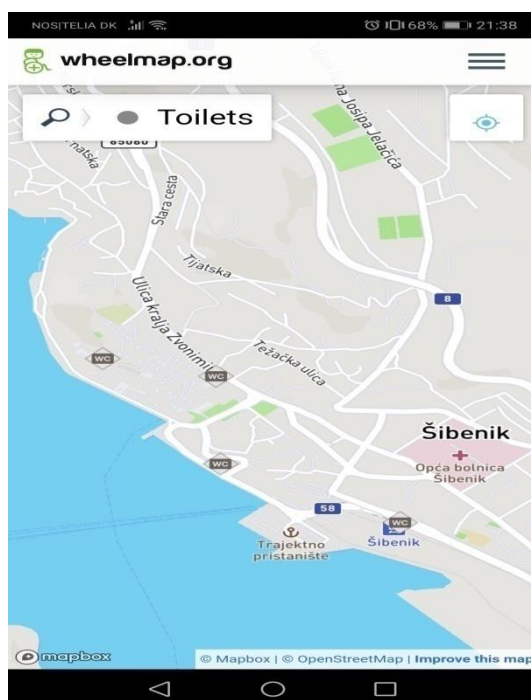


Image 63, Screenshot of toilets in Sibenik on 'wheelmap' app; Self-made

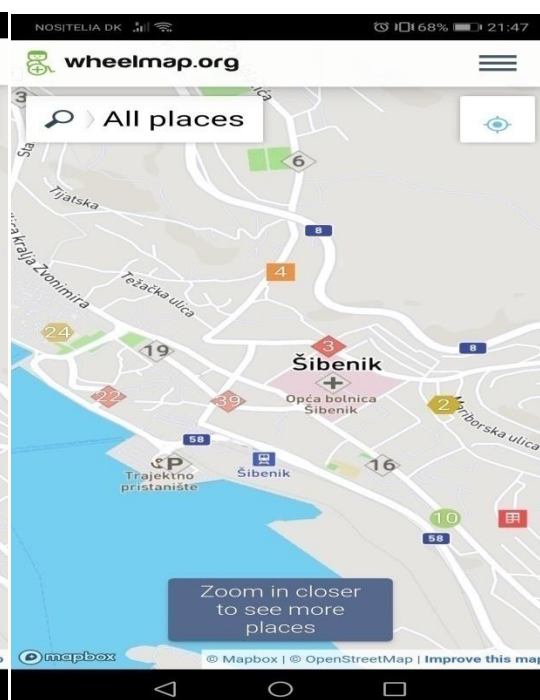


Image 64, Screenshot of information about the accessibility of Sibenik on 'wheelmap' app; Self-made

On the other hand, there are some information about accessibility in Sibenik. Most of the information about the accessibility of Sibenik are showing inaccessibility for wheelchair users, while rarely there are information with fully accessible or partly accessible.

To conclude the information's discussed in the section 'Public infrastructure', considering primary and secondary data presented above, the researcher created an accessibility map of Sibenik, more precisely the city center which is the main place all tourists go.

For readers to understand the map, the researcher created the map in which accessibility is distinguished by colors.

- RED – Inaccessible for wheelchair users
- YELLOW – Accessible for wheelchair users with the assistance of another person
- GREEN – Accessible for wheelchair users without anyone's assistance

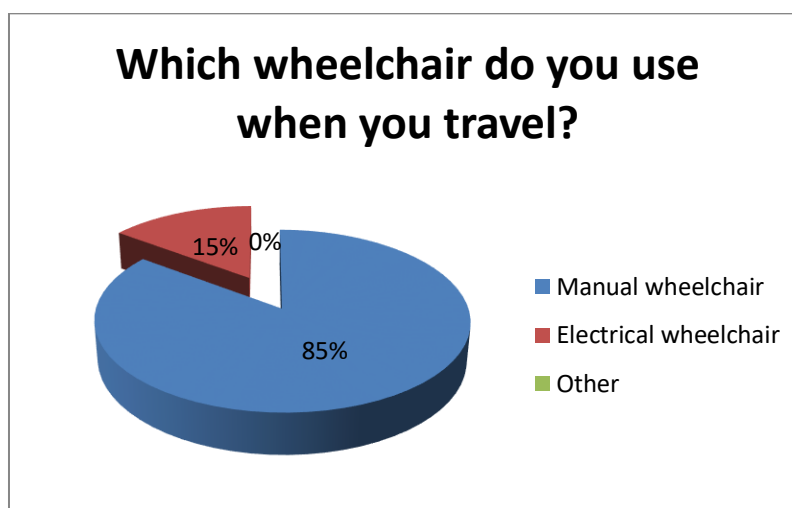


Image 65, Map of Sibenik's (City center) accessibility; Self-made

4.5.1. Summary of public infrastructure

Considering all the data about public infrastructure and testimonies of tourists and local people who use wheelchairs, the researcher can conclude that Sibenik is partly accessible. More clearly, there are parts of the city through which wheelchair users can pass without anyone's help, and that are either newly build areas or areas which were reconstructed. On the other hand, as it is

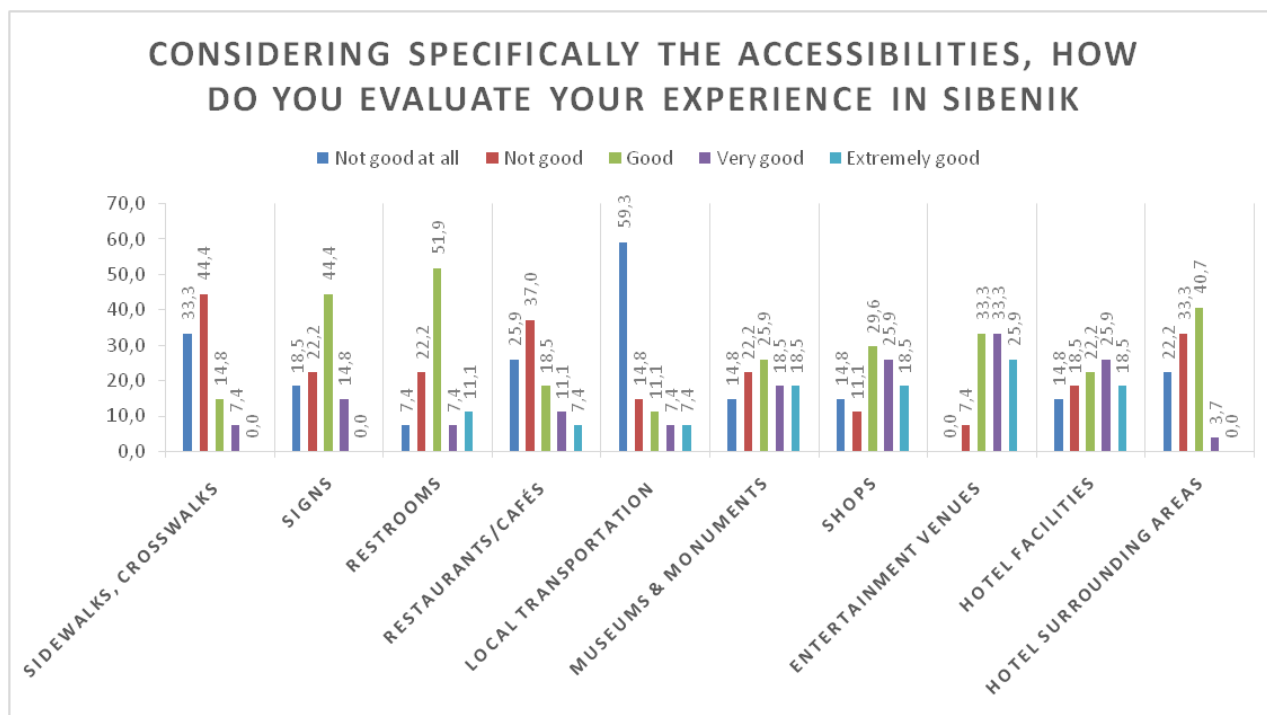
possible to see in image 64, every direction leads to an area that is not accessible for wheelchair users or some help is needed. It is important to mention that the areas that are in Yellow (Accessible for wheelchair users with the assistance of another person) color would be more challenging for tourists in electric wheelchairs as they are much heavier than a manual wheelchair. As the questioner shows 85% of participants are using a manual wheelchair, while only 15% use electric.



Graph 4, Which wheelchair do you use when you travel?; 27 participants; (Appendix 2)

From the perspective of public toilets, there are only four around the city, which is unacceptable as Sibenik during the high season has a huge number of tourists at the same time circulating around the city. As well, even though those public toilets are accessible for wheelchair users, there are no information online which indicates that important facts. Overall, there is a lot of space for Sibenik to improve its accessibility, which will lead towards being a more sustainable and authentic holiday destination.

As the researcher asked participants of a questionnaire to evaluate their experience of Sibenik from an accessibility perspective, the results are as well not satisfying. Ten factors have been evaluated with ranks 'Not good at all – Not good – Good – Very good – Extremely good. As it is possible to see in Graph 5, most of the factors are evaluated with negative ratings, which clearly show that when tourists in a wheelchair come to Sibenik, they are mostly leaving unsatisfied with the overall experience as for wheelchair users accessibility is the crucial factor.



Graph 5, Considering specifically the accessibility, how do you evaluate your experience in Sibenik?; 27 participants;
(Appendix 2)

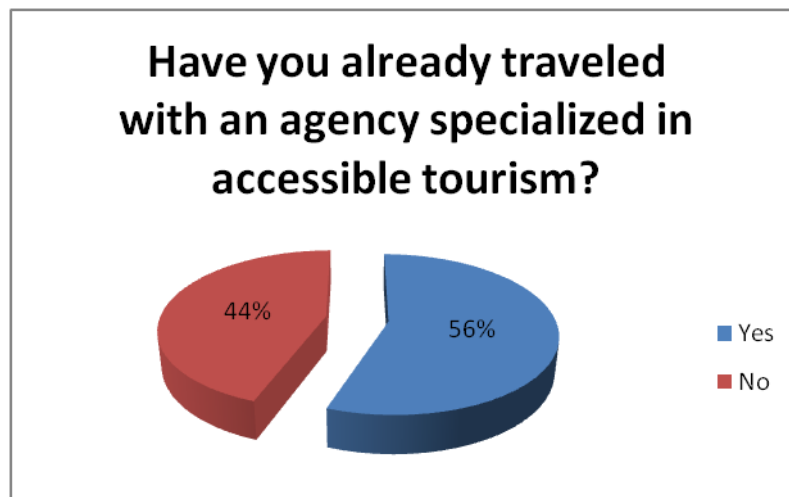
4.6. Tourist offer for disable tourists

As the potential of disable tourists is already recognized (S.P., 2020), the researcher analyzed would creating specialized tours just for disable tourists be interesting to them, and on the other hand would it be interesting for a travel agency to create that kind of offer.

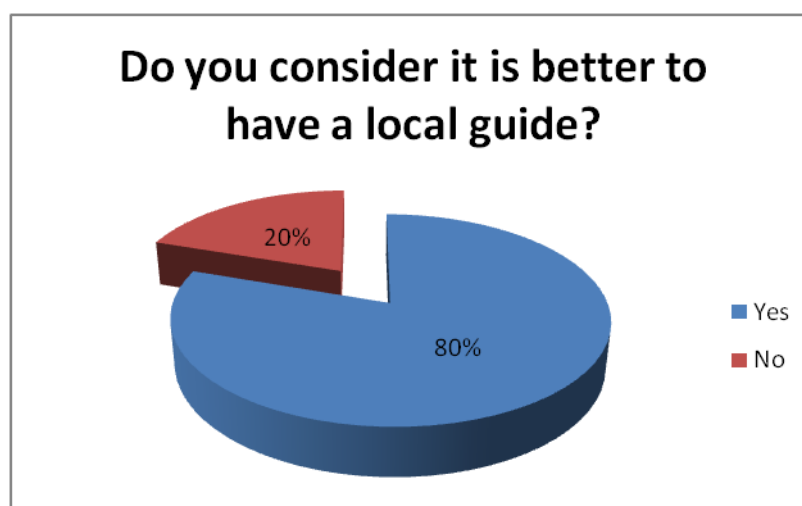


Graph 6, Would you like to attend group tours which are specialized for tourists in a wheelchair; 27 participants; (Appendix 2)

Of 27 participants of the questionnaire, 63% of them would be interested in attending group tours specialized for wheelchair tourists and the majority of them have attended the travel with travel agencies specialized in disable tours (Graph 7). As well, 80% of participants declared that their experience of the destination was better with having the guide (Graph 8). The data from the graphs 6 & 8 supports the claim by Bi et al. (2007), which states that creating the offer specifically for wheelchair users would bring additional value to the destination and it would differentiate it from other destinations.



Graph 7, Have you already traveled with an agency specialized in accessible tourism?; 27 participants; (Appendix 2)



Graph 8, Do you consider it is better to have a local guide?; 27 participants; (Appendix 2)

This idea was presented by the researcher to travel agency in Sibenik, but the answer was not encouraging:

"It's not worth it, and it requires big investments. As I told already before, busses companies are using these situations to make more money. And on the other hand, it seems there are more customers with disabilities every year, but that is not enough to make special tours just for them. We try to do everything for the best, that is, we try to have the conditions for the trip to go smoothly, but we do not intend to make trips for the disabled." (Ana, Appendix 1.)

From her words, the researcher can conclude that travel agencies still do not see the perspective of enriching their offer just for wheelchair users as it requires bigger investments and still not enough of demand from the disabled tourist.

5. Conclusion and discussion

For a destination to be recognized as accessible, it is essential that everyone, regardless of their physical condition or mobility, has the opportunity to access the existing tourist offer, namely services and infrastructure, without any type of constraints. Traveling is everyone's right, and for this to prove true, tourist destinations must adapt to every type of visitor as no one should feel discriminated against because of their physical or psychological condition (Eichhorn et al., 2008). Anyone with reduced mobility or any other type of disability must have access to what is available to any other tourist, accessibility being paramount for a destination to be attractive and competitive. Tourists in the wheelchair should have the opportunity to independently and with dignity enjoy the tourism products, services, and environment (Darcy & Dickson, 2009). As we have seen throughout this paper and as the literature suggests (Lee et al., 2010), the tourism service chain must be accessible in all its connections, and there must be a joint effort by all its stakeholders, including the state, municipalities and public institutes and entities representing people with reduced mobility (Peixoto & Neumann, 2009), in order to make tourism development effective for all. As stated by Devile (2003), this should be a systemic process, coordinated among all components of the tourism product. In addition to the legislative policies in force and despite the growing interest and concern on the part of various agents in relation to accessibility and accessible tourism, there is still a long way to go in order to make destinations with disabilities accessible.

Although historic cities represent important and picturesque elements of European history and culture, many visitors have limited access to this heritage. In most of these cities, the architecture itself and the built heritage make improving accessibility more complex. However, building creative solutions and effective response to those barriers is possible. The need to improve accessibility conditions is an unequivocal principle for the development of accessible tourism in Sibenik, as in all other destinations. From the data collected, overall, it can be concluded that Sibenik is not even close to be an accessible destination, as all the factors that have been analyzed were unsatisfying. There are numerous barriers in Sibenik, which prevent or hinder the enjoyment of tourists in wheelchairs, whether due to barriers of access, accommodation, information or tourism professional's education. From table 3. that indicates minimum criteria for accessibility, made by Peixoto & Neumann (2009), Sibenik doesn't meet the majority of them.

The case of accommodation in Sibenik is critical, with a very small number of hotels that have rooms equipped for the needs of wheelchair users. Considering that wheelchair users are the same

people as everyone else, the fact that there is such a limited number of accessible rooms can be seen as a type of discrimination. The range of accessible information about accessibility in hotels is more than limited, as hotels that have accessible rooms do not publish that kind of information. As already mentioned in the literature section, many countries do not have laws, and accessible standards for the development of accessibility (ESCAP, 2008), but the Republic of Croatia is not one of them as they have regulations (Appendix 3). The fact that there are laws that are not followed in many cases is something that worries the researcher. Even though the private sector tends to see the laws for the implementation of accessibility as an inconvenient issue of additional expenditure (Eichhorn & Buhalis, 2011), if not followed it should be punishable. The researcher's opinion is that the best way for the private sector to respect the rules of accessibility would be financial restrictions to those ones who don't follow the regulations.

Similar to hotels, restaurants are as well in the critical situation, by not offering basic physical requirements for wheelchair users and by not securing adequate toilets. From all the restaurants analyzed, the researcher was not able to find any information about accessibility. Having in mind Buhalis et al (2005) statement that reducing the physical barriers, will not have any benefit if there is a lack of information as travel planning of tourists with disabilities is often characterized by a detailed search for information about accessibility, Sibenik doesn't appear on the map. Even though Miller & Kirk (2002) point out that information about accessibility are hard to find, they are a crucial fact for wheelchair users when preparing for the trip (Neumann & Reuber, 2004) as that is something that differentiates tourists in a wheelchair from tourists without any disabilities (Michopoulou and Buhalis, 2013). Considering that so little or no information about accessibility in hotels and restaurants was found for this paper, and on the other hand, considering what academics say about accessibility, the researcher concludes the hotels and restaurants are not ready at all for welcoming potential tourists who are in wheelchairs. Hotels and restaurants in Sibenik should recognize the potential of the internet (Eichhorn et al, 2008) as it will make them stand out due to the fact that tourists with disabilities prefer to search for references on the internet before traveling (Fernandéz-Villarán, 2007).

From the perspective of education of tourism professionals in hotels and restaurants in Sibenik, data haven't show intentions towards reducing those barriers which agree with the Muller's (2012) and Rhodda's (2012) claim that the lack of adequate and specialized service is the issue that should worry tourism industry, as the tourism professionals have a huge impact on tourist experience (Muller, 2012). The little knowledge that these tourism professionals have about disabilities and the real needs of those tourists, as well as the existing offers in the destinations, results in the failure to support the customer before, during and after the trip. The fact that tourism professionals often do

not know how to welcome tourists with disabilities (Packer et al., 2008), tourist companies in Sibenik should realize the importance of staff training (Saarinen, 2006, Muller, 2012) in order to be able to give concrete and reliable answers to tourists with disabilities.

Data about the accessibility of tourist attractions puts a bit light on the accessibility of Sibenik from a physical perspective. Most of the tourist attractions that were analyzed in this paper were accessible, or partially accessible. Tourists in the wheelchair are able to enter and explore the attraction, and even are able to find for some of the attractions detailed information about accessibility. Even though, it is possible to find information about accessibility, the web sites of tourist attractions, and as well websites of hotels and restaurants do not fulfill any of the key points for creating information for accessible tourism which are pointed out by El-Gohary (2012). The researcher was not able to find so much detailed information which include images of accessible facilities nor the information were available clearly on the websites.

The problem that often occurs is the surrounding public infrastructure of the way to those attractions. The data collected for the purpose of this paper show that there is a mix of accessible and inaccessible public infrastructure. All around the city, it is possible to find inaccessible public infrastructure, but in the city center is the worst. Considering that the city center is the main place where all the tourist attractions are, it is crucial that those barriers are reduced if Sibenik wants to be recognized as an accessible destination. While on the other hand, it is possible to notice that those areas which are equipped with accessible infrastructures are newly built and made by the regulations for disabled persons.

Overall, as Graph 5 indicates, the experience of 27 participants who are wheelchair users regarding the accessibility of Sibenik are more negative, then positive. Even though there is a small number of hotel rooms that are accessible, and even though there is lack of information about the accessibility of hotels, hotel facilities (Graph 5) were evaluate by most of the participants by 'very good' (25.9%) and hotel surrounding areas with 'good' (40,7%). Evaluation of the restaurants agrees with the conclusion about the accessibility of restaurants. 25.9% of participants evaluated the accessibility of restaurants with 'not good at all' while 37% evaluated it with 'not good'. The evaluation of accessibility of tourist attraction is leaning towards positive evaluation: Museums & Monuments 25,9% 'good', Shops 29,6% 'good' and Entertainment Venues 33,3% 'good'. Even though the evaluation is far from 'highly accessible' and the fact there is still a lot of barriers that need to be dealt with, tourist attraction are showing directions for hotels, restaurants and public infrastructure towards the development of the accessible destination. Graph 5. shows that public infrastructure

(sidewalks, crosswalks and signs) are given the worst evaluations of all factors that have been analyzed.

Physical barriers remain a challenge in the public space not only for tourists, but as well for many local citizens of Sibenik which are users of the wheelchair. As it was indicated in the paper, local wheelchair users state it is impossible for them to go anywhere. There is an urgent need to become aware of the diversity of access needs, in order to gradually improve the offer in terms of infrastructure and services.

These obstacles are at the heart of a very delicate matter for tourism because, as Lee et al. (2010) say, they can significantly reduce the pleasure of traveling, as well as increase a negative self-image in the tourist himself, who will feel helpless and dependent. As Kastenholz et al. (2012) point out accessible destination market has stood out as a good opportunity and that the provision of quality products and services at this level can provide a competitive advantage. For that reason, it is crucial to demonstrate to tourism companies and services the benefits arising from accessibility, such as reduced seasonality, competitive advantage and consequently economic development. In fact, in addition to an ethical and social component, the promotion of accessible tourism also reaches a significant economic dimension. However, there still seems to be some ignorance of the advantages related to this segment of tourist demand, which may justify the lack of interest and investment by the economic agents in the sector in accessible structures. Inclusive tourism must involve the creation of a competitive benefit, providing and marketing the best possible products and services for tourists with special needs, creating inclusive environments and experiences for an immense and growing market.

More should be done in the scope of creating/adapting a larger number of rooms for this type of public, more equipment or services to be provided to the client, committing to marketing policies and strategies in order to further captivate this type of tourist.

There is an urgent need to continue to debate and promote the theme of accessibility and to engage in a continuous work methodology to raise awareness among the different players in the tourism industry. The researcher hopes that this work can be a contribution to deepen knowledge and raise awareness among the different agents with responsibility in this area.

It is important, in terms of future research, to deepen this study, extending the field of analysis to other tourist spaces and, also, to other municipalities along with all cities in Croatia. In fact, accessibility must be seen from an integrated perspective, promoting different regions, working in a network, allowing them to articulate and assert themselves as accessible tourist destinations.

It is crucial that the country's government together with the private sector, strategically develop a sustainable plan and program in the direction towards developing destinations, or even better said countries that are fully accessible to wheelchair users (Darcy et al., 2010).

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