

**MANAGER'S KNOWLEDGE AND  
AWARENESS TOWARDS ACCESSIBLE  
TOURISM IN THE REGION OF MURCIA  
CONOCIMIENTO Y PERCEPCIÓN DEL  
GERENTE HACIA EL TURISMO ACCESSIBLE  
EN LA REGION DE MURCIA**

JUAN ANTONIO CLEMENTE SOLER<sup>1</sup>

*Facultad de Economía y Empresa. Departamento de Sociología. Universidad de Murcia.*

MARCOS BOTE DÍAZ<sup>2</sup>

*Facultad de Economía y Empresa. Departamento de Sociología. Universidad de Murcia*

PEDRO SÁNCHEZ VERA<sup>3</sup>

*Facultad de Economía y Empresa. Departamento de Sociología. Universidad de Murcia.*

DAVID RODRÍGUEZ GUILLÉN<sup>4</sup>

*Parlamento Europeo. Bruselas. Bélgica.*

**RESUMEN**

Tradicionalmente, el tema del turismo accesible ha sido el enfoque para considerar las demandas de las personas con discapacidad con respecto a la práctica del turismo. Sin embargo, poco se ha dicho sobre la percepción o conocimiento del gerente/director del establecimiento hotelero sobre el fenómeno. Esta investigación se dirige a los gerentes/directores como el principal foco de interés para saber cómo se adaptan los diferentes establecimientos hoteleros al creciente sector de turismo accesible. Para ello, se realizó una encuesta para medir el nivel de conocimiento y actitudes hacia el Turismo Accesible presentada por los administradores (n = 318) de propiedades (hoteles y casas rurales) en la Región de Murcia (España). Los resultados muestran que solo 1 de cada tres gerentes/directores están familiarizados con el concepto, la mayoría de ellos (67%) no proporciona a los clientes un sitio web accesible, solo el 38% adapta la infraestructura del establecimiento para una mejor accesibilidad y la mayoría de ellos (90%) nunca tomó cursos de capacitación sobre el tema. Se necesitan cursos de formación, campañas de concienciación y financiación por parte de la Administración pública para lograr un diseño universal en el turismo.

---

Fecha de Recepción: 11 de noviembre 2019 Fecha de Aceptación: 23 de diciembre 2019

<sup>1</sup> Facultad de Economía y Empresa. Departamento de Sociología. Universidad de Murcia. E-mail: juanantonio.clemente@um.es.

<sup>2</sup> Departamento de Sociología. Universidad de Murcia. E-mail: mbote@um.es

<sup>3</sup> Departamento de Sociología. Universidad de Murcia. E-mail: psv@um.es

<sup>4</sup> Parlamento Europeo.

**Palabras clave:** Turismo accesible, concienciación en accesibilidad, Accesibilidad web, Formación en accesibilidad

## **ABSTRACT**

Traditionally the issue of Accessible Tourism has been approached in order to consider people with disabilities' demands regarding the practice of tourism. However, little has been said about the manager's perception or knowledge about the phenomenon. This research targets the managers as the main focus of interest in order to know how the different properties adapt to the growing sector of accessible tourism. In order to do so, a survey was conducted to measure the level of knowledge and attitudes towards Accessible Tourism presented by managers (n=318) of properties in the southeastern Region of Murcia (Spain). The results show that only 1 out of three managers are familiar with the concept, most of them (67%) does not provide the customers with an accessible website, only 38% adapt the property infrastructure for better accessibility and most of them (90%) never took training courses on the topic. Training courses, awareness campaign and funding by the Administration are needed in order to totally achieve a total universal design in tourism.

**Keywords:** Accessible Tourism, Accessibility Awareness, Managers Training, Website Accessibility

## **1. INTRODUCCIÓN**

Undoubtedly, the segment of people with disabilities or those with different functionalities has, over the last decades, obtained a leading role for different economic and cultural agents, with the enjoyment of tourism and leisure activities being one of the sectors in which both associations of disabled people and public and private institutions for the development of them are interested. The role of associations of disabled people together with the growth of social sensitivity towards them and the dynamism of tourism, increasingly segmented, have increased the role of Accessible Social Tourism.

After the international recognition of the right to exercise tourism from equality and improvement of the quality of life and the creation of better conditions in the 1980 Manila Declaration, have taken place within the international, European and national framework numerous regulations and actions aimed at providing space to accessibility in tourism.

In the opinion of a specialist, tourism is a social good of the first magnitude that should be available to all citizens, without any group being excluded, regardless of personal, social, economic or other circumstances that concur in its components (Pérez & Velasco, 2003).

For this reason, tourism has been forged into a true fundamental right, indispensable for the full development of human dignity. Tourism could not be understood at present without considering the accessibility factor and the equal

treatment for all segments of population without discrimination by race, age, sex or disability.

In the current scenario of accessibility, the group of people suffering from some type of disability has acquired pre-eminence in the political-social landscape and has been participating in the decision and elaboration of the laws and guidelines by which they will be directly affected. In this sense, the economic importance that tourism represents for this group is no longer discussed, but, on the contrary, the idea of the economic benefits created by the access and development of tourist activities by people with different functionalities is unanimous. One of the most notable effects is the Accessible Tourism as a seasonal phenomenon, managing to promote tourist areas in times of scarce affluence. The dimension of supply and seasonality of tourism business, so important for the economy of countries like Spain, make the sector to stop generating employment during the low season, with a notable social and economic impact on the tourist areas (Waterhouse, 1998).

In this sense, The Ministry of Ageing and Social Services (IMSERSO) Senior Vacation Program aims to create or maintain employment in the tourist sector, especially in the hotel sector, during the winter season, being this the case of hotels that would remain closed period if the Program did not exist.

Equally, the importance of senior tourism as a potential economic source is remarkable. Spain has become a retirement destination for Europeans for several reasons. As pointed out by various specialists, the Mediterranean coast is the place of the world where the highest percentage of the elderly live in relation to the total population, due to climatological, geographical, idiosyncratic and economic reasons, people who retire in Europe often choose to settle in Spain, and this trend has been constant (Ribera, Majos & Reig, 1993).

But there are not only economic benefits for the economy as a whole and mainly for the tourist industry sector, such as hotels, restaurants, shops, etc., but the boost of tourist activities and their support by the institutions entails no doubt, and as studies have shown in the matter, a reduction of social cost for public administrations, by which they recover the total amount invested in the partial funding of IMSERSO Programs (Waterhouse, 1998), through taxes (IRPF, VAT, Companies), Social Security contributions, benefits savings and unemployment benefits, etc..

In the current scenario of a growing number of people with disabilities and different functionalities, an adequate level of accessibility has to be provided so they can develop their citizenship status with equal opportunities. However, this situation, apparently clear and accepted by common sense,

does not always imply the effective and reliable development of policies developed and integrated to promote accessibility to tourism.

Given this political-social panorama, there is an increasing demand of people with different functionalities that demand the exercise of their right to tourism in the same conditions as the rest of the population. There are several reasons why the demand access to tourism by this group has increased, either because of its greater visibility, because of the dynamism of the group, because of the desire to travel and the desire for mobility, or by the existence of aid aimed at favoring this economic-cultural activity.

IMSERSO, since its creation in 1978 by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, has been working to facilitate access to recreational and cultural activities for groups that are in a situation of inequality due to accessibility.

However, as mentioned above, not only are people with disabilities affected by the lack of accessibility to the development of tourism activities, but the segment of the elderly is one of the most relevant and growing in our current society. Likewise, the concept of "accessibility for all" has become stronger, which has favored the elimination of architectural barriers in all areas, both public and private, which facilitates accessibility for the entire population, including disabled and non-disabled.

In this sense, Brinckmann and Wildgen (2003) postulate that tourism is, above all, a collective social practice that integrates different mechanisms of relationship with space, identity and the *other*. Therefore, tourism is a practice that generates more than only economic activity in the same way as religion, sport or war. Social inclusion is, therefore, a bilateral process in which there is an interaction between society and people excluded. In this process society tries to solve the problems of people excluded, trying to find solutions which can give opportunities to them. Inclusion is a requirement for people with disabilities to access social benefits without having to "pay income to integrate them into the community" (Sasaki, 1997; Brinckmann & Wildgen, 2003).

According to Barton (1998) disabled people or people with different functionalities, by the mere fact of being like that, are in a situation of discrimination, insofar, as, they do not present the necessary functionality ("normal") to access to the full exercise of their social, political and economic rights, and therefore, is limited to enjoy a minimum condition of citizenship. Being disabled implies experiencing discrimination, vulnerability and abusive assault on one's own identity and esteem. Palacios and Románach state that (2006) deficiency becomes a disability when involves discrimination in the social environment. In this way (Brinckmann & Wildgen,

2003), the practice of social inclusion rests on common principles: acceptance of individual differences, valuation of each person, coexistence within diversity, and learning through cooperation.

In the face of the phenomena of increasing number of people with disabilities or aged population, it is essential to develop action programs and to carry them out effectively. There are still many barriers that prevent these segments of the population from the enjoyment of tourist activities. Along with the popularly known architectural barriers, we must pay special attention to the improvement of the training of tour operators in the area of Accessible Social Tourism, as well as to develop a true accessibility in urban tourist routes and the improvement of tourist information to the applicants for this type of activities. Only in this way, will society succeed in eliminating not only the architectural barriers, but also the social and cultural barriers. The final objective is the so-called Universal Design, which entails the development of any leisure, tourism or cultural activity on equal terms, regardless of the functionalities of each individual.

Spain as a world leader in the tourism sector, should pay more attention to Accessible Social Tourism and, in this sense, this paper aims to address the current situation of tourist properties (hotels and country houses) in the Region of Murcia, taking into account different parameters such as the information offered by the tourist establishments, the training of tourist destination managers, the accessibility transmitted through the web pages, the adaptation of infrastructures or the existence of demand of tourist establishments by people with problems of accessibility.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The Baker report from 1989 can be considered the starting point of the acceptance of Accessible Tourism, or tourism for all having into account the importance of this report in future legislation regarding tourism and accessibility afterwards. Since the beginning of the 90's a growing number of research has been dealing with social and accessible tourism, analyzing, for example the features and advantage of tourism for people with disability and giving policy makers solutions to implement more inclusive policies (Driedger, 1987; Smith, 1987) Murray and Sproats, 1990; Brown, 1991; Cavinato and Cuckovich, 1992). Some authors focused specifically in troubles and barriers faced when travelling by people when disability (Ritcher and Ritcher, 1999). Important has been also the contributions on the motivations and needs of people with disabilities as touristic consumers (Baker, 2001, Ray and Ryder, 2003, Bi, Card y Cole, 2007). In sum, for

people with disability tourism experiences must be built on the basis of having accessible destination and locating appropriate accommodation while travelling (Israely, 2002; Darcy, 2002a; Dwyer and Darcy, 2008).

More recently, academic works have started to look into the requirements to ensure that accommodation, destinations and transportations across the tourism system meets the needs of people with disabilities properly (Buhalis and Darcy, 2011; Domínguez, Darcy y Alén, 2016). Specially, taking into account that disabled people are often local customer which return to places that provide good accessibility (Westcott, 2004).

However, there is scarce research from the point of view of the Managers. In a survey conducted in Turkey in 2006, the authors concluded that the Turkish industry, despite the important number of weaknesses in accessibility, will be able to cater for customer after making some improvements (Ozturk, Yayly and Yesisiltas, 2008). However, ten years later, a similar research concluded that the Turkish industry is still not ready to meet the needs of people with disability (Akinci and Alpasian, 2016). In the case of management of tourism destinations, the attitudes of managers towards disability are a key issue. Previous research suggests that usually managers are concerned about aesthetic issues, denying, for instance, employing people with disability (Gröschl, 2007). However, it seems easy to change the perception of people with disabilities as customer, as has been probed recently in a quasi-experimental design with Tourism students (Bizjak, Knezevic and Cvetreznik, 2011). Similar results have been showed in emerging tourism industries, with manager easily convinced to eagerly implement improvements to accommodate guest with disabilities (Gon, Wade and Soo, 2012). In countries where there is a solid tradition of senior tourism, manager's attitudes are more inclined towards providing quality customer services to meet the needs of people with disability, which can be understood also as a competitive advantage (Darcy and Pegg, 2011).

Taking into account the evidence from previous research, and considering the particular case of Spain, in the present paper two hypotheses have been tested:

H1: There is knowledge and a positive attitude by the managers towards Accessible Social Tourism.

H2: Properties in the Region of Murcia are not enough adapted for people with accessibility problems.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

In order to achieve the aims of this research, the situation in the hotels and rural houses of the Region of Murcia

regarding accessibility has been analyzed in order to offer empirically verifiable results on the state of accessible social tourism in this Region. The main purpose of this research is to know the awareness, attitudes and behaviors towards accessible social tourism of managers of tourist properties of the Region of Murcia before the accessible social tourism.

The research objectives of the paper are the following ones:

-To examine the level of knowledge of the concept *accessible social tourism* by managers (RO1).

-To test the manager's awareness towards accessibility and people with disabilities as customers (RO2).

- To explore the Web accessibility level of tourism establishments (RO3).

- To measure the degree of adaptability of establishments for people with accessibility problems (RO4).

- To assessed the training on accessible social tourism by managers and employees of tourism destinations (RO5).

#### 4. SAMPLING

The results showed in this paper are part of the Research Project "15377/ Fundamental Research on Accessible Social Tourism in the Region of Murcia", funded by the Seneca Foundation. The target population of our investigation is composed by managers in charge of the following properties in the Region of Murcia, in southeast Spain:

- Hotels: Hotels, Spa Hotels, Hostels and Guest Houses.

-Country Houses: Rural Houses, Rural Hostels, Farmhouses and "*Cortijos*".

The information was collected through a survey between May and June 2014. Out of 537 properties to which the questionnaire was addressed (209 hotels and 328 country houses) a total of 318 responses was obtained (138 hotels and 180 rural houses). Likewise, the information was collected through telephone calls, asking to participate either to the owner or the manager of the destination.

In order to carry out the sampling process, it was necessary to limit the universe and know the units that compose it. To narrow the universe means to perfectly specify the population to be studied (Rodríguez, 2010). For this reason, the research universe has been limited to 537 establishments, of which we have obtained a sample of 318 establishments, gained by non-probabilistic sampling by quotas, using the "type of property" condition until reaching through questionnaire responses the minimum sample set for the margin of error of 5% in each one of the conditions.

**Table 1. Sample size**

Type of property	Universe	Sample	Margin Error
<b>Hotels</b>	209	138	± 5'0 %
<b>Country houses</b>	328	180	± 5'0 %
<b>TOTAL</b>	537	318	± 3,5 %

As shown in Table 1, the total confidence level was set at 96.5% for any inference, with a margin of error of  $\pm 3.5\%$  for the total population.

## 5. INSTRUMENT

Previous to the design of the questionnaire, discussion groups were conducted. Together with the information gathered in the focus group, plus the extensive literature review conducted on the issue, the questionnaire was designed through the formulation of semi-structured interviews. In this sense, open-ended questions have also been formulated.

In order to know the attitudes and behaviors of hotel and country houses managers, a scalar procedure of summative rank (Likert) was introduced in the questionnaire, which finally was differentiated into three blocks:

This first block includes 5 items, which have as objective to know the attitudes of those responsible for tourist properties (Hotels and Rural Homes) towards Accessible Social Tourism, all of them in relation to the following aspects:

- Level of knowledge of the concept *accessible social tourism concept* (V1).
- Awareness of the managers as regards accessibility (V2). Five questions measuring awareness form this dimension (Q2a to Q2f).

The second block covers 6 items, which aim to know the behavior of those responsible for tourism establishments in relation to accessible social tourism, based on the following aspects:

- Web accessibility level of tourist establishments (V3).
- Degree of adaptability of establishments for people with accessibility problems (V4).
- Training on accessible social tourism (V5).

The third block includes 5 questions, which aims to know the sociodemographic profile of the people surveyed and the features of the different types of properties.

The authors have considered the questionnaire as the most used tool for obtaining data in studies of empirical sociology. Despite its rigidity, because it is a list of questions

that must be formulated in an identical way to all interviewees, it presents other advantages that clearly outweigh its drawbacks. The role of the questionnaire in the social research process is twofold. On the one hand, it aims to place all the interviewees in the same psychological situation and, on the other hand, through a system of simple notations it facilitates the examination, and ensures the comparability of the answers (Stoetzel & Girard, 1973).

A descriptive analysis has been carried out and secondly; this analysis has been repeated differentiating between hotel and country houses. Descriptive statistics, such as the mean and standard deviation, as well as Pearson's chi-square have been applied for this purpose.

## 6. RESULTS

Attending to the composition of the sample we can observe that the average age of the individuals who answered the survey is 48.7 years. There is a proper distribution of the sample by gender (52.2% males vs. 47.8% females). In the case of the properties most of them are rural houses (56.6%) which explains why most of them (81.5%) are not in the main three cities of the region. In general, most buildings are just new (or have been used as business recently), since the average time on the business is around 2 years.

**Table 2. Sample characteristic.**

	N	(%)/X
<b>Age</b>	318	48,7
<b>Male</b>	166	52,2 %
<b>Female</b>	152	47,8%
<b>Hotel</b>	100	31,4%
<b>Hostel</b>	38	11,9%
<b>Country House</b>	180	56,6%
<b>Rooms</b>	318	47,5
<b>Yeas in business</b>	318	1,9
<b>Murcia</b>	22	6,9%
<b>Cartagena</b>	17	5,3%
<b>Lorca</b>	21	6,6%
<b>Other cities</b>	258	81,15%

### 6.1. Knowledge and attitudes towards Accessible Social Tourism

In order to test the first hypothesis of the research (H1), several questions were asked on the questionnaire. As shown in table 3, just one out of three people knew about the concept of Accessible Social Tourism, so that confirms our first part of the hypothesis, that is, there is scarce knowledge

on the concept Accessible Social Tourism. Regarding the awareness towards accessibility, five items were asked, and in all of them the managers showed a positive attitude towards accessibility and the needs of people with disabilities.

**Table 3. Knowledge and awareness towards accessible Social Tourism (H1)**

Items	RO1	RO2
Knowledge about Social accessible Tourism (% Yes)	36,2	
Q2a: All the tourism destination must be adapted for PwD		3,6
Q2b: All rooms must be adapted for PwD		2,7
Q2c: Customers may feel uncomfortable sharing a destination with people with disability		0,7
Q2d: The presence of PwD will reduce the demand of customers		0,4
Q2e: To make a destination accessible is too expensive		2,7

On table 4, knowledge on social Accessible Tourism regarding several variables is shown. Younger people and males have a better knowledge on the phenomenon; however, statistically age and gender are not relevant on better knowing the concept. More relevant are the characteristics of the property, being more knowledgeable about the issue the managers of hotels, buildings with a bigger number of rooms, older and those located on the most populated villages on the region.

In order to get a better measure of the general level of awareness of the managers of the different properties an index was created using the joint average value of the six items concerned with awareness towards accessibility ( $V2a+V2b+V2c+V2d+V2e$ ), inverting the item values when it was needed. On table 5, we can see the general Awareness towards accessibility and how it is influenced by several variables. Regarding age, we can see how there is not, in general any kind of correlation between awareness and age. As for gender, women are slightly more kind towards accessibility. By type of property, hotels are slightly more aware of accessibility, however there are not differences by time, number of rooms or geographical location.

**Table 4. Knowledge on Social Accessible Tourism (RO1) according to managers and type of property characteristics**

	N	RO1(% Yes)	Chi Square Sig.
<b>&lt;40</b>	72	47,2	,096
<b>40-49</b>	102	37,3	
<b>50-59</b>	81	20,9	
<b>&gt;60</b>	63	16,5	
<b>Male</b>	166	37,3	.646
<b>Female</b>	152	34,9	
<b>Hotel</b>	138	54,3	,000
<b>Country House</b>	180	22,2	
<b>Rooms&lt;10</b>	92	17,3	,000
<b>Rooms10-50</b>	153	35,3	
<b>Rooms 50&gt;</b>	73	61,6	
<b>&gt;10years</b>	99	27,3	.014
<b>10-19years</b>	131	35,1	
<b>20&gt;years</b>	88	47,7	
<b>Murcia</b>	22	63,6	,033
<b>Cartagena</b>	17	35,3	
<b>Lorca</b>	21	23,8	
<b>Otros</b>	258	34,9	
<b>Total</b>	318	36,2	

**Table 5. General awareness (RO2) depending on sociodemographic characteristics and type of property.**

	N	(%)/X	Correlation Attitude/Media	Sig/Eta sq.
<b>Age</b>		48,7	,024	,676
<b>Male</b>	166	52,2	2,75	.003
<b>Female</b>	152	47,8	2,72	
<b>Hotel</b>	138	43,4	2,84	,030
<b>Country Houses</b>	180	56,6	2,62	
<b>Rooms</b>	318	47,5	.008	,884
<b>Yeas in business</b>	318	1,9	-.001	,983
<b>Murcia</b>	22	6,9	2,8	,003
<b>Cartagena</b>	17	5,3	2,6	
<b>Lorca</b>	21	6,6	2,7	
<b>Other cities</b>	258	81,1	2,7	
<b>Total</b>	318	-	2,7	-

## 6.2. Adaptations for people with accessibility problems

On the other side, one of the main objectives of this research consists on knowing to what extent the managers of different properties have taken action in order for the different buildings to become more accessible, including both technical, architecture or training activities. In order to do so, six items were included in the questionnaire. The hypothesis of this papers is that managers have carried out few adaptations for people with disabilities (H2). As seen in Table 6, most properties (67%) did not offer an accessible website for their customers. In this sense, just 14.2% of the manager checked the accessibility level of their website. In most cases (89.6%) the managers applied for funding in order to adapt their premises to the minimum legal requirements regarding accessibility, but just 37.4% of the simple took further action to improve their buildings' accessibility. Consistent to our hypothesis, most managers stated to have never attended training courses on accessibility (87.4%) and not to encourage their employees to do it (83%).

**Table 6. Actions taken regarding accessibility (H2)**

Item	RO3	RO4	RO5
<b>Accessible Web (%No)</b>	67%		
<b>Check Web's accessibility level (%Yes)</b>	14,2%		
<b>Applied for Funding (%No)</b>		99,6%	
<b>Took Adaptation Actions (%NO)</b>		77,4%	
<b>Attended Training (%NO)</b>			87,4%
<b>Encouraged Training (%NO)</b>			83%

Regarding actions taken (Table 7), first, when talking about website accessibility, again gender and age does not make any significant differences on providing their customers with more accessible sites. These findings are consistent with previous research on the topic (Jaume & Battle, 2006). However, regarding the type of properties, hotels and properties with a bigger number of rooms are more accessible that country houses or smaller properties, regardless of the antiquity of the building or their geographical location. Secondly, when talking about the measures taken to adapt their building towards a greater accessibility, Young managers have faced those types of reforms on a greater way than older managers, but the difference is not statistically significant. The differences are significant, however, when taking into

consideration the gender of the manager (being males more keen towards those reforms than females) or by type of properties, being hotels and bigger buildings better adapted. Again, there is no influence by the antiquity or location of the property.

**Table 7. Actions taken towards accessibility regarding sociodemographic variables.**

	N	RO3(%) YES	Chi Square Sig.	RO4(%) YES	Chi Square Sig.	RO5(%) YES	Chi Square Sig.
<40	72	23,6	,161	70,8	.179	11,1	.298
40-49	102	15,7		62,7		12,7	
50-59	81	18,5		63		8,6	
>60	63	22,2		52,4		19	
Male	166	24,7	.020	70,5	.002	12	.766
Female	152	13,8		53,9		13,2	
Hotel	138	31,9	,000	80,4	.000	10,9	.421
Country House	180	10		48,9		13,9	
Rooms<10	92	10,9	,001	42,4	.000	7,6	.107
Rooms10-50	153	20,3		60,1		13,1	
Rooms 50>	73	28,8		93,2		17,8	
>10years	99	15,2	.276	63,6	,302	10,1	,141
10-19years	131	19,1		58		12,2	
20>years	88	25		68,2		15,9	
Murcia	22	36,4	,151	86,4	,115	13,6	,411
Cartagena	17	29,4		64,7		0	
Lorca	21	23,8		57,1		9,5	
Otros	258	17,1		60,9		13,6	
Total	318	19,5	-	62,2	-	12,6	-

Finally, when looking into the training courses taken by the managers, it can be observed that the sociodemographic characteristics of the managers does not make any difference in taking or not training courses on the issue. The features of the properties are also irrelevant on this matter. These findings are consistent with results published recently (Etxebarria & Etxebarria, 2009)

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The results show that generally speaking the managers of tourism destination show a positive attitude towards accessible tourism (Research Objective2), even though they have not a clear knowledge on the concept Accessible Social Tourism (Research Objective 1), The attitude of managers can be explained partially by the intrinsic feature of the tourism market in Spain. As compared to other countries, the competitiveness factors are in Spain mostly enhanced by climate, and the locale and tourist structure, paying scarce

attention to other factors like quality of services, brand and infrastructure. This could explain why managers of tourist facilities still have not implemented to a greater advance, a more disability oriented model of tourist service (Domínguez et al, 2015), nor have they taken measure to increase the accessibility of the website of their destinations (Research Objective 3).

In the particular case of Region of Murcia, due to its particular location in an area close to large Green spaces there is a considerable amount of country houses in the rural settings. Usually those settings are not the most suitable for tourists with accessibility demands. In big cities, or the particular case of hotels with an important number of rooms, those buildings are more accessible, following not only the legal requirements, but also company policies involving social responsibility and sustainability. In this sense, aligned with previous findings (Alen et al, 2012), managers consider business opportunity not as much as a niche market, but an extension of the tourist segment based on quality and the increased supply of goods and services, so managers are considering the adaptation in an on-demand position, rather than advancing the future needs of the customers.

There is no doubt that entrepreneurship has a lot to do in making things easier for people with disabilities, but there are multiple issues that are beyond their powers and responsibility. To a large extent, the actions or omissions of the different administrations can become drivers of improvements for everyone's accessibility to leisure and tourism consumption, or mean a real brake for certain actions that would enable some spaces for groups with certain mobility handicaps or any other type of disability. (Millán Escriche, 2010).

However, the former condition described above is not unique in the case of Spain, but rather spreadable to the global tourist industry, which have yet to connect to a enhanced standard of access provision, due partially to the fact that today still pervades the perception within the sector that accessible tourism market is low yield, connected to long-held stereotypes of people with disabilities and seniors. A misconception that often has avoided investment in accessible tourism (Darcy et al, 2011).

## **8. IMPLICATIONS**

The paradigm of Social Accessible Tourism, while quite established in the academia and the pro-accessibility lobbies, still has not permeated into managers, since it is not considered a priority or a future line of investments. Precisely, the very distinctive feature of this piece of research resides on giving voice to the managers of the different properties, rather

than to the customers. In order to achieve a total accessible design, the involvement of this stakeholder is critical. Training courses and awareness campaigns are substantial to achieve improvements in this issue, together with proper funding by the administrations to better adapt settings for everybody (universal design).

The current research is not exempted of limitations. An important one is the confusion around the concept *Accessible Social Tourism*. There is not yet a social definition of the concept and Accessible and Social Tourism are still considered as separated entities. Methodologically talking, the research lacks information on the level of attainment of the participants in the survey. Also, a qualitative approach could be added on to get more insight on the topic. Thus, that could be a future line of research, together with expanding the research to satellite business (retailers, restaurants, museums...).

## 9. REFERENCES

- AKINCI, Z., & KASALAK, M. A. (2016): "Are Travel Agencies Ready for Accessible Tourism in Turkey?" The Tendencies and Expectations of Travel Agencies as Supply Side of Accessible Tourism in Turkey. *J Bus Hotel Manage* 3, 1, 2.
- ALÉN, E., DOMÍNGUEZ, T., & LOSADA, N. (2012): "New opportunities for the tourism market: Senior tourism and accessible tourism". In *Visions for global tourism industry-Creating and sustaining competitive strategies*. InTech.
- BARTON, L. (1998): "Sociología y discapacidad: algunos temas nuevos. *Discapacidad y sociedad*" [*Sociology and disability: New Issues. Disability and society*]. Madrid: Ediciones Morata; La Coruña: Fundación Paideia, 19-33.
- BI, Y., CARD, J.A., COLE, S.T., (2007): "Accessibility and attitudinal barriers encountered by chinese travellers with physical disabilities." *International Journal of Tourism Research* 9, 205–216.
- BIZJACK, B., KNEZEVIC, M., & CVETREZNIK, S. (2011): "Attitude Change Towards guests with disabilities". *Annals of Tourism Research*, (38), 842-857.
- BRINCKMANN, W. E., & WILDGEN, J. S. (2003): "Desafíos para los estudiosos del turismo: la construcción de la «sociedad inclusiva» y del «turismo accesible». [*Challenge for research on tourism: the building of inclusive societies and accessible tourism*]. *Cuadernos de Turismo*, (11), 41-58.
- BROWN, F. (1991): "Tourism for All", *Tourism Management*, 12 (3), 258-260.

- BUHALIS, D., & DARCY, S. (2011): "Accessible Tourism: Concepts and Issues." UK: Channel View Publications.
- BURNETT, J. J., & BAKER, H. B. (2001): "Assessing the travel-related behaviors of the mobility-disabled consumer". *Journal of Travel Research*, 40(1), 4-11.
- CAVINATO, J. L., Y CUCKOVICH, M. L. (1992): "Transportation and Tourism for the Disabled: An Assessment", *Transportation Journal*, 31 (3), 46-53.
- DARCY, S. (2002a): "Marginalised participation: physical disability, high support needs and tourism." *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 9(1), 61-72.
- DARCY, S., CAMERON, B., & PEGG, S. (2011): "Developing a business case for accessible tourism. In *Accessible tourism: Concepts and issues*, Channel View, Bristol
- DARCY, S., & PEGG, S. (2011): "Towards Strategic Intent: Perceptions of disability service provision amongst hotel accommodation managers". *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, (30), 468-476.
- DOMÍNGUEZ, T., DARCY, S., & ALEN, E. (2015): "Competing for the disability tourism market - A comparative exploration of the factors of accessible tourism competitiveness in Spain and Australia". *Tourism Management* (47), 261-272.
- DRIEDGER, D. (1987): "Disabled people and international air travel." *Journal of Leisurability*, 14(1), 13-19.
- DWYER, L., & DARCY, S. (2008): "Chapter 4 – Economic contribution of disability to tourism in Australia". In S. Darcy, B. Cameron, L. Dwyer, T. Taylor, E. Wong, & A. Thomson (Eds.), Technical Report 90040: Visitor accessibility in urban centres (pp. 15-21). Gold Coast: Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre.
- ETXEBARRIA, G., & ETXEBARRÍA, S. G. (1997): "El derecho al ocio de las personas con discapacidad: análisis de la normativa internacional, estatal y autonómica del País Vasco." [*Disabled People right to leisure time: International, national and regional legislation analysis*]. Universidad de Deusto, Bilbao.
- FERNÁNDEZ, M. (2009): "Turismo Accesible y Turismo para todos en España: Antecedentes, estado de la cuestión y futuras líneas de investigación". *Estudios turísticos*, (180), 141-153.
- GON, W., WADE, H., & SOO, J. (2012): "Accommodating the needs of disabled hotel guests: Implications for guests and management." *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, (31), 1311-1317.
- GROSCHL, S. (2007): "An exploration of HR policies and practices affecting the integration of persons with disabilities in the hotel industry in major Canadian

- tourism destinations.” *Hospitality Management*, (26), 666-686.
- ISRAELI, A. (2002): “A preliminary investigation of the importance of site accessibility factor for disabled tourists.” *Journal of Travel Research*, 41(1), 101–104.
- JAUME, J., & BATTLE, M. M. (2006): “Análisis de la Accesibilidad Web en Sitios Web de Hotelería. [Analysis of accessibility in hotel’s websites].” In VI Congreso Nacional de Turismo y Tecnologías de la Información y las Comunicaciones-TURITEC 2006. Servicio de publicaciones de la Universidad de Málaga, Málaga.
- MILLÁN ESCRICHE, M. (2010): “Turismo Accesible/Turismo para todos. Un derecho ante la discapacidad”. *Gran Tour: Revista de investigaciones turísticas*, 2, p. 116.
- MURRAY, M., & SPROATS, J. (1990): “The disabled traveler: tourism and disability in Australia.” *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 1(1), 9–14.
- OZTURK, Y., YAYLI, A., YESILTAS, M., (2008): “Is the Turkish tourism industry ready for a disabled customer’s market? The views of hotel and travel agency managers”. *Tourism Management* 29, 382–389.
- PALACIOS, A., & ROMANACH, J. (2006): “El modelo de la diversidad: la bioética y los derechos humanos como herramientas para alcanzar la plena dignidad en la diversidad funcional” [The diversity model: Bioethics and human right to reach dignity for people with functional diversity]. Diversitas, Madrid
- PÉREZ, D. M., & VELASCO, D. J. G. (2003): “Turismo accesible. Hacia un turismo para todos.” [Accesible Tourism: Towards tourism for all]. Colección Comité Español de Representantes de Personas con Discapacidad, Madrid.
- RAY, N. M., & RYDER, M. E. (2003): “Eabilities” tourism: An exploratory discussion of the travel needs and motivations of the mobility-disabled.” *Tourism Management*, 24, 57–72.
- RIBERA, D., MAJOS, A., & REIG, A. (1993): “La cuarta edad europea: envejecer en la Costa Blanca.” [European Fourth age: Ageing in the Costa Blanca]. Fundación Caja Madrid, Barcelona.
- RICHTER, L. K., Y RICHTER, W. L. (1999): “Ethics Challenges: Health, Safety and Accesibility in International Travel and Tourism”. *Public Personnel Management*. Washington. Invierno, 28 (4), 595-616.
- RODRIGUEZ OSUNA, J. (2010): “La Muestra: teoría y aplicación.” En García Ferrando, M., Ibañez, J. y Alvira, F. (comps.), *El análisis de la realidad social*.

- Métodos y técnicas de investigación* (pp. 445-482). Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
- SASSAKI, R. K. (1997): “Inclusão: construindo uma sociedade para todos” [*Building a society for al*]. (Vol. 174). Wva, Rio de Janeiro.
- SMITH, R.W., (1987): “Leisure of disable tourists: barriers to participation”. *Annals of Tourism Research* 14 (3), 376–389.
- STOETZEL, J., STOETZEL, A., & GIRARD, A. (1973): “Las encuestas de opinión pública” [*Public opinion survey*]. Instituto de la Opinión Pública, Madrid.
- VILA, T. D., DARCY, S., & GONZÁLEZ, E. A. (2015): “Competing for the disability tourism market—a comparative exploration of the factors of accessible tourism competitiveness in Spain and Australia”. *Tourism Management*, 47, 261-272.
- WATERHOUSE, P. (1998): “Incidencia socioeconómica de los programas de vacaciones para mayores y termalismo social del IMSERSO” [*Socioeconomic impact of IMSERSO senior holydays and social thermalism programs*]. Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, Madrid.
- WESTCOTT, J. (2004): “Improving information on accessible tourism for disabled people.” *Office for Official Publications of the European Communities*.