

ACCESSIBLE TRAIL MAP TO COMFORT THE DISABLED TOURISTS IN THE NATIONAL PARKS: CASE STUDY IN KUKUP ISLAND NATIONAL PARK, MALAYSIA

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Tourism is a sector which embraces all the aspects related to human wellbeing from human socio-cultural activities to quality of life. Therefore, it is unfair for certain category of people is excluded from experiencing travelling just because of their physical deficiency. Thus, the aim of this paper is to create an accessible trail map to allow the disabled people to choose the most practical route for them. Kukup Island National Park is selected as the research area and the method were used in this research is auditing method. To facilitate the auditing process, the facilities were divided into three elements such as accessibility, spatial and support facilities. Based on the auditing result, it is found that only some of the facilities provided in the Kukup Island National Park is be fully accessible. Other facilities can only be accessible with the little modifications. Based on the results obtained from the auditing method, an accessible trail map is developed to ease the movement of the disabled tourists. By using this map, the disabled tourists will then have an option whether to go certain places or not which does not fit their physical requirements. In addition, by referring to this map too, the disabled tourists can decide whether to continue with their holiday bookings or called off their trip. One must bear in mind that not all the disabilities are visible hence all the tourism destinations must be well prepared with the necessary facilities needed by all category of people to reach wider a market. This map will be an essential tool to screen the tourism destinations in the planning stage itself to avoid any unwanted travel experiences. Usually, requirements from one disabled people will not be similar with another, therefore research need to be conducted using all type of disability categories.

Keywords: Accessible, disabled, national park, trail map, tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is very complex and consist of multifaceted activities and parties such as travel agents, meeting planners and other service providers namely accommodation, transportation, attractions and entertainment (Personal, Social & Human Education Section Education Bureau, 2013). According to United National World Tourism Organization (2016a), persons with disabilities are taking part more frequently in tourism activities as a result of their growing economic level and social integration. Nevertheless, there remain many obstacles and barriers that obstruct access to tourism services. Accessibility is not a requirement specially and exclusively for the disabled people, as they are not its only beneficiaries to them but it is useful for everyone. A high percentage of one billion tourists who are travelling each year

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consists of families with young children and seniors and persons with disabilities or other special needs. Hence, it is necessary that the destinations to develop universal accessibility measures to promote equality (United National World Tourism Organization, 2016b).

Unhealthy lifestyle and other aspects, especially accidents or certain illnesses, are merging an upward trend in the traditionally used figures. In any event, nowadays people desire to live longer, which will undoubtedly involve certain limitations. The characteristics of disability in a given country are affected by trends in health disorders and in environmental and other aspects, such as traffic accidents, natural disasters, conflicts, eating habits, and the abuse of certain materials. To promote “Accessible Tourism for All”, concept which is vital, it is also important to build know-how and healthy partnerships among public authorities, the private sector and organizations of disabled people (United Nations World Tourism Organization & Fundacion ACS. (2015). The major concepts of tourism sustainability include satisfying the needs of both visitors and local community as well as preserving and increasing the tourism attraction for the future as a section of a national economic resource. The connection between tourists, local community, businesses institutions, attractions and environment is very difficult, collaborative and symbolic. The main aim of quality tourism is to supply the tourists with ‘good value for money’. Quality tourism product doesn’t need to be expensive (Shalini & Seow, 2016).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The term of “Accessible Tourism” or “Tourism for All” is been a necessity aspect recent. It refers to the removal barriers in urban, architecture and the social integration through the tourism for disabled people. Definitely, we should also study the accessible tourism considering the accessibility and disability or dependency aspect. So the role of other fields such as architecture, urbanism, sociology, economics is very important to gain knowledge and experience. Therefore, it is not enough to consult geographic works and researchers only but many other investigations, private or institutional authorship is needed. Indeed, we need a broader collaboration to see this issue in a larger angle (Almonte & Manuel, 2014).

Many researches shows that information regarding accessible facilities is not well documented for the use of the public especially the disabled people. In addition, it is difficult to obtained a documented information which publish the criteria determined as “important” by them (Darcy, 2010). More than one billion people live are with some types of disability in this world. Populations of the disabled and elderly people are increasing due to the prevalence of the disability and longer life span with the usage of advanced technology in healthcare facilities. it is their basic right to take part in any domain of life under equality terms with all everyone else.

Disabled people also have leisure desires like travelling, vacationing and sightseeing in different places as others. It is their basic right to obtain equal, hygienic, comfortable and honorable benefits from the tourism services (Akinci, 2013).

According to Bindu & Kiruthika (2016), it requires a set of practices to enable the tourists who suffer a limitation in their ability as tourists. Such type of tourists has quite a number of specific special requirements at different facets of travel and stay, provision of such requirements are necessary to facilitate their travel. It is meant to accommodate all those having diverse degrees of accessibility constraints as regards in taking part in leisure, recreation and tourism opportunities namely disability and other medical conditions requiring superior care, elderly people and others in need of short-term assistance. Inaccessibility towards tourism opportunities should not always be categorized as the fundamental issue but judicious provisions need to be created in a way to address the constraints which appear to be the central challenge.

Barriers were regarded as factors that precluded or reduce an individual's frequency, rate or satisfaction as a participant in an activity. Barriers are a physical structure which blocks or obstructs something (Dorji, 2012). Leisure barriers can be categorized into three main categories, namely intrapersonal barriers, interpersonal barriers and structural barriers. Intrapersonal barriers include lack of self-confidence, lack of encouragement or lack of information about opportunities for leisure that effect preference or lead to a lack of interest in a particular type of leisure activity. Interpersonal factors are those associated with other individuals including lack of leisure partners or lack of social interaction skills. Structural barriers are those that exist between individual preferences and participation in a leisure activity, including lack of finances, lack of transportation, limited abilities and lack of time or architectural barriers (Shalini and Seow, 2013).

In many situation, information and technology becomes the bridge to foster usability, accessibility and equality of the society. Tourism developers are forced to gain accessibility services for open up travel opportunities and this requires information, effort and desire from its customers. As everyone knows disabled people anywhere the world requires easy access to proceed their lives in equality and usability standards. As travel is a key of continuing globalization to gain information for the development, tourism activities of the society need to play a significant role in providing accessibility and expanding accessibility for all citizens equally. Accessibility is an important element for the disabled people for the welfare of the society, whereby the literature need to pay attention on physical and web accessibility for societal and institutional services (Altinay, *et al.*, 2016).

All this while, tourism activities are specifically designed for people who are not disabled. Many experts are debating on this matter by saying that participating in tourism activities should be encouraged for all people, whether or not they have a disability. Many proven result can be observed by engaging the disabled people

in tourism activities. They are believed to be live happier, more fulfilling lives thus, it is essential for them to overcome various social and practical difficulties. Despite the fact that disabled people are a niche market for the tourism sector, their needs have not been emphasized in academic studies yet (Akýncý, & Kasalak, 2016).

The level of inaccessibility issue is depending on the understanding and corrective actions which is taken to minimize the complaints and shifting towards the “Universal Designs” or “Design for All” (Shalini & Seow, 2015) Therefore, the aim of this paper is to create an accessible trail map to allow the disabled people to choose the most practical route for them. Findings of this paper will enabled the disabled tourists to have an option whether to go certain places or not which does not fit their physical requirements. In addition, by referring to this map too, the disabled tourists can decide whether to continue with their holiday bookings or called off their trip.

3. METHODOLOGY

Kukup Island is selected as the research area. Methodology used in this paper is auditing method. In this research, categories of disabled tourists are wheelchair users, visual impairment, hearing impairment, elderly and pregnant ladies. To facilitate the auditing process, the facilities were divided into three (3) elements such as accessibility, spatial and support facilities. Facilities in accessibility elements are ramp, handrail, grab-bar, walkways and sidewalks, entrance, textured surface routes and stairs. Facilities in spatial elements are toilet, parking area, shower facilities, wash basin, refreshment building, clothes suspension, accommodation facilities, briefing room and gazebo wakaf. Facilities in support facilities elements are bed facilities, wardrobe facilities, fixed and built-in benches, signage, announcement board, directions signs, warning sign and trail map. Auditing is done based on Universal Design and Accessibility in the Built Environment-Code of Practice (Second Revision) MS 1184: 2014. Based on the auditing result, accessible trail map is developed to ease the movement of the disabled tourists around the Kukup Island.

4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This study conducted in the Kukup Island National Park. Kukup Island is one of the largest uninhabited mangroves in the world. Since a century ago, this island established as a fishing village. This park is located 1km off shore of the Johor and it is the southernmost part of Johor. This island is covered by mangroves and mudflats completely. In addition, most popular homemade local food products namely *Belacan* and *Cencaluk* sold widely here.

From the Table 1, it is found that a number of facilities such as grab-bar, stairs, shower facilities, washbasin, clothes suspension, accommodation, bed,

wardrobe, fixed or built-in bench or seat are not provided in Kukup Island National Park. Wheelchair users cannot use several facilities such as ramp, texture route, toilet and parking area. In addition, visually impaired tourists cannot use facilities like ramp, stairs, textured route, signage, announcement board, direction signs, warning signs and trail map.

TABLE 1: LIST OF FACILITIES AUDITED IN KUKUP ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

<i>Element</i>	<i>Kukup Island National Park</i>			
	<i>Wheelchair users</i>	<i>Visual impaired</i>	<i>Hearing impaired</i>	<i>Elderly & pregnant ladies</i>
<i>a) Accessibility</i>				
Ramp	√	√	√	√
Handrail	√	√	√	√
Grab-bar	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Footpath or walkways and sideways	√	√	√	√
Main entrance	√	√	√	√
Stairs	N/A	√	√	√
Textured route	√	√	√	√
<i>b) Spatial</i>				
Toilet	√	√	√	√
Parking area	√	√	√	√
Shower facilities	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Washbasin	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Refreshment building	√	√	√	√
Clothes suspension	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Accommodation facilities	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Briefing room	√	√	√	√
Gazebo wakaf	√	√	√	√
<i>c) Supporting facilities</i>				
Bed facilities	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wardrobe facilities	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>d) Supporting facilities</i>				
Fixed or built-in bench or seat	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Signage	√	√	√	√
Announcement board	√	√	√	√
Direction signs	√	√	√	√
Warning signs	√	√	√	√
Trail map	√	√	√	√

Legend:

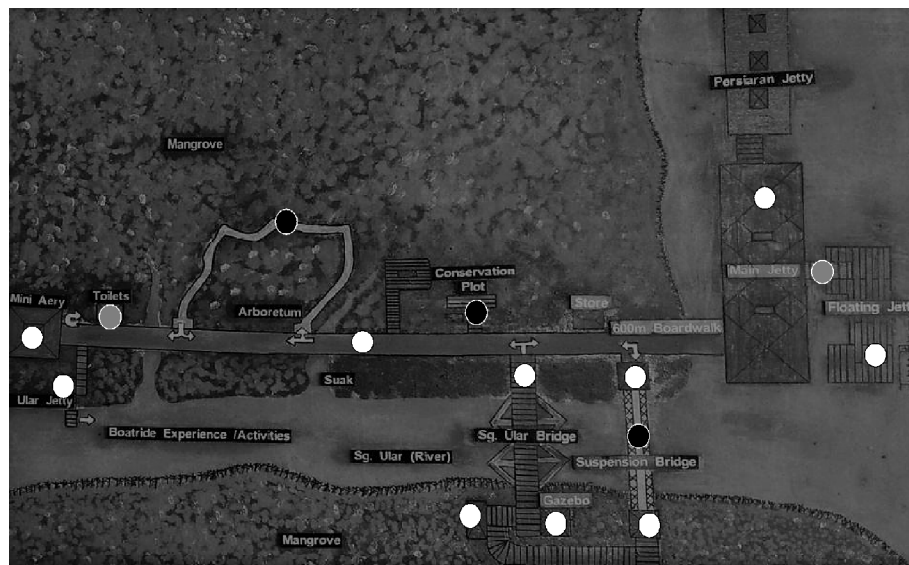
√ Facility can be accessible by the disabled tourists

- Facility cannot be assessed

N/A Facility is not available

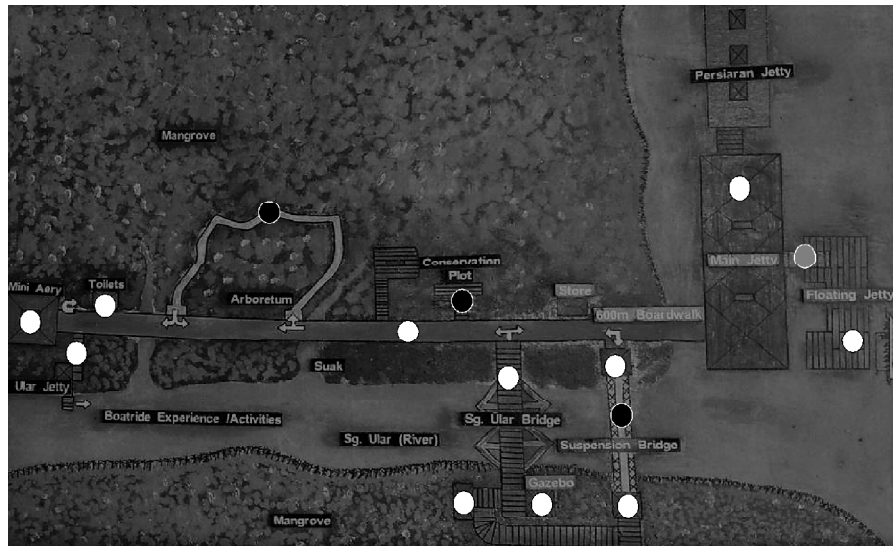
The tourists usually visit this national park to see the mangrove plantation and the another attraction of this park is the biggest mangrove tree in Peninsular of Malaysia. To attract more tourists to this park, Johor National Park Corporation need to provide the accessible trail map to indicate the accessible areas for the disabled so that none of the tourists will be excluded from visiting this park. Based on Table 1, accessible trail map is developed according to the disabled category as shown in Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3. Three (3) areas clearly identified and marked as accessible, partially accessible and not accessible. Tourists can access the areas with accessible symbol independently but then they need assistance when accessing the areas with partially accessible symbol. On the other hand, they cannot access the areas with not accessible symbol. This trail map is generated based on the current facilities.

Wheelchair users definitely cannot use the suspension bridge, arboretum and conversation plot but they can use other facilities provided there. Basically, the hearing impaired tourists can access all the areas easily, all the they need is the tour guides with sign language proficiency to help them to understand the history of the place better. Tourists who are visually impaired also cannot use a number of the facilities provided like wheelchair users namely suspension bridge, arboretum and conversation plot.



Legend:
 ○ Accessible ● Partially accessible ● Not accessible

Figure 1: Level of accessibility in Kukup Island for wheelchair users, pregnant ladies, elderly



Legend:

- Accessible
- Partially accessible
- Not accessible

Figure 2: Level of accessibility in Kukup Island for visually impaired



Legend:

- Accessible
- Partially accessible
- Not accessible

Figure 3: Level of accessibility in Kukup Island for hearing impaired

5. CONCLUSION

From Table 1, we know that not all the facilities provided in Kukup Island National Park can be accessed by all category of the disabled tourists. Therefore, a trail map is needed to direct the disabled tourists in a right trail to avoid unwanted incidents or accidents. As everyone knows, the main function of a trail map is to be used as assistance in navigation and it can symbolize the specific amount of information of park areas with a single piece of map, hence this map need to be comprehension stating information about accessibility. We must bear in mind that not all the disability is visible therefore, we need to provide facilities which is ready to be used by all type of people regardless their physical conditions. In a nutshell, National Park meant to be a leisure place whereby every one of us wants to be included and experienced the holidays as others. Accessibility concept need to include everyone without separating anyone from the social activities.

In the current rapid development of a municipality, this research clearly highlighting social issues of concern to dispose of discontent among those who are minority. Other than, providing an efficient facility management system, the authorities need to have standards or guidelines for the design of the internal and external of public recreational parks for the use of all kinds of people to practice equality. At present, many recreational parks cannot be accessed by the people with disabilities (PwDs) due to lack of concern and ignorance among the society. People with disabilities who are been categorised as minority groups usually discriminated when it comes about rights to travel. PwDs often perceived as weak and has low interest level to explore the beauty of the nature. In many situations, society norms and social attitude generally create stereotype and discrimination which leads to inequality in the society.

Generally, when PwDs plans to choose national parks especially as their tour destination, their wishes will be limited by the barriers which will be faced them in the national parks due to their limited physical capability. This situation is worsened by the inaccessible facilities which are provided, resulting in PwDs to have low tendency in visiting national parks. Accessible facilities are not enough to solve inequality issue but we need design for all' which does not exclude anyone from using it. When we get aged, we tend to be physically weak, at that moment we will definitely look for accessible facilities hence implementation of accessible concept in the national parks will not be a waste but it will be out future investment.

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