

A Bibliographical Study On the Contributing Factors And Limitations of Accessible Tourism Perspective Of Hotel Industry In The Indian Context

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Abstract

The Constitution of India, in its Preamble, offers the following Fundamental Rights to all the citizens – Right to Equality; Right to Freedom; Right against Exploitation; Right to Freedom of Religion; Cultural and Educational Rights and Right to Constitutional Remedies. All these rights are also available to the Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) even though no specific mention of such persons appears in this Part of the Constitution.

This paper will analyse the hurdles that hinder their accessibility to the hotel facilities in India. This marks a point of physical exclusion of such customers with disability of any kind. The research intends to inquire and record the prevailing facilities available for any guest, who is willing to pay for all the services experienced in as many possible categories of hotels in India. It is imperative to see that the differently-abled people can zero down on the very take away especially the offerings and the challenges from their hospitality experience.

This study tries to conceptualise a disabled friendly environment in hospitality units in India, this instead boosts 'accessible tourism'. This research employs a bibliographic analysis from the various conclusion and derived perspectives to differently-abled tourists. This study further intends to explore the implementation of concept of universal standards pertaining to the differently-abled guests. There are stipulated initiatives under the Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India for the classification of 4- and 5-star hotels to provide differently-abled friendly facilities.

This study further suggests to extend the inclusive accessible tourism to all categories of hotels in India with an affordable and inclusive hotel design as another feather to the Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav drive. This insight will encourage every sect of these potential hotel guests to experience the local culture and heritage of India.

Keywords: Differently-abled, Hospitality, Accessible, Inclusive, Facilities

1. INTRODUCTION

In a world of equality, when we have people from different caste, creed, etc being treated without any discrimination, we have a category of Specially-abled people. These People with Disabilities (PwD) have proved their mettle in various spheres of life including sports, science and technology etc fighting the barriers that come their way. This empowers the individual to unlock their potential in their capable field of interest thereby contribute to the world.

A 2016 report the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India states The Preamble to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities(CRPD) -2006, adopted by the United Nations, describes disability by stating that:

“Disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments andattitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effectiveparticipation in society on an equal basis with others.”

Magasi et al. (2015) agree that environmental factors, which include the basic amenities, accessibility in the form of natural environment, assistive technology and transportation help experience physical, cognitive, sensory, and social communication, which can improve societal attachment.

Piramanayagamet. Al. (2019) added in their study on Inclusive hotel design in India towards a User Perspective to accessibility and design for All. Gillovicet. Al. (2018) suggest that there is successive movement in the usage of the term to ‘barrier-free tourism’, ‘disabled tourism’, ‘easy-access tourism’, ‘inclusive tourism’ and ‘tourism for all’ to the more recent and updated concept of ‘accessible tourism’.

Deviet. al. (2013) define accessibility as physical access as well as accessibility to transportation. The five components considered are 1. Accessibility. 2. Accommodation and 3. Resources like essential medical facilities 4. Community’s attitude towards integrating PwD and 5.Equal opportunities through the policies and regulations adopted by governments and organisations.

Out of the above five, accessibility and accommodation were considered as the barriers that affected people using wheelchair the most. Through this paper we have tried to address the design consideration and accessibility quotient of hotels thereby create awareness regarding the inclusive-accessible tourism and people as a whole in our society.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

SenthilkumaranPiramanayagam, ParthoPratim Seal and Bhakti More found out that current research supports fostering an understanding among all categories of hotels about the needs of travellers with disabilities. This study contributes towards building an understanding regarding the level of inclusiveness of the existing hotels in India as perceived by PwD.Affordability is an essential factor for tourists. Hence, the hotel industry should provide an inclusive hotel design for budget hotels in order to encourage the tourism sector of India.

However, this study is not free from certain limitations, similar to any cross- sectional study. Its comparatively small sample size coupled with non- disclosure of income and occupation by several respondents are a few limitations, which restrict the development of better understanding about the role of income and occupation on their choice of hotels. Though the paper focuses on hotel design and planning, the concept of accessible tourism is important for catering to the overall mobility and independence of disabled individuals.

This study opens many new avenues for further research through its findings. Existing hotels in India, which include budget, three- and four-star hotels are lacking in implementing mandatory

requirements of PwD, which was introduced in the year 2010 itself by Hotel and Restaurant Approval and Classification Committee (HRACC).

The study by Dr. Bindu.V. and M. Kiruthika Devi. reveals in their study that the existing facilities available in Tamil Nadu for AT is minimum. Only limited facilities are available in 3A's- access, accommodation and attraction. Tamil Nadu has not yet adopted the universal design approach. There must be barrier free system of transportation for the loco motor disabled people. Most of the disabled people have various constraints like intrinsic, interactional, environmental, helplessness and intention to travel. Demanded services like Electric wheelchair, Electric Scooter, Electric hoist is inevitable in AT. The facilities of disabled people should be made available in all cities of Tamil Nadu where these people can be benefitted.

From the study it is concluded that environmental and attitudinal barriers pose major challenges to normal living of individuals with disabilities. Only loco motor disabled people have taken for the present study; the perception of other disabled people can also be studied in future.

Suprabhat Banerjee says despite all legal efforts and administrative programme and policies promoting fair job opportunities for people with disabilities, these individuals continue to face significant challenges in their everyday lives and at work

As per Ranjit Singh and Sibi P.S., currently, websites are the leading source of information for travel planning and booking. To make it beneficial universally, tourism and hospitality websites should follow accessibility policies and guidelines to make the information available for all the people. This indicates that accessible tourism directly benefits at least 20% of the population (Fuguet & Nieto, 2008), while Darcy & Dickson (2009) argue it is closer to 31%.

Emphasis on compliance with existing guidelines and regulations is also required for hotels and the Government to consider accessibility as a standard of quality for classification/ re-classification of hotels as India signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2007.

Syed Ahmed Kabeer found out that the Internet has become an integral part of the Information Society and a driving force of the Information revolution. Key social benefits of Web accessibility are that it makes PwDs independent, provides equal opportunities and enable them to actively participate in the society. This study has yielded findings which have managerial, legal and policy implications as discussed in this chapter. Web accessibility is imperative for digital inclusion of PWVI and is an important step towards ensuring social justice in an Information Society.

In Parikshit Sharma, Vikesh Kashyap and Pallavi Thakur literature reviewing the supply side accommodation managers has been infrequent, covering a number of issues. The major areas investigated in the research included: Supply of rooms;

01. Organisation experiences with PwD;
02. Disability as a market segment;
03. Information provision;
04. Staff training.

Senthilkumaran Piramanayagam and Partho Pratim stated that the significant contribution of the study is multi-fold. The study provides evidence on employers' attitudes in recruiting persons with disabilities in India, an emerging economy and a culturally diverse one. The existing studies available are from developed economies, mostly from the western world. This study extends the possibilities for replication in different service sectors, where employee attrition is a major issue for sustainability.

Raju Kr Mahto 2017 says today's attention towards Accessible Tourism market and solving presents a challenge for global travel industry in terms of civilising policies and assembling

investment to carry out the compulsory enhancements across the board in sense of short and long term. However, with the accurate methodology the tourism sector also has a golden opportunity to serve a growing market, by winning new clients and increase revenue at a time when other segments of the market may be weakening.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To evaluate the accessibility facilities of PwD in Indian Hotels.
- To explore the community training regarding PwD
- To understand the perspective of the management of hotels in Indian context

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted is a descriptive analysis. The target population comprised domestic travellers, who stayed in hotels and have seen/ experienced the existent accessible PwD facilities. Our study intends to create awareness and responsive attitude towards specially-abled hotel guests. This study extends to and their level of information accessibility.

5. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem to be addressed in this study titled “A Bibliographical Study On the Contributing Factors and Limitations of Accessible Tourism Perspective of Hotel Industry in The Indian Context.” is to find out the PwD accessible design in structural needs in public circulation areas and also the community awareness through signage, and classification mandatory elements in their planning.

Considering inclusiveness, there are very few stakeholders interested in adopting, investing, and implementing an accessible design to build infrastructure. The available literature studies do not address the perspective of PwD by large so through this paper we intend to encourage understanding of inclusiveness in the country.

Hence, this study aims to provide an overview of users’ perspective on inclusiveness in hotels, which directly may influence accessible tourism in India.

6. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study is limited. The perception of the respondents were collected using a questionnaire via google form that comprises of statements related to accessibility, circulation, guest room experience, and the public area facilities for PwD available in Indian star hotels.

7. SAMPLING METHOD AND SAMPLE SIZE

A survey was conducted amongst hotel guests’ who have accessed 4-5 star hotels in India on the PwD facilities and the hotel’s commitment to meet up with the mandate guidelines on this subject.

Non-probability convenience method was followed considering the current pandemic situation and reached a smaller sample of the population of 18 no. The limited questions have been designed to address the accessibility by large.

8. THEORITICAL BASE AND PRACTICAL INSIGHT

8.1 GUIDELINES FOR PLANNING FACILITIES (SPECIAL GUEST)

It is imperative to note that most of these guidelines are also a mandatory part of the Hotel Classification guidelines by HRACC, ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

In 2009, the Union Ministry of Tourism made mandatory for all star categories property to incorporate the following infrastructure/services for all disabled guests by September 2010.

- Easy access for the differently abled guests.
- At least one room for the differently abled guest. Minimum door width should be 1 m to allow wheelchair access.
- Room to have audible and visible (blinking light) alarm system.
- Free accessibility in all public areas and at least one restaurant in 5-star and 5-star deluxe properties.
- Public restrooms to be unisex. Minimum door width must be 1 m and mandatory to all star hotels.
- Ramps with anti-slip.

The Ministry also developed a new format of assessment of category of all star hotels in the month of August 2009. Five marks are allotted for facilities to be offered to physically challenged persons in the star category system.

Distribution of marks for various facilities is as follows: (01 Mark Each)

- At least a room for physically challenged persons.
- Public toilet in lobby.
- Telephone in public places
- Ramps, etc.
- Facilities for aurally and visually handicapped.

The physical needs of each of the specially-abled guests are different. But with slight modifications in various areas of the hotels, not only can these properties be rendered easily accessible to them, but by integrating simple unobtrusive facilities in the design structures, the special guests can go about freely without hassling other guests; to meet the needs of guests with mobility impairments, those who use wheelchairs, canes, or crutches.

8.1.1 PARKING AND ENTRANCE

The industry guidelines for the public entrance are as follows:

- A public entrance must be accessible to wheelchair use from setting down or car parking point.
- Where a hotel has a car park, a reserved parking space should be available for a disabled guest, on request.
- The path from parking point or space to the entrance must be sound in construction, and free obstacles. Deep gravel, cobbles, and pot- holed surfaces must be avoided.
- Where there is no ramp, there must be not more than 3 steps to the entrance at any point.
- Steps to be used by a special guest should have risers, not more than 19 cm, with treads not less than 25 cm deep and 75 cm wide.

8.1.2 RECEPTION AND LOBBY ACCESS

- Within the reception area, there must be an unobstructed space of not less than 110 cm*70 cm.
- Ramps giving access to most public spaces and public pathways that lead to the restaurant/ dining room, lounge, TV lounge, (unless TV is provided in the bedroom), bar, the special guests bedroom and bathroom should be not less than 75 cm wide.
- Where the special guests may be required to use a lift, its door should have a clear opening of not less than 67 cm, and the interior of the lift should not be less than 110 cm deep by 70 cm wide.
- Seated check-in and check-out available in the reception area or the guest room.
- Escape chairs available in all fire exits of the guest room floors.

8.2 GUESTS WHO ARE ASSISTED ON THE WHEELCHAIR (IN GENERAL): PUBLIC FACILITIES:

8.2.2 ENTRANCE PARAMETERS:

- Widened public pass ways, public access points and guest room including bathrooms should not be less than 80 cm wide and not less than 120 cm on the opposite side if the doors to the rooms referred to above.
- Doors to the rooms should have a clear opening of not less than 75 cm.
- There must be no more than single steps, at any point, in the corridors that a guest on wheelchair will be required to use.
- There can be a succession of single steps, provided there is sufficient space after each step for a wheelchair to sit comfortably and safely, with all four wheels on ground.
- Removable ramps, unless installed permanently, are not acceptable.
- Threshold to rooms to which the wheelchair user requires access must not be higher than 2 cm.
- In the restaurant/ dining room there must be at least one accessible table with a clear under space at least 65 cm high. Blocks, to lift a table when required, are acceptable.
- Where three or more bedrooms meet such requirements, at least two such accessible tables should be provided.

8.2.3 GUEST ROOM PARAMETERS

- There must be unobstructed space not less than 110 cm*70 cm.
- There must be space alongside at least one side of the bed of not less than 80 cm to allow lateral transfer.
- At least one bedroom must be designed to such specifications for the mobility disadvantaged guests.
- Handicapped-accessible rooms feature connecting doors to another handicapped-accessible room.
- The guest rooms are located close to the elevators and fire exits.
- Entry door is 94 cm wide.
- A telephone with a flashing light to indicate an incoming call
- A television decoder for reading closed captions or programs
- A smoke alarm with a flashing light.

- A knock light for the door; and a vibrating alarm clock.
- Floor to ceiling mirror available in the room.
- The safety box is installed at shoulder-height of a sitting person (100 cm).
- Lower cloth rails in certain areas e.g., left cupboard, small rail.
- The top of the mattress is 70 cm high and 46 cm when special mattress base is installed (upon request).
- The bedrooms feature a bench in front of the beds with a height of 50 cm.
- Along the length of the bed (210 cm) between bed and cupboard width of 155 cm manoeuvring space next to bed.
- Plug Socket in 30 cm height.
- Light switch in 73 cm height.
- A/C control 75 cm height.
- Service in the bathroom in 90 cm height.
- The surface of the bed must be between 45 and 54 cm from the floor.
- Door handles, light switches, TV controls, curtain pulls, wardrobe rails etc. should be accessible and not more than 140 cm from the floor.
- At least one bedroom needs to meet these requirements.
- Lights switches and telephone (where provided) should not be more than 50 cm from the bed.

8.2.3 BATHROOM AND WATER CLOSET (WC) PARAMETERS:

- There must be unobstructed space not less than 110 * 70 cm.
- Where a bath is provided, there must be a seat alongside of not less than 80 cm to allow lateral transfer.
- Where only shower is provided, it must have level entry, i.e., no rim; a lateral transfer space of not less than 80 cm and a seat.
- Only one bathroom, separate or en suite with the bedroom(s) must meet these requirements.
- The washbasin, either within the bathroom or bedroom, must have sufficient clear under space and/ or level taps to enable it to be used by someone in a wheelchair.
- The door handle and light switch must be 140 cm or less from the floor.
- The horizontal or angled support rail at the far side of the bath must be no more than 30 cm above the rim.
- The rim of the bath must be from 45-50 cm from the floor.
- Where only a shower is available for the guest, the controls must be 140 cm or less from the floor.
- Only one bathroom, separate or en suite with the bedroom(s) must meet these requirements.
- The bathroom must be en suite or on the same floor as the special guest's bedroom.
- Where a bath is provided, it should have horizontal or angled support rail on the far side.
- Where only shower is provided, it must have a seat (recommended 45-50 cm above floor) and a support rail on the far wall (recommended 25 cm above top of the seat and maximum of 50 cm from centre of the seat).
- Where there is a step into the shower, it should have riser of not more than 19 cm.
- There must be washbasin within the bathroom/bedroom.
- The WC must be en suite or on the same floor as the special guest's bedroom
- Toilet paper must be within the reach of the guest.
- Where the WC is separate from the bathroom there must be washbasin within the same room.
- The horizontal support rail on the opposite side of the transfer space must be not more than 50 cm from the centre of the seat.
- Only one WC, separate or en suite with the bedroom(s) above, should meet this requirement.

8.2.3.1 SPECIFICATIONS OF BATHROOM PARTICULARS:

DOOR

- Door to the bathroom is 120 cm wide with a threshold of 1 cm.
- Door to WC and shower is 88 cm wide with a threshold of 2 cm.

8.2.3.2 SINK

- Clearance below the sink is 69 cm in height between the floor finish and the apron to allow access to wheel chairs users.
- The sink is 85 cm high.
- Faucets are lever-operated.
- Mirror in 90 cm height.

8.2.3.3 BATH TUB

- In-tub seats provided upon request.
- Grab bars are provided.
- The shower spray unit features a hose of 115 cm length, which can be used both as a fixed shower head and a hand-held unit.

8.2.3.4 SHOWER

- Size of: width of 160 cm x 190 cm.
- Shower equipped with a marble bench (height 44 cm) depth: 35 cm.
- The shower spray unit features a hose of 145 cm length, which can be used both as a fixed shower head and a hand-held unit.

8.2.4 KITCHENS (SELF-CATERING UNITS ONLY) PARAMETERS:

- There must be a minimum clear floor space of 120 cm front of units and work surfaces.
- At least one work surface or table should have a clear under space between 65 and 80 cm height.
- The oven should have front controls and base between 65 cm and 80cm above the floors.
- The hob (cooking appliance with burners) should not be more than 80 cm high. It should have clear under space below or alongside and accessible controls.
- The base of the wall cupboards and shelves should not be more than 120 cm above the floor.
- The sinks should have lever taps and a clear under space.
- Light switches and door handles should not be more than 140 cm above the floor level.

9. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

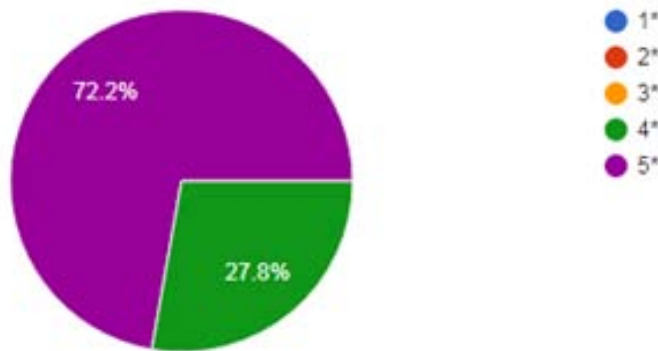


Fig 1. Maximum respondents have provided review opinion pertaining to 5* Hotels

1. Whether the Star Hotel Employees provide the following friendly facilities to abled* guests

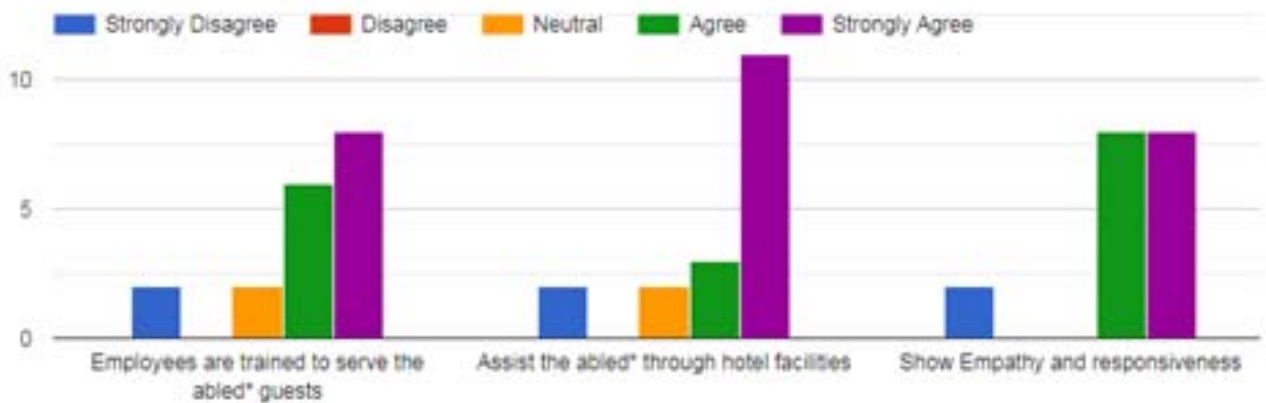


Fig 2. Maximum Hotels assist specially-abled guests followed by responsiveness and employee training with a concern that some of the hotels still have to gear up the attitude

2. Whether the Star Hotel Infrastructure provides the following friendly facilities to abled* guests

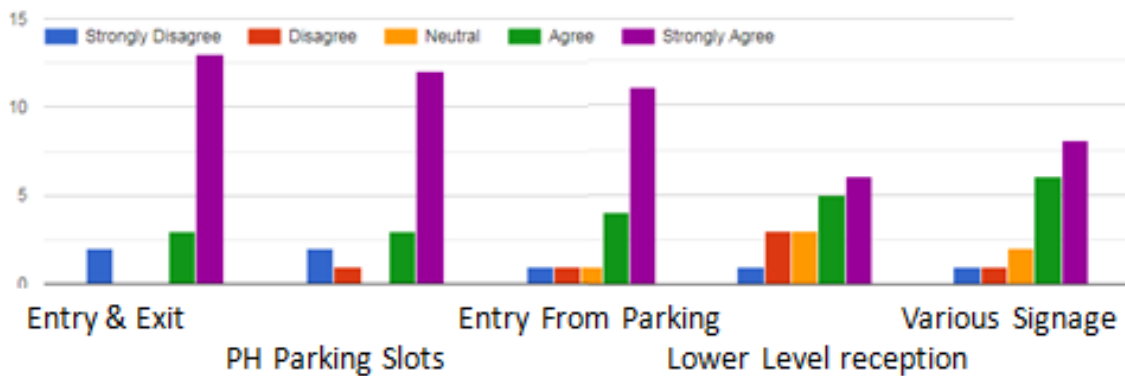


Fig 3. Maximum Hotels have specially-abled guests accessible entrance, parking, signage and some hotels still don't have a lowered reception

3. Whether the Star Hotel Building provides the following friendly facilities to abled* guests

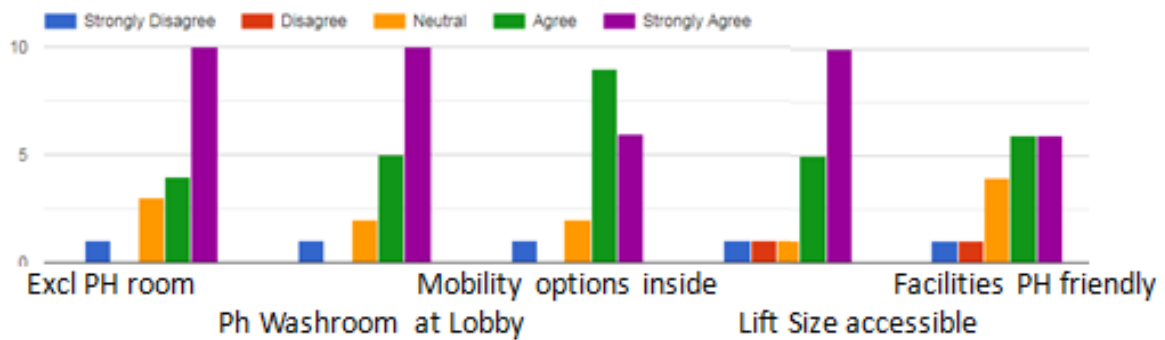


Fig 4. Maximum Hotels have specially-abled room, lobby washroom, mobility designed access including lift and followed by user friendly facilities

4. Whether the Star Hotel Rooms provide the following friendly facilities to abled* guests

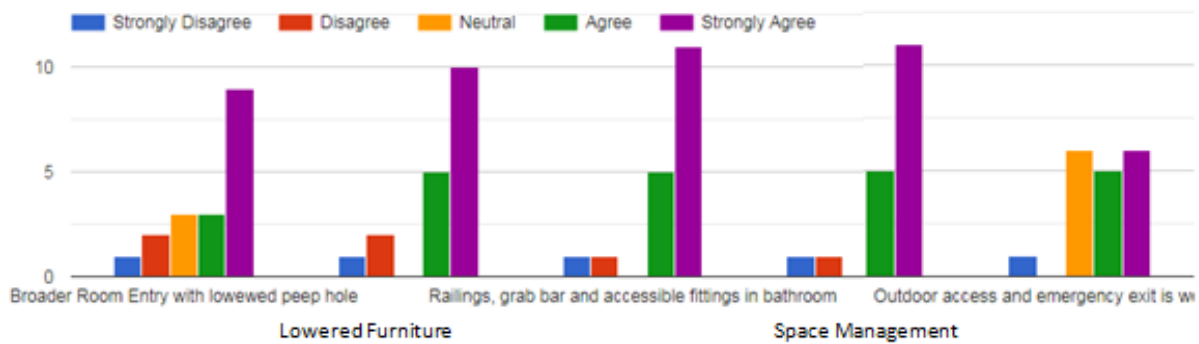


Fig 5. Maximum Hotels have specially-abled guests' accessible fittings and furniture, wide room entrance, basically effective space management with a concern that some of the hotels still don't provide or implement outdoor access and emergency exit facilities.

5. Whether the Star Hotel supports Inclusive and Accessible Tourism in Indian context

18 responses

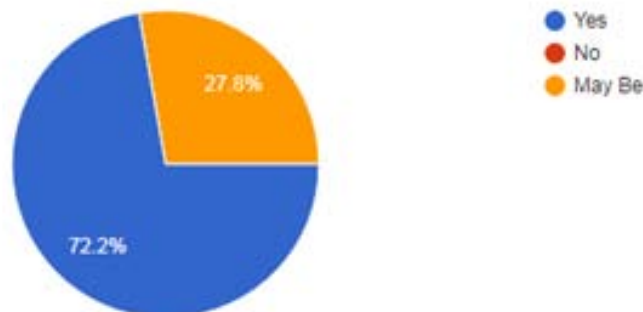


Fig 6. Maximum respondents agree that Star Hotels support Inclusive and Accessible Tourism

9.1 SUMMING UP THE FINDINGS

- Maximum respondents have provided review opinion pertaining to 5* Hotels, maximum Hotels have been assist specially-abled guests followed by responsiveness and employee training, accessible entrance, parking, room, lobby washroom, mobility designed access including lift and followed by user friendly facilities with fittings and furniture, basically effective space management to support Accessible Tourism

POINTS OF CONCERN

- Some of the hotels still have to gear up the PwD user friendly attitude, lowered reception, adequate signages, outdoor access and emergency exit facilities.

9.2 ADDITIONAL INPUTS FROM THE RESPONDENTS ON THE POSSIBLE CONSTRAINTS THAT NEED TO BE MANAGED ARE LISTED BELOW:

(FROM THE SURVEY)

- Hotel keeps in mind the checks and balances of every type of customer including specially-abled guests, female traveller, frequent flyer.
- Specially designed infrastructure in comparatively newer properties
- Hotel rooms provision for guests with special needs
- Providing a wheelchair taxi services.
- Government norms for star category classification
- Escort services with tourism packages
- Building structure according to handicapped guest
- Well-designed facilities for challenged guests and at every level consideration for their comfort and accessibility
- Business
- Accessibility and Eco Friendly
- Well-designed layout.
- All star hotels need to follow the classification guidelines and they compulsorily do so as well. Plus, most of them are affiliated to foreign chains which have their own strict guidelines regarding accessibility.
- Fortune select Grand ridge
- Sign language capable staff and provision of assistive listening devices
- Infrastructure and assistance provided by hotel employees

10. CONCLUSION

The results of this study relate that in 4-5 star hotels, there is provision for most of the parameters giving access to PwD guests starting from the shower chairs, handrails, parking areas for disabled individuals, mobility options available for hotel guests are comparatively better in 5-star hotels, which include the size and space of lifts. Through this study we would like to draw attention that there are some necessary parameters being neglected like lowered reception, emergency exit and access to landscape, that could be reinforced. The employee assistance provided by majority of the hotels was satisfactory proving the community responsive connect towards inclusive-accessible tourism.

11. SUGGESTIONS TO INCREASE PwD CLIENTELE:

- **ONE POINT COMPLETE INFORMATION ONLINE:**
 - As a general rule of thumb, if it takes more than a few clicks to find your disability information - we can assume it is not a priority. As such, you should have a dedicated page on your website, highlighting your access and specific, relevant information to using the facilities and getting comfortable in their rooms.
- **BOOKING MADE EASY INCL. EASY IDENTIFICATION OF ROOMS:**
 - One problem many with disabilities face is the lack of an accessible booking system. If possible, include an option to directly book an accessible room, also highlighting the features and as to who the room will suit.
- **EQUIP ACCESSIBLE ROOMS:**
 - The bedroom should be completely accessible. Keep everything in the room at a reasonable height to ensure all have access to the features. touch screens can prove a challenge for many, so always include features with large buttons and clear instructions.
- **HANDLING /TRAINING TO THE HOTEL EMPLOYEES:**
 - Your staff must be confident when assisting those with disabilities; for specific requirements regarding pillow types and personal requests, rooms for easy access, possibilities of opening your spa or gym, as well as the restaurant. Everyone is a paying guest, and must be treated as such. Ultimately, to make the hotel industry completely accessible. Some disabled guests may require more equipment, or a larger power chair, so try and position your accessible rooms in the most convenient locations. The ground floor is ideal, but guests always prefer a view.

12. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has been with a comparatively small sample size that could further be studied taking a larger sample size and also larger hotels, Comparative in nature - area wise, brand –wise and State-wise.

In this study we could consider related hotel respondents but not PwD, so further studies could be with them, adding on the reasons on the influence of travel choices of PwD.

12.1 ADDITIONAL INPUTS FROM THE RESPONDENTS ON THE POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS IN THE HOTELS THAT MATTER ARE LISTED BELOW:

(FROM THE SURVEY)

- Not much of specially-abled room available.
- Difficult to incorporate all the infrastructural changes in older proper
- Trained staff to handle specially-abled guests
- Number of rooms for differently abled guest are less.
- Staff training for different types guest with specially-abled guests
- MOU of hotels with travel agency for smooth operation of both the entity
- Not much room for handicapped guest and arrangements in restaurant
- The regular guests find it difficult to adjust with these facilities
- Expensive

- Bookings not easily available
- The numbers of rooms for specially-abled people should be more in number. Generally, they are very less. Most hotels have only one specially-abled room.
- Space management
- Type of clientele of the sort maynot be there so hotels tend to not take accessibility seriously, till the time an accident with a specially-abled guest doesn't happen or they don't complain, things are not taken seriously in hotels.

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