



What is stopping the process? Analysis of obstacles to accessible tourism from a stakeholders' perspective

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ABSTRACT

People with disabilities still encounter many hurdles when traveling. This study aims at identifying the factors hindering the development of accessibility in tourist destinations. To this end, we developed a stakeholder analysis using the Spanish Costa Blanca as a case study. Employing a qualitative approach, insights from accessible tourism stakeholders were gathered. Data was collected through 83 semi-structured interviews. The research revealed instances of non-collaborative relationships and conflicts among stakeholders, which are acting as obstacles to accessible tourism. Among others, discrimination by firms and non-disabled customers to tourists with disabilities, inconsistencies in legislation, or challenges associated with the implementation of Universal Design.

1. Introduction

Accessible tourism is the process of reshaping the entire tourist environment (physical, informative, online, staff training ...) to ensure inclusivity for all population groups, regardless of age, health condition or disability (Buhalis & Darcy, 2011; Buhalis & Michopoulou, 2011; UNWTO, 2016). This universal usability of the environment can be achieved through the principles of Universal Design (Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, 2024). While a diverse range of population groups (parents with children, people with temporary disabilities ...) can certainly benefit from a more accessible environment, people with disabilities and the elderly are the primary beneficiaries of accessible tourism. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), about 15% of the world's population has some form of permanent disability and this percentage will continue to rise, due to population aging and the increase of chronic diseases (WHO, 2022a). Furthermore, population over 60 years of age currently amounts to 12% of the world population, and it will only grow bigger in the following decades (to an estimated 22% by 2050) leading to a corresponding increase in the number of people with disabilities (WHO, 2022b). Consequently, accessible tourism has a huge potential for growth as a market segment for tourist

destinations (Buhalis & Michopoulou, 2011; Buhalis & Darcy, 2011; Dominguez et al., 2013; Patterson et al., 2021).

The practice of tourism has been shown to improve happiness and well-being and has been recognized as a universal right (McCabe, 2020; Morgan et al., 2015; UNWTO, 2022). This recognition is reflected in legislation enacted by governments worldwide in accordance with the 'Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' a legal instrument approved by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006 to safeguard the rights and dignity of individuals with disabilities (UN, 2006). Despite the recognition of the importance of accessibility by governments and international organizations, accessible tourism has not yet been fully realized. Numerous physical and informational barriers persist (Deville & Kastenholz, 2018; Loi & Kong, 2017; McKercher & Darcy, 2018; Michopoulou & Buhalis, 2013; Orakani et al., 2021; Rubio-Escuderos et al., 2021a; Zhang & Cole, 2016), with physical and architectural obstacles representing only a portion of the problem (Bi et al., 2007; Loi & Kong, 2017; McKercher & Darcy, 2018; Moura et al., 2018; Rubio-Escuderos et al., 2021a). For instance, current tourist information systems often fail to provide detailed information about spaces and their adaptations to specific needs, which is crucial for people with disabilities (McKercher & Darcy, 2018; Michopoulou & Buhalis,

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³ <https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=trdwygYAAAAJ&hl=es&oi=sra>.

2013). Additionally, there is a notable lack of e-inclusion on tourism websites (Park et al., 2022).

This lack of accessibility undermines tourists with disabilities's freedom and satisfaction during their trips (Deville & Kastenholz, 2018). An accessible architectural environment and a good service aimed at people with disabilities and the elderly, can, therefore, help to improve their psychological and, by extension, physical wellbeing (Chrysikou et al., 2018; Devile & Kastenholz, 2018; Loi & Kong, 2017; Moura et al., 2018; Rubio-Escuderos et al., 2021a; Zhang & Cole, 2016). Accessible tourism is, thus, poised to become a socially responsible development strategy for those firms and destinations that implement it and, as a fundamental right, it is also an issue social welfare programs will increasingly need to address (Alén et al., 2012; Buhalis & Michopoulou, 2011; Domínguez et al., 2013).

Despite its widespread recognition at cultural and institutional levels, there has been a surprising dearth of academic interest in accessible tourism. The scarcity of studies aimed at identifying the barriers impeding the advancement of accessible tourism underscores the need for further research in this area. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the obstacles that may be hindering accessibility in tourist destinations, with the ultimate goal of enhancing accessible tourism planning. A critical question that arises is why the tourism industry has made little progress in accessible tourism, despite the purported economic benefits highlighted in the literature. Furthermore, the role of public administrations and people with disabilities in this context warrants investigation. To this end, an in-depth analysis was deemed necessary.

The methodology employed in this study is a Stakeholder Analysis, which is particularly suited to the study of accessible tourism for several reasons. Firstly, stakeholder collaboration is integral to the success of any tourist activity, including accessible tourism (Buhalis et al., 2005; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015; McCabe, 2018, pp. 279–294). Secondly, the literature reveals a significant research gap in this area (Perkins et al., 2020). Stakeholder Analysis is a valuable tool for identifying patterns of social interaction, predicting and resolving conflicts, and enhancing management (Grimble & Wellard, 1997; Ramirez, 1999, pp. 101–126). Our Stakeholder Analysis has been implemented on the case study of the Costa Blanca region (tourist brand used as a label for the coastal areas of the Alicante province in Spain), a consolidated Mediterranean destination predominantly offering a sun-and-beach product (INECA, 2020). The study examines the experiences and discourses of various accessible tourism stakeholders operating in the region, encompassing both demand-side groups advocating for increased accessibility and supply-side tourism providers. Following a comprehensive analysis, several obstacles impeding the development of accessible tourism were identified, and practical recommendations to mitigate these challenges were proposed. This study, therefore, contributes to the ongoing discourse on accessible tourism and provides actionable insights for its future development.

2. Literature review

2.1. Limitations on accessible tourism

Research on barriers to the development of accessible tourism remains notably sparse (Rubio-Escuderos et al., 2021b). This literature review, which examines the experiences of people with disabilities and tourism firms, has identified several obstacles to the expansion of accessible tourism. Notably, there is a lack of studies incorporating a representative sample from public administrations, a critical stakeholder in implementing accessible tourism.

The existing body of literature reveals that only a minority of entrepreneurs perceive accessibility as a market opportunity (Capitaine, 2016; Patterson et al., 2012; Wall-Reinius et al., 2023). Many are primarily focused on compliance with existing legislation. Patterson et al. (2012) and Wall-Reinius et al. (2023) identified the primary deterrents

to accessible tourism development as the high costs associated with accessibility and perceived low demand. Capitaine (2016) further highlighted prevalent misconceptions among hoteliers regarding disability and accessibility, citing instances where proximity to a hospital was erroneously equated with accessibility or where it was assumed that people with disabilities would adapt to inaccessible facilities. Another study investigating the challenges of accessible nature-based tourism in Sweden concurred that there is a lack of knowledge about accessibility, particularly in relation to product development and customer outreach (Wall-Reinius et al., 2023).

Regarding regulations, the literature suggests that they have had limited impact on improving accessible tourism, given their inconsistent application and the persistent barriers encountered by people with disabilities when traveling (Lovelock & Lovelock, 2013; Shaw & Agarwal, 2011).

The advocacy of people with disabilities plays a crucial role in raising awareness about accessibility among entrepreneurs. However, it has been suggested that tourists with disabilities tend to be less demanding customers, exhibiting greater tolerance towards service deficiencies despite experiencing feelings of helplessness when accessibility expectations are not met (Lee et al., 2021; Poria et al., 2011).

There is a pressing need for further research to elucidate:

1. The tourism industry's apparent disregard for accessible tourism, given the contradiction between existing literature advocating its profitability and the persistently negative attitudes exhibited by many entrepreneurs.
2. The role of public administrations in promoting and implementing accessible tourism.
3. The potential of disability organizations and individuals with disabilities as agents of change in the realm of accessible tourism.

These areas of inquiry are critical for advancing our understanding of the dynamics at play in the development and implementation of accessible tourism.

2.2. Stakeholders and accessible tourism

The future trajectory of accessible tourism and its impact on destination competitiveness is largely contingent upon the collaboration among a diverse array of stakeholders (Michopoulou et al., 2015). Each stakeholder plays a pivotal role in integrating accessibility into the broader tourism ecosystem, thereby yielding benefits for both the supply and demand sides (Buhalis et al., 2005; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015).

In their evaluation of the market potential of the One-Stop-Shop for Accessible Tourism in Europe (OSSATE) project, Buhalis et al. (2005) identified the key stakeholders in accessible tourism. They categorized these stakeholders into "supply" and "demand", as well as "mainstream", "mixed", and "specialized". Despite the absence of primary data, this report was a seminal contribution to the field. The comprehensive list of stakeholders they compiled includes national and local administrations, national and regional tourism organizations, providers of tourist services, venue owners, tourist intermediaries, tourism associations, hotel firms, the European Tourism Commission, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), end users, accessibility suppliers and distributors, social partners (such as trade unions), the vocational training sector, media, private investors, financial institutions, corporate buyers (firms and organizations that purchase tourism services), professional associations, networks of professionals, human resources managers, and trainers. This work, in conjunction with the study by Gillovic and McIntosh (2015), significantly advanced our understanding of the potential benefits of accessible tourism for the tourism industry. These benefits encompass a differentiated and diversified portfolio of products and services, competitive advantage, added value, enhanced brand and reputation, self-marketing, increased earning potential, empowered staff and clients, access to new market

segments, enhancement of organizational effectiveness, business longevity, and long-term sustainability.

Nyanjom et al. (2018) pioneered research into stakeholder relations in accessible tourism, conducting a case study in Western Australia. Their findings revealed a lack of collaboration, communication deficiencies, and confusion regarding roles and responsibilities. Additionally, they identified shortcomings in integration strategies and misconceptions surrounding accessibility. While this study has served as a foundation for our own work, it is not without limitations, primarily stemming from its exploratory nature. These limitations include a small, unrepresentative sample (18 interviews without determining saturation point for demand and supply) and the lack of a conclusive explanation for the absence of collaboration among stakeholders.

Nigg and Peters (2022) applied Nyanjom et al. (2018)'s framework to examine the role of stakeholders in accessible tourism digitalization implementation. Despite sharing some limitations with the previous study, such as a lack of sample stratification and failure to acknowledge potential conflicts, their work yielded valuable insights: 1) stakeholder collaboration in accessible tourism digitalization appears stronger at the regional level; 2) mistrust towards people with disabilities by entrepreneurs can significantly hinder collaboration between these two stakeholder groups; 3) the distribution of tasks among stakeholders lacks clear boundaries. These studies raise new questions that warrant further investigation: In which instances and between which stakeholders does collaboration fail? Do conflicting relations exist? Could certain collaborative relationships among stakeholders impede accessible tourism progress? What kinds of collaboration or conflict relations emerge during the process? What role does each stakeholder play within these relations? What resources do they employ to exert influence? Which stakeholders hold power, and to what extent? Who takes on leadership roles? In which way does being knowledgeable about the issue affect the relationship?

3. Methodology

3.1. Stakeholder Analysis design

Stakeholder Analysis methodology is well-suited for examining the multifaceted factors influencing accessible tourism and the crucial role of stakeholder collaboration in its implementation (Buhalis et al., 2005; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015; McCabe, 2018, pp. 279–294). Stakeholder Analysis facilitates the identification and characterization of stakeholders based on their attributes, relationships, and interests pertaining to a specific issue or resource within a given context (Ramirez, 1999, pp. 101–126). While Stakeholder Analysis can be applied in various ways, it is recommended to engage in prior stakeholder consultation, establish systematic processes for information gathering and analysis, and seek for objectivity (Schmeer, 1999). The analysis encompasses stakeholder characteristics such as their knowledge about the phenomenon/action/policy, their position and associated interests (for or against), potential alliances with other stakeholders, and their ability to influence the process. Comprehending these characteristics empowers managers and policymakers to interact more effectively with key stakeholders, foster support for specific policies or programs, and identify and mitigate potential opposition to policy implementation (Schmeer, 1999).

The application of Stakeholder Analysis in this study followed a series of structured steps. The different dimensions of Stakeholder Analysis outlined by Schmeer (2000) were considered, including position, knowledge, alliances and conflicts, resources, power, and leadership. They enable us to define the stakeholder systems of relationships and interests in general terms. These dimensions have been adapted to the study of accessible tourism, being a guide to develop research questions and, consequently, for information collection and data analysis:

- **Position:** This dimension assesses whether stakeholders support, oppose, or remain neutral towards accessible tourism. It involves

analyzing whether they have invested or plan to invest in accessibility, their discourse in favor or against, and the arguments they employ.

- **Knowledge:** This dimension evaluates each stakeholder's understanding of accessible tourism and its relation to their position. It considers stakeholders' interest in learning about accessibility and how they are informed.
- **Alliance/Conflict Relationships:** This dimension examines the conflicts and alliances that influence the development of accessible tourism. Alliances are formed between groups with similar positions and can be formal (partnerships, direct collaborations) or tacit (acceptance of legal or technical support, attendance at events organized by other stakeholders). Conflicts arise when interests clash and are classified as 'open' (e.g., pressure actions like complaints or demonstrations) or 'latent' (e.g., deferred or indirect actions).
- **Resources:** This dimension assesses the quantity and type (human, financial, technological, political, etc.) of resources each group can mobilize to protect their interests.
- **Power:** This dimension considers a stakeholder's ability (in relation to its resources and position) to advocate for its interests and influence others. It examines the influences that hinder accessible tourism.
- **Leadership:** This dimension evaluates the willingness of stakeholders to initiate and lead actions for or against accessible tourism.

Following the identification of key stakeholders (see section 3.2), data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted face-to-face or via video call for those residing outside the province of Alicante. Face-to-face interviews were held at locations chosen by the interviewees, such as their offices, homes, cafeterias, parks, or headquarters, to ensure their comfort and confidence. Participants were asked for permission to record the interviews, and all consented. The interviews were conducted throughout 2019 and March 2020. Instead of using a standardized questionnaire, a guideline based on Stakeholder Analysis dimensions was employed, with questions tailored to supply-side and demand-side stakeholders (see Annex 1).

After data collection, the analysis was conducted based on the stakeholder dimensions (see section 3.3). The first phase involved an individualized analysis of each group, focusing on positioning and knowledge dimensions. The second phase involved analyzing relationships between stakeholders based on alliances, conflicts, resources, power, and leadership.

3.2. Sample

Drawing upon the literature on AT, stakeholders have been categorized into two primary groups (Buhalis et al., 2005): tourism firms and public administrations as the 'supply' side, and disability organizations and individual tourists with disabilities as the 'demand' side. 'Supply' stakeholders possess the capability to implement accessibility measures within their respective domains, while 'demand' stakeholders require accessibility and exert pressure on the 'supply' side to implement it. Within these broad categories, more specific subgroups have been identified.

Informants were selected through convenience sampling (Emerson, 2015) in alignment with the study objectives. The "snowball" technique was employed as a complementary strategy, whereby each interviewee was requested to suggest additional contacts. Researchers adhered to a confidentiality agreement throughout the data collection process. The contact method varied depending on the stakeholder group:

- **Tourism firms:** A standardized email was sent to a list of contacts provided by municipal tourism departments.
- **Public administrations:** Tourism departments in Alicante, Altea, Benidorm, Calpe, Campello, Elche, Finestrat, Guardamar, and Vilajoyosa, along with two officials from the Valencian Regional

Government, were contacted via a standardized email. During fieldwork, some interviewees acknowledged having limited knowledge of accessible tourism and referred us to other relevant departments.

- Disability organizations: Only organizations headquartered within the province of Alicante or organizing trips and meetings within the province were included in the sample. Staff and members who had participated in organized trips were contacted.
- Independent tourists with disabilities: Individuals were contacted via snowball sampling through members of disability organizations, at disability-related conferences, and through an accessible travel agency. Among those contacted, only some resided in the province of Alicante and had engaged in local tourism activities.

The number of interviews was determined by saturation point (Bowen, 2008), which is reached when new interviews no longer introduce new themes or alter previously established categories. Due to the heterogeneity of the sample and the inherent complexity of the phenomenon, saturation point was reached more quickly for some groups than for others. On the demand side, the main themes emerged after the 15th interview. Subsequent interviews served to solidify our findings and provide additional nuances. Saturation was more challenging to attain for the companies group, with saturation becoming evident around the 22nd interview. To ensure the robustness of the results, we conducted an additional 16 interviews.

In total, the study involved 83 participants divided between the supply and demand sides, as shown in Table 1.

Regarding the representativeness of the sample, a non-probabilistic purposive sample design was used. The first key informants were selected from among institutional representatives of the different stakeholder groups. From there, a snowballing technique was applied. The size of the sample, as is usually the case in qualitative research, was not established a priori, but resulted from discursive saturation, as indicated above. This qualitative approach is justified by the type of information sought and the topic in question. If honest and comprehensive answers are to be obtained on the conception of disability and accessibility, as well as on issues of power and conflict, the questions can hardly be posed through a closed questionnaire. Qualitative research, in this case, has made it possible to obtain honest and emotional responses from participants on a particularly sensitive topic (Cowles, 1988). Often, pertinent information was derived from the conversations themselves or through cross-referencing various pieces of partial information, as conflicting and politically sensitive positions are not always expressed overtly.

3.3. Analysis

Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, enabling the

Table 1
Number of participants.

SUPPLY					
Tourism firms					
Accommodation	Transport	Travel agencies	Tourist services/activities	Restaurant	TOTAL
14	9	3	10	2	38
Public Administration					
Regional	Municipal				
Tourism	Tourism	Culture	Town planning	TOTAL	
2	9	4	4	19	
TOTAL: 57					
DEMAND					
Disability associations			15		
Tourists with disabilities			11		
TOTAL: 26					

Source: own elaboration.

analysis of raw data, namely the discourse expressed by the interviewees (Holsti, 1969). Data analysis was conducted using Atlas.ti, a software that facilitates the organization and interrelation of information through codes, quotes, comments, and memos. This approach enabled a comprehensive identification of stakeholder positions and relationship networks, as well as an accurate detection of barriers to accessible tourism.

The analysis was divided into two phases:

Phase 1: Individual Stakeholder Analysis.

This phase involved an in-depth examination of each stakeholder group, identifying their positioning and knowledge based on their personal and/or professional experiences. Secondary stakeholders within the main category groups were also identified.

Phase 2: Network Analysis.

This phase focused on the network of relationships among stakeholders. Initially, alliances (formal or tacit) and conflicts (open and latent) between each group and subgroup were identified based on interview statements. These interactions were subsequently organized into a matrix to facilitate systematic network analysis. Additionally, the following factors were analyzed: the impact of power imbalances among groups, the resources available to each of them to defend their interests, the means through which they interact with each other, as well as their initiative to lead actions (leadership).

Combining the findings from individual and relationship analyses enabled the detection of several obstacles to accessible tourism, which will be discussed in subsequent sections.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Stakeholders' positions

This section delineates the positioning of various stakeholders regarding accessible tourism. Stakeholders exhibit diverse interests and stances on accessible tourism, with notable variability observed within the "tourism firms" group compared to other stakeholders.

Among tourism firms, a spectrum of positions regarding accessible tourism has been identified. As depicted in Table 2, these positions are classified into three categories:

1. In favor: Firms specializing in accessible tourism, including three transportation firms (a railway assistance provider for people with disabilities, a car rental company, and a personal mobility and technical assistance company), two travel agencies, and one hotel consulting firm. These firms actively promote accessible tourism and view it as a business opportunity.

Table 2
Classification of positions of tourism firms towards accessible tourism.

In favor-Specialized firms-		Neutral-Nonspecialized, but take some initiatives-		Against-Not willing to improve in accessibility-	
Transport	3	Hotel	3	Tourist service and attraction providers	7
		Campsite	2		
		Holiday apartment	2		
		Hostel	1		
		Transport	3		
Travel agencies	2	Tourist service company	2	Holiday apartment	3
		Restaurant	1	Hotel	2
		Hotel association	1	Restaurant	1
				Travel agency	1
Consulting agency	1	Fairground	1	Car rental	1
TOTAL	6	TOTAL	17	TOTAL	15

Source: Own elaboration from the interviews' analysis.

"We have fifteen years of experience working and since then we have tried to diversify services and things that the competition did not do, for example, the issue of accessibility. Many of the companies in the area have standard vehicles and standard staff, without thinking about reduced mobility." (Car rental agency)

2. Neutral: firms that are not specialized in accessible tourism but offer a variety of services to the general public. They have implemented some accessibility initiatives or are open to doing so, but their advocacy for accessible tourism is not as steadfast as that of specialized companies. They also acknowledge the existence of challenges in implementing accessible tourism. This group comprises 17 firms: three hotels, two tourist service firms, two campsites, two holiday apartments, two coach companies, a fairground, a restaurant, the Alicante railway station managing company, a taxi firm, and a hostel. The hoteliers association is also included in this category.

"At the time, we adapted to the regulations. What's going on? You say "wow, how demanding the regulations are! It won't be that bad", but then, once you start working and the years go by, you realize that at the time, the regulations were not so demanding." (Hotel manager)

3. Against: firms that consider themselves accessible because they meet the minimum legal requirements but acknowledge deficiencies in accessibility and lack concrete plans to address them. This group consists of 15 firms: seven tourist services and attractions providers, three holiday apartments, two hotels, a restaurant, a conventional travel agency, and a car rental firm.

"If I had to create special rooms and spend more, recovering that with clients who must use it specifically is going to be complicated. There is not so much demand." (Hotel manager)

This categorization highlights the varying levels of commitment to accessible tourism among tourism companies. While some companies recognize its importance and are taking steps to implement it, others remain hesitant or resistant to change.

Public administrations wield significant influence in fostering the advancement of accessible tourism at various levels. At the international level, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), adopted in 2006, delineates a comprehensive framework aimed at safeguarding the rights of individuals with disabilities, explicitly stating that "public authorities are obliged to ensure the exercise of these rights is full and effective" (UN, 2006). Central to this framework is the right of individuals with disabilities to partake in tourism activities on an equitable basis with others. Similarly, the European Union (EU) has undertaken substantial initiatives to propel accessible tourism forward. The 2017 European Accessibility Act (EAA) endeavors to enhance the accessibility of products and services across EU member states by standardizing accessibility requirements, thereby alleviating burdens on businesses and fostering a more uniform accessibility landscape for individuals with disabilities. In Spain, the enactment of the General Law on the Rights of People with Disabilities and their Social Inclusion (Ley General de Derechos de las Personas con Discapacidad y de su Inclusión Social) in 2014 embodied the principles delineated in the UN CRPD. Moreover, regional governments within Spain possess the jurisdiction to institute tailored accessibility regulations within their respective territories. Notably, municipalities wield pivotal influence in implementing accessible tourism initiatives at the grassroots level. They can implement direct and concrete actions to make their tourist destinations more accessible, such as improving infrastructure, providing accessible transportation, and training tourism service providers.

The approach of public administrations towards accessible tourism is not predicated solely on the anticipation of heightened visitor influx or economic gains. Rather, it is underscored by a commitment to public service and the upholding of the rights of individuals with disabilities. Consequently, the focus lies on ensuring that services and facilities are accessible to all, irrespective of economic returns.

"That cannot be measured in this way. We offer a public service and, in that sense, we are not looking for a return on investment. We aim to provide a public service. Tourist information offices are not a profitable service, we offer a service for which we do not charge, but it is a service that must be offered. That's all there is to it." (DMO)

While minor institutional challenges were reported by some informants, overt opposition to accessible tourism was not discernible. In summary, public administrations assume a pivotal role in advancing accessibility through the enactment and enforcement of accessibility regulations, provision of funding for initiatives, and delivery of accessible services and facilities.

Tourists with disabilities constitute a diverse group, encompassing individuals with varying types (physical, sensory, cognitive, etc.) and degrees of disability. However, they share a common stance in favor of accessible tourism, recognizing that accessibility enhances their travel experiences, holiday enjoyment, and overall quality of life and well-being (Chrysikou et al., 2018; Devile & Kastenholz, 2018; Loi & Kong, 2017; Moura et al., 2018; Rubio-Escuderos et al., 2021a; Zhang & Cole, 2016). Ideally, people with disabilities prefer to travel independently and seek assistance from professional service providers outside their immediate family or friends (Rubio-Escuderos et al., 2021a). These travel companions and/or caregivers play a crucial role in mitigating barriers and ensuring a seamless travel experience. Importantly, there are groups of individuals whose disabilities have not yet been formally recognized, but who also require accessible spaces: senior tourists, people with temporary disabilities (e.g. following an accident), and others.

Disability organizations in Spain exhibit a diverse landscape. Some national organizations or federations specialize in a particular type of disability or condition, with regional headquarters throughout the country. Others operate at a local level. Their overarching goal is to empower people with disabilities to lead as normal and active lives as possible and to organize accessible trips for their members.

4.2. Alliances and conflicts' relationships

Nyanjom et al. (2018) did not identify collaborative relationships or conflicts among stakeholders. In contrast, this study has uncovered several forms of collaboration and conflict, but we will focus here only on those that hinder accessibility. Fig. 1 summarizes these relationships between sub-stakeholders when they occur. Within the matrix, the gray circles represent the most influential sub-stakeholders. A green arrow represents an alliance and a red one a conflict. The arrows' direction indicates the influence that some groups exert on others.

Section 4.3 will specifically develop these alliances and conflicts insofar as they are relevant to understanding the obstacles to accessible tourism.

4.3. Obstacles to accessible tourism

The literature consistently underscores the pivotal role of stakeholder cooperation in propelling accessible tourism forward (Buhalis et al., 2005; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015). This study echoes this sentiment, unveiling an empirical linkage between instances of underdeveloped accessibility and inadequate collaboration among stakeholders. Moreover, relationships that hinder progress in accessible tourism have been identified. Regardless of their stance or specific vested interests in accessible tourism, each stakeholder bears a measure of responsibility in fostering its advancement. The dearth of collaboration and the

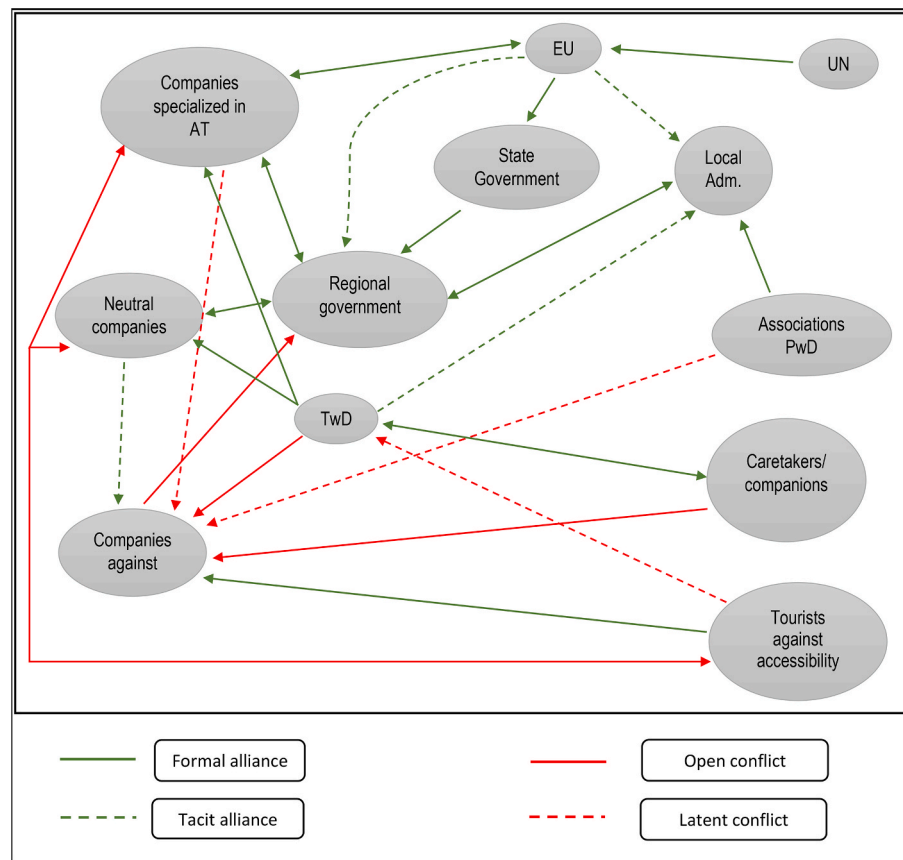


Fig. 1. Alliances and conflicts among stakeholders.
Source: Own elaboration from the interviews' analysis.

underlying factors contributing to this dearth are labeled as 'obstacles' to the development of accessibility.

Fig. 2, elaborated using Atlas.ti software, offers a comprehensive depiction of the causal interconnections among these obstacles. The figure furnishes a panoramic insight into how these causes intertwine and their positioning within the broader systemic framework.

Upon initial observation, it becomes apparent that obstacles originating from the supply side outnumber those arising from the demand side. The figure also clearly illustrates the specific factors contributing to

each side, as well as the type of connections linking them. The label "is a cause of" indicates a causal relationship, while "is a property of" refers to the more specific dimensions that influence the development of a linguistic construct. Finally, the phrase "is associated with" identifies obstacles that share similar characteristics and, consequently, occupy similar positions within the causal structure.

While Fig. 2 serves as a valuable analytical tool, it does not negate the need for further analysis. Therefore, an in-depth examination of the interactions between these factors is undertaken in subsequent sections,

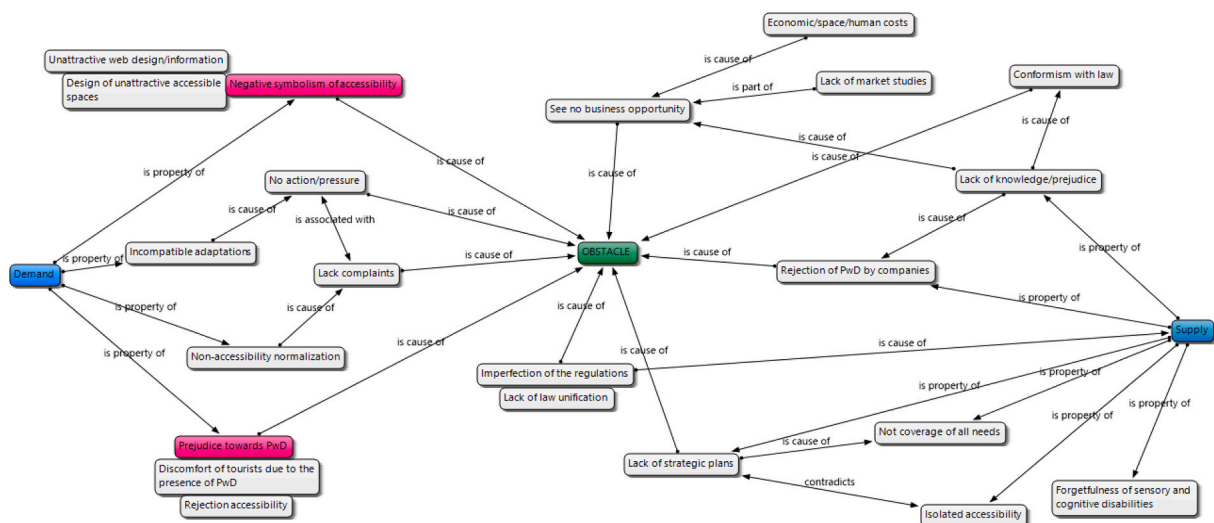


Fig. 2. Causal relationships of obstacles to accessible tourism.
Source: Own elaboration from the interviews' analysis.

accompanied by illustrative quotes from the interviews.

• Relations between public administrations and tourism firms.

All interviewees agreed that public and private sectors should work together to promote accessible tourism. Although some formal alliances have been found, there are many other cases in which these are non-existent. Some companies, despite recognizing accessibility as beneficial to their business, do not think they should have an active role in advocating for accessible tourism.

"We do not have time to be in contact at all times with public administrations to make these kinds of demands. That is the associations' task" (Car rental company manager)

In general, the attitude is still one of reluctance, because administrations are mainly seen as bureaucratic entities aimed at controlling the companies' activity rather than as business partners. Nigg and Peters (2022) found an unclear distribution of responsibilities in the processes of collaboration among stakeholders to control digitalization for accessible tourism. Our study shows that a definition of roles does exist, but collaboration is hampered in some cases by the patronizing attitude of some public officials. The following quote illustrates that attitude:

"If they come and say, 'I am from the Territorial Tourism Service and I come to ...'. If they say 'assess', wrong. If they say 'some advice on accessibility', bad. If, instead, they say 'we are coming to improve your marketing', everyone opens the door. If the administration comes to tell you about accessibility, entrepreneurs, in general, think about having to spend money and don't listen (...) Resources are there, but they don't know where to apply for them. If they want to improve accessibility, I doubt anyone knows that the Territorial Service is there to help." (Camping manager)

An interviewee proposed as a solution that firms with knowledge and interest in accessible tourism should approach other firms, showing how accessibility can be a business opportunity, rather than an obligation or liability.

"A hotel is a business and has to make money. If something is imposed as mandatory, entails expenditures and does not bring any return, then we will try not to do it. (...) It would be different if it is another company that says 'Gentlemen, you have to be accessible no matter what, but, the obligation notwithstanding, it is also an opportunity for you to make money.'" (Accessible tourism consulting manager)

• Is Accessible Tourism a neglected business opportunity?

The literature consistently indicates that tourism firms do not perceive accessibility as a business opportunity (Capitaine, 2016; Paterson et al., 2012; Wall-Reinius et al., 2023). While some firms have implemented strategies to minimize costs, many others have not. In this study, companies with an 'against' stance argued that they would not recoup their investment due to insufficient demand. However, interviews led us to concur with Capitaine (2016) that this perception stems from misconceptions or a lack of knowledge about disability and accessibility rather than empirical evidence. Firms with an 'against' stance have not even attempted to market their accessible products or introduce 'additional value-added products'. The following quote exemplifies an entrepreneur's prejudice regarding the interest of people with disabilities in sports like diving:

"I would need a market study, because I don't know to what extent this type of persons have an interest in diving. If since you are a child you keep being told that you cannot do certain things ... So, it's very

difficult, even if you offer them the possibility to try a new experience in an accessible way." (Tourist services company manager)

Accessible tourism's profitability remains a subject of debate among business groups, with firms holding varying stances: 'Against' firms consider themselves to be fully accessible just for complying with regulations (or some aspects of them) and do not wish to go further. 'In favor' firms, all specializing in accessible tourism, assert its profitability and express their commitment to continuous innovation and accessibility enhancement. They recognize the broader benefits of their specialization for groups like the elderly and others with accessibility needs. 'Neutral' firms acknowledge the importance of accessible tourism but maintain that exclusive focus on accessibility would be unsustainable for their business models. One company expressed regret over a significant investment in adapted vehicles that failed to yield the expected return. Such experiences often lead to a reluctance to make further investments in accessible products and services.

"When it comes to build a new vehicle, adding a platform is a fairly high cost that we won't recuperate because there is not so much demand." (Car rental company manager)

Some public officials also see the lack of demand as an obstacle to accessibility. In this sense, some public services have been discontinued after a very low demand has been detected.

"Years ago we had brochures in Braille provided by the Valencian government but the truth is that no one has ever asked for them." (Municipal official, Department of Tourism)

A major obstacle for firms specializing in accessible tourism is discrimination of tourists with disabilities by some suppliers.

"A receptionist sent an email to the hotel director but made a mistake and, instead, sent it to me. The email said: 'Do I raise the price to this group to get rid of them?'" (Accessible travel agency manager)

Although Spanish law prosecutes this type of discrimination, instances of prejudice against tourists with disabilities have been documented. These include suppliers canceling reservations for intellectually impaired tourists or proposing price hikes to deter them from utilizing their services. Additionally, hotel managers have expressed the belief that providing high-quality service to this clientele is unnecessary, as their appreciation is perceived to be minimal.

"I don't know if you've seen a drooling quadriplegic (...). Some hotel managers think they are not capable of appreciating anything and see them as a nuisance for the hotel. A hotel called me because it was interested in us, because we are a large group, and told us they had a lot of adapted rooms. The summer ended and they called me again and told me that they no longer wanted us. They had a bad experience with a group screaming at the reception and had had complaints from other customers." (Accessible travel agency manager)

• Legislation on accessibility.

In concurrence with Lovelock and Lovelock (2013) and Shaw and Agarwal (2011) we acknowledge the empowering role of legislation for people with disabilities. However, despite the well-intentioned efforts of policymakers, Spanish regulations exhibit several shortcomings. Firstly, they exclusively address the accessibility of physical spaces, primarily catering to individuals with reduced mobility. Sensory disabilities are only beginning to gain recognition in regulations, while intellectual disabilities remain largely overlooked. The activism of large disability organizations plays a crucial role in advocating for the social and political recognition of people with disabilities' rights and needs. Nevertheless, designing information that is universally comprehensible remains a complex challenge, with no immediate technological solution

in sight.

"For the first time, manuals are being published on how to adapt premises for people with cognitive needs. (...) How do pictograms have to be so that anyone can understand them? Disabilities are so varied ... It is very complicated. There are always more studies, but it is something that is advancing slowly." (Regional administration official)

Furthermore, instances of partial or dysfunctional adherence to accessibility legislation are prevalent. Despite formal adaptations to meet minimum regulatory standards, some venues continue to fall short of addressing the specific needs of people with disabilities. These shortcomings pose severe consequences for disabled tourists, hindering their ability to fully engage in and enjoy their travel experiences (Loi & Kong, 2017; McKercher & Darcy, 2018; Moura et al., 2018; Rubio-Escuderos et al., 2021a).

"There were a lot of stairs to enter the hotel. It went up slowly, but I struggled." (Tourist travelling with disability organization)

Acknowledging the overarching goal of achieving universal accessibility, regulations recognize the necessity to adopt a realistic implementation pace, considering the economic, technical, and even cultural constraints faced by both companies and administrative bodies.

"There are laws and they must be upheld but transformations are not easy. Public support is provided to help companies to adapt and maintain their competitiveness, but you cannot change the image or the logo in ten weeks." (Official, Valencian regional administration)

Notwithstanding the efforts of public administrations to accommodate the needs of all stakeholders, certain aspects of prevailing regulations prove impractical for many companies. This stems from the lack of specificity in these regulations, which fail to adequately consider the variations in infrastructure size and service types to which they apply. Companies express their collective dissatisfaction through business associations, which serve as intermediaries in conveying the industry's sentiments to public administrations.

"There is resignation amongst hoteliers, because there are many unrealistic regulations. For example, the obligation to have some accessibility system in the pool. A hotelier told me "The whole season can go by and no one needs to access the pool with an amphibious chair but the law forces me to have such a bulky device just in case. Which, on top of that, occupies half the pool's space, especially in hotels with tiny pools." (Hotel Association Technician)

A final challenge posed by accessibility legislation is the heterogeneity of accessibility regulations across Spain. Disparities in regional application criteria for national law lead to confusion for firms and disability organizations, who must navigate a patchwork of requirements across different territories.

"We have found a hotel that was pressured by a regional administration to replace shower trays with bathtubs. And in our region the requirement is just the opposite." (Accessible travel agency manager)

• Pressure from the demand side.

Despite the shortcomings in firms' efforts to address the needs of people with disabilities (Deville & Kastenholz, 2018; Loi & Kong, 2017; McKercher & Darcy, 2018; Michopoulou & Buhalis, 2013; Orakani et al., 2021; Rubio-Escuderos et al., 2021a; Zhang & Cole, 2016), research suggests that people with disabilities often fail to proactively communicate their needs. There is widespread consensus that filing complaints or seeking legal recourse represents the most effective means for people with disabilities to advocate for accessibility. In the latter instance, public administrations are obligated to implement control and punitive

measures, including inspections, fines, and even closures.

"They will never go ex officio to notify you do not comply and close your venue, but when people file a complaint you always have an inspection and then a fine may follow. They may even go as far as closing you up." (Accommodation Association director)

Many entrepreneurs consider that the customer base accessibility needs just does not exist.

"It's common to get requests from an agency asking you for rooms for I don't know how many disabled children. We give them the information, but while I was there, they never ended in any actual booking." (Hotel manager)

Both firms and public administrations say they would like to receive more feedback from people with disabilities to better understand their needs.

"If they gave us more feedback, maybe we would be better informed." (Hotel manager)

Some people are reluctant to make formal complaints because they involve some time-consuming bureaucratic procedures.

"If citizens were a little bit more incisive, maybe we would achieve something more. Maybe there's one loud comment in a thousand, but when you ask him or her to put it in writing, they refuse. And it is the same with disability organizations. If I were them, I would be more pugnacious." (Municipal official, Department of Tourism)

Nigg and Peters (2022) highlighted the reluctance of some people with disabilities to engage in collaborative efforts with hotel managers or administrations. In their study, certain interviewees expressed concerns about the effectiveness and commitment of disability organizations.

Firms and public administrations have attempted to engage disability organizations in the testing and development of accessible products but have encountered unresponsive attitudes and a lack of interest in establishing collaborative partnerships. This apathy persists despite companies offering financial compensation for such services.

"I even spoke with the president himself but they (a national organization) didn't show any interest". (Campsite manager)

People with disabilities exhibit a low propensity to file formal complaints. Lee et al. (2021) ascribed this phenomenon to the heightened tolerance to adversity developed by people with disabilities. The present study has identified an additional contributing factor: people with disabilities have, to a certain extent, normalized inaccessibility. Some interviewees expressed pride in their ability to independently adapt to non-accessible environments, despite or even because of the significant willpower, skill, and effort required to do so. In general, they have developed coping mechanisms, either independently or by assistive technology, which serve as a deterrent against exerting pressure on other accessibility stakeholders.

"Since my house is not adapted, I see everything as adapted. Maybe you put a couple of grab rails next to the toilet to help you sit down and I already see that as a super adapted toilet" (Tourist travelling with disability organization)

The scarcity of formal complaints might also stem from the lack of adequate mechanisms (public or private) for filing such complaints. Certain administrations have expressed a lack of motivation in implementing an effective complaint filing system and have acknowledged prioritizing collective complaints over individual ones due to their reduced media and electoral impact.

"You know that politicians act according to the importance of people complaining. Numbers count. Politicians or businessmen act when

the disability story is on the news. (Municipal official, Department of Culture)

The concept of universally accessible spaces remains elusive, as there are instances where spaces and services designed for one group of people with disabilities prove inaccessible to others. Our research has identified examples of this phenomenon in rooms, floors, bathrooms, taxis, and even light switches. This lack of consensus on universality is further evident in the varying accessibility of bathtubs and shower trays, with preferences differing among individuals. Similarly, non-slip floor coverings, while considered an accessibility feature, can hinder movement for some individuals. Moreover, a visually impaired individual expressed discomfort in spaces where light is automatically activated by motion sensors, a feature officially deemed accessible. Conversely, excessively bright spaces that may benefit some individuals with visual impairments can be overwhelming for others:

"You walk into a toilet and the light switches on by itself. It is not ok for me because I move a little slower, I have to look more carefully at everything, and maybe when I am halfway into my thing the light goes out I have to make a movement turn it back on. (...) I am also bothered by the excess of light. However, people with retinitis do very well with a lot of light." (Member of disability organization's board)

• Prejudices and universal design.

Tourism firms acknowledged that a significant portion of their non-disabled clientele expresses a preference for non-accessible accommodations, particularly in hotel bedrooms and bathrooms. Conversely, accessible common areas are typically perceived favorably, often being described as "attractive" and "innovative".

Most people, all other things being equal, opt for the non-accessible room, fundamentally because of the bathroom. The rest of the room is more comfortable because is roomier." (Campsite manager)

The allocation of accessible rooms to the "general public" is typically reserved for instances of full occupancy. Hotel staff proactively inform guests of this situation and attempt to persuade them of their ability to comfortably utilize the accessible accommodations. Despite these efforts, some patrons have expressed dissatisfaction with being assigned to accessible rooms. Notably, among these individuals may be tourists with disabilities themselves. A hotel manager recounted her experience with a wheelchair-bound guest who opted to decline an accessible room and subsequently caused significant damage to a standard room due to its unsuitability for her needs.

"There was a case of a woman who was in a wheelchair. She scratched the room walls by crashing against them while maneuvering. We asked her to change rooms and there was no way." (Hotel manager)

When asked about the reasons, hotel managers assumed adapted rooms or bathrooms are simply not attractive: "they remind people of gym bathrooms", "they make you feel weird", "they have an orthopedic style" or "they are over dimensioned".

"Adapted bathrooms have a lower sink. They are more like gym bathrooms than hotel bathrooms." (Hostel manager)

While a substantial portion of tourists hold positive views towards accessibility tourism, it has also been encountered instances of negative attitudes directed towards both accessible tourism and people with disabilities themselves. Some individuals express reluctance to share common spaces with clients accompanied by intellectually impaired customers. A hotel manager recounted uncomfortable situations arising from such attitudes, prompting him to decline accommodations to prospective guests who may harbor negative sentiments towards

accessibility.

"Some customers have complained they don't want to stay in a bungalow close to the "retarded". Well, I'd rather not have that kind of client. (Campsite manager)

Accessible designs are often perceived as less aesthetically appealing for web pages and other advertising and informational materials due to their standardized, minimalist, and simplistic use of colors, fonts, and images. Despite an understanding of accessibility requirements and the purported advantages of accessible websites, the supply side has historically favored non-accessible designs.

"If I made the website fully accessible to visually impaired readers I would have a skeleton with a lot of text, deprived of graphic effects. Even the writing style would be different. I would lose a lot of audience if I were to make my website accessible to all types of readers. It's that sad. (...) A person with a disability is interested in technical specifications, he wants to know how reality is, one hundred percent without ornaments, whereas the general public is seduced through sight." (Campsite manager)

Other informants affirmed accessibility and attractive design are not necessarily at odds, arguing that all depends on the designer's skill and suggesting advances in new accessible design techniques and concepts should be encouraged.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Theoretical contributions

Public recognition of the right to tourism for people with disabilities and the economic impact of accessible tourism have been acknowledged by public institutions and academic research. However, the development of accessible tourism remains sluggish, and people with disabilities continue to encounter numerous obstacles when traveling. Despite the literature's consensus on the importance of stakeholder collaboration for accessible tourism development, many questions regarding the barriers to accessibility expansion remain unanswered. Additionally, existing studies on accessible tourism often lack primary data or a representative sample of the entire tourism ecosystem, and conflicts between stakeholders are not adequately addressed.

This study contributes to filling this gap by identifying and analyzing numerous instances of accessible tourism perceptions, non-collaboration, conflicts, and even collaborations among stakeholders that hinder accessible tourism development. Previous studies (Buhalis et al., 2005; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015; McCabe, 2018, pp. 279–294; Nigg & Peters, 2022; Nyanjom et al., 2018) have highlighted the lack of stakeholder cooperation as a major obstacle to accessible tourism expansion. Our work not only confirms this finding but also identifies additional obstacles, such as conflictual relationships (e.g. hoteliers influenced by non-disabled clients complaining about disabled guests). These new findings stem from the use of a diverse and extensive sample of stakeholders who have shared their personal and professional experiences on the matter. The sample was stratified into four main stakeholder types based on their position regarding accessible tourism. Additionally, the study includes representatives from public administrations (primarily local) who provided insights into their experiences with developing accessibility regulations.

Among the concrete supply-side hurdles, it is worth noting the general tendency of companies to adhere to minimum regulatory requirements without going beyond them. This stems from a widespread lack of knowledge, attributable to insufficient market research and inadequate communication channels between tourism firms, administrations, and disability organizations. Additionally, culturally ingrained misconceptions often lead to the perception of accessibility investments as liabilities rather than assets.

The varied array of social prejudices revealed through our

interviewees' personal experiences poses a significant challenge, hindering entrepreneurs' willingness to invest in accessibility. These prejudices often manifest as discrimination against people with disabilities by both firms and non-disabled customers. Discrimination is particularly prevalent in the case of intellectually impaired tourists. Many non-impaired tourists and entrepreneurs perceive accessible design (in rooms, toilets, websites, and other information/advertising channels) as aesthetically unappealing. Furthermore, inconsistencies and loopholes in legislation hinder the effective implementation of accessible tourism. In the Spanish context, the added layer of diverse regional regulations further complicates the situation.

This work also highlights the presence of demand-side obstacles, stemming from both individuals with disabilities and disability associations. While the importance of people with disabilities complaints in promoting accessible tourism is well established, we have identified two previously unexplored reasons for the underreporting of complaints: 1) inconsistencies between different forms of accessibility (due to the lack of truly universal spaces) and 2) a higher threshold of tolerance and normalization of inaccessibility among people with disabilities, which reduces the pressure on the supply side. In this context, the activism of disability associations and individuals plays a crucial role in improving supply-side understanding of this client segment and enabling demand-driven action. Supply-side stakeholders emphasize the need for demand-side stakeholders to make their voices heard to raise awareness and drive change.

The next section presents practical proposals for addressing the identified hurdles, tailored to both supply-side and demand-side stakeholders.

5.2. Practical recommendations

- *Enhancing market awareness and knowledge sharing. Dissemination of success stories and best practices.*

There remains considerable reluctance and even skepticism among firms and administrations regarding accessible tourism development. They justify their stance by citing an alleged lack of demand and the perceived high risks associated with accessibility investments. To address these concerns, it is crucial to widely share success stories and best practices in accessible tourism implementation. Encouraging successful accessible firms to openly share their strategies and know-how with the broader industry can significantly alleviate these concerns. As one interviewee aptly noted, having access to more market information on disability demand would motivate her to invest in adapting her premises. Instances have been documented, even in the public sector, where supply failed to meet demand. This underscores the importance of effective communication through appropriate channels to reach the potential disability market segment and ensure a return on investment. The most difficult market segment to reach is that of individual with a disability who travel independently, without the support of an organization. Even firms specializing in accessible tourism still lack a clear strategy for effectively engaging with this segment. Further research is needed to shed light on this critical issue.

- *Improving legal regulations.*

Collaboration between administrations and firms is often hindered by the latter's reluctance to view accessibility as an asset rather than an obligation or liability. Additionally, existing regulations contain flaws, gaps, and inaccuracies. For instance, regulations often fail to adequately address dimensions such as online information accessibility or the specific needs arising from sensory and cognitive disabilities. Moreover, instances of discrimination against tourists with disabilities continue to occur, despite the existence of legal protections. This reinforces the limited capacity of regulations to promote accessible tourism without a genuine commitment from all stakeholders involved.

- *Standardizing universal design and enhancing its aesthetic appeal.*

The study reveals a lack of consensus on universal design principles, an issue evident not only in people with disabilities' perspectives but also in discrepancies between regulations. Another drawback of current design practices is the tendency for accessible spaces, products, web-pages, advertising, and information materials to lack aesthetic appeal and even generate social rejection. To address this issue, we propose broadening the concept of universal design to encompass the aesthetic dimension wherever it is currently absent. Applying this concept to rooms, toilets, websites, and tourist information in general would promote acceptance and increase the desirability of these products among everyone.

- *Addressing prejudices and discriminatory attitudes through awareness campaigns.*

Finally, to address the prevalence of prejudices and discriminatory attitudes, educational campaigns should be implemented in schools and through media channels. These campaigns should aim to promote civility, awareness, and understanding of people with disabilities.

5.3. Social implications

Currently, issues related to lack of accessibility persist at the architectural, service, informational, and online levels, constraining the travel capacity of many individuals. Promoting accessible management of tourist destinations is not only crucial for the inclusion of people with disabilities but also renders these destinations straightforward and comprehensible for all individuals, particularly considering the inevitable aging of global population. Understanding the barriers to accessible tourism enables stakeholders to focus their actions in developing strategies to overcome them. The findings presented in this paper contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2006). Specifically, Goal 10, "Reduced Inequalities" by aiming to enhance the social, economic, and political inclusion of all individuals, regardless of age, gender, or disability and ensuring equal opportunities through targeted policies. Similarly, it also promotes Goal 11, "Sustainable Cities and Communities", which includes universal urban accessibility, and Goal 17, "Partnerships for the Goals", which highlights the need for commitment and collaboration among all countries and stakeholders in achieving the objectives. The alignment of our work with these goals underscores the relevance of the research topic and the findings obtained.

5.4. Methodological limitations and directions for future research

The study sample is not without its methodological shortcomings:

- Underrepresentation of openly negative attitudes towards accessible tourism: The sensitive nature of the subject likely led some individuals with prejudices against accessible tourism to decline participation in the study. As a result, the sample may underestimate the prevalence of such attitudes.
- Overlapping between independent and organization-supported travelers with disabilities: Many travelers with disabilities engage in both independent and organization-supported trips, leading to an overlap between these two categories in the sample.
- Limited representation of diverse disability types: The sample primarily focuses on individuals with reduced mobility, potentially overlooking the experiences of those with other types of disabilities.
- Administrative sample primarily limited to the municipal level: The administrative sample largely comprises representatives from the municipal level, leaving out insights from regional and state-level administrations.

Given the exploratory and qualitative nature of this research, the sample does not provide statistically representative data on the population under study. Future research could complement these findings with quantitative studies to gain a more comprehensive understanding of accessible tourism perceptions and experiences.

Despite being focused on the Costa Blanca, the study's conclusions are expected to serve as a valuable reference for understanding accessible tourism in other destinations. Further research should undertake comparative studies to identify the specific factors hindering accessible tourism development in different destinations and examine the networks of relationships among local stakeholders in these contexts. Additionally, in-depth investigations into topics that emerged during this research, such as accessible website information and business strategies for enhancing accessible tourism efficiency, would be beneficial. Future research should also broaden the scope of the public administration perspective, differentiating between technical and political figures and conducting interviews with actors at the state and European levels.

The present study has allowed us to understand the social dynamics

affecting accessibility development. Through the obtained results, it has been possible to identify barriers to accessible tourism from the business, public, and social sectors, as well as from the interaction between them. Gaining a deep understanding of these dynamics that hinder the advancement of accessible tourism is a key step in developing solutions, which represent the challenge to be addressed within the realm of marketing and socially responsible destination management.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Lucía Rubio-Escuderos: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Software, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Francisco Javier Ullán de la Rosa:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Resources, Project administration, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Hugo García-Andreu:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Conceptualization.

ANNEX 1. interview script

	SUPPLY (Tourism firms and public administration)	DEMAND (PwD organizations and tourists)
CHARACTERISTICS	● Features, services offered and target customers.	● Gender, age, kind and origin of disability, travel experience, kind of destinations you travel to. ● Are you traveling with or without an organization? Have you traveled both ways? ● How important is accessibility for you when deciding to take a journey? ● Accessibility issues during the trip
POSITIONING	● Experience with the implementation of accessibility in your city? In case you have implemented it, how did you start? What factors led to the decision? ● Have you gone beyond regulations? ● To what extent accessibility is important to your business? ● How has being accessible benefited you?	
POSITIONING/ COMMITMENTS	● Are you thinking of future improvements in accessibility or services to PwD? ● Why?	● Are you active in promoting accessibility in your municipality/destination/company? ● How?
KNOWLEDGE	● Knowledge about PwD needs. What sources of information have you used? Do you think training in accessibility is important? Have you taken or would be interested in taking courses on the subject?	● Tell us about the process of planning your trip and searching for information about it (instruments used and people (or interest groups) they address to).
INTERESTS AGAINST RESOURCES	● Accessibility costs? Difficulties to implement it? Do the profits outweigh the costs? Have you done it only to comply with regulations? ● What resources have you used to implement accessibility? By what means have you pressured other actors to defend their interests?	● Are there adaptations (for other kind of disabilities) that bother you or hinder in any way your trip experience? ● Are you traveling alone? Do PwD organizations have any specific function in AT (alliances with “demand” stakeholders)?
ALLIANCES/ POWER	● How do you interact with the administration, other tourist companies and PwD organizations? Is this relationship aimed at promoting AT? Is it a relationship of pressure or collaboration? ● Do you consider the demands of PwD and/or other tourists with accessibility needs? Do you establish means to receive complaints or suggestions?	● Relationships – alliances, leadership, power – and resources regarding accommodation, transportation, travel agencies, restaurants, other businesses: which ones do you use, preferences, how do you interact with these stakeholders (for example, if you have a complaint, who do you go to? what means do you use?)
LEADERSHIP	● Have you taken the initiative for any joint action in defense of (or against) accessibility? ● What do you think the future development of AT will be like? To which actors do you attribute responsibility for progress or lack thereof?	● Relationships -alliances, leadership, power- and resources with respect to the tourist destination. Do you interact with the public administration of the destination? In what way? By what means. ● In your place of residence, do you pressure or ally with the “supply” to promote accessibility? ● How do you value supply stakeholders, in general, and PwD organizations? ● What do you think the future development of AT will be like? To which actors do you attribute responsibility for progress or lack thereof?

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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