

Accessible Tourism Challenges and Development Issues in Tourist Facilities and Attraction Sites of the Amhara Region World Heritage Sites, Ethiopia

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Abstract *Tourism is believed to be a tool for accommodating individuals with different needs. But, it is still far from entertaining the interest of people with limited ability. For such shortcomings, accessible tourism can be taken as the best remedy. The aim of this study is to evaluate accessible tourism challenges and development issues in hotels and attraction sites. Based on the assessment most of the tourist standard hotels have tried to fulfil basic accessibility facilities like ramps, telephone, accessible drop-off area, etc on the other hand, most of them have failed to fulfil elevators, pushchair, shower chair, bed risers etc. In the attractions assessment, compared to the Royal enclosure of Gondar, the Rock hewn churches of Lalibela are trying to improve the site and are constructing facilities in and around. Generally, there are efforts to make tourism accessible in Amhara Region; but, still there is a lot to do.*

Keywords: Accessibility, Disability, Limited Ability, Tourist Facility, Attraction

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is now one of the largest and most important industries in the world in terms of employment creation and generation of foreign revenue (UNDP, 2011). According to UNWTO (2015), International tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) hit a record 1133 million worldwide in 2014, up from 1087 million in 2013. Likewise, international tourism receipts earned by destinations worldwide have grown to US\$ 1245 billion in 2014 up from US\$ 1197 billion in 2013. Besides, tourism today represents 9% of global GDP, 30% of the world's export services and one in every 11 jobs worldwide (UNWTO, 2015). Simultaneously, in Ethiopia tourism is becoming one of the important sectors contributing a lot in the social, cultural, and economic development aspects of the country (MoCT, 2011).

The provision of safe, convenient and economical transport and other tourism-related infrastructure is a key factor for the

success of tourism (UNWTO, 2013). That is why businesses in the tourism sector compete intensely with each other on quality, price, service offering, and the charm. Accessible businesses are one additional attraction for the customers and it gives businesses a significant competitive advantage (Westcott, 2004; Akinci, 2013). Accessible tourism also enables people with access requirements including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed products, services, and environments (Luiza, 2010). As the demand for accessible tourism for all is growing, it is now seen as an opportunity rather than an obligation. Accessible tourism benefits everyone and then when more individuals enjoy the opportunity to travel, the tourism industry gets more visitors, longer seasons and new incomes (UNWTO, 2013).

According to the World Health Organization (2011) and Akinci (2013) there is approximately 1 billion persons with

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disabilities in the world. This equates to approximately 15% of the world population having a physical, mental, or sensory disability. In industrialized countries up to 40% of individuals over the age of 65 suffer from a chronic illness or disability that limits their daily activities (Buj, 2010). Even if disabled people have the means to travel, they may not be able to do so because of the lack of accessibility, which restricts the possibility of travel for a significant portion of the population (Buj 2010). People with accessibility requirements have the desire and the right to travel like everyone else. However their travel experiences are still highly restricted by physical accessibility barriers such as transportation constraints, inaccessible accommodation, and tourism sites as well as information barriers such as a general lack of information or poorly designed web sites (Buhalis, Eichhorn, Michopoulou & Miller, 2005), (UNWTO, 2013).

Accessible tourism is also a question of human right; article 9 of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities state that states parties must ensure that communications and information services, transportation systems, buildings and other structures are designed and constructed so that they can be used, entered or reached by persons with disabilities. In addition article 30 of the convention clearly declare that persons with disabilities have the right to equal access to play, relaxation, amusement and physical pastimes (UN, 2008). It is not only the convention different national and international legislations give the right to access tourism facilities and attraction sites for disabled individuals.

Providing information on accessibility and improving access benefits a wide range of people who want to travel, but who may find it difficult (Westcott, 2004). It is clear that older people and (most severely) disabled persons face the biggest barriers regarding accessibility. Therefore they are groups that can benefit most from accessible tourism. The total group that will actually benefit from accessible tourism is a lot larger compared to the number of people with a disability. People of all ages and abilities can benefit from accessible tourism: small children benefit from being able to reach things that are placed within reach of wheelchair users, both children and visitors who don't speak the local language benefit from the use of pictograms and clear information and signs. Even visitors who are in a hurry or may have forgotten their glasses can benefit from good signage. Improvement of the accessibility in tourism will therefore improve the quality and comfort of all travellers, visitors and guests (ENAT, 2007). Last but certainly not least, it is important to mention that the target group of accessible tourism isn't limited to tourists with and without disabilities, but includes also people working within the tourism sector, policy makers, etc. It is clear that efforts to improve accessibility of hotels, transport, travel agencies, etc. aren't only for the benefit of tourists. Another important economic aspect (besides from the higher market segment attracted) is the

creation of new employment opportunities for people with disabilities (ENAT, 2007).

Facilities and destinations should also be aware that many barriers can be easily over-come with careful consideration and at little cost. For example, disability awareness training will not only help ensure service that is sensitive and inclusive, but will also train staff to identify access problems and suggest improvements (Westcott, 2004). Despite the fact that modern society is increasingly aware of the need to integrate people with any type of disabilities tourism industry worldwide is not adapted to the needs of those requiring accessible tourism (Luiza 2010). Luiza also point out very little research regarding accessible tourism and perception of tourism stakeholders that accessible tourism is "low yield" as the main reasons for inaccessible tourism. Historically, disabilities have been one of the under-researched topics; this is even truer for the topic of "tourism and disabilities". The academic community was relatively slow to attribute any importance to disabled people's political struggle for a decent life, let alone recognize the potential of disability research (Buj, 2010).

To date, no confirmed statistical data on number of arrivals, travel behaviour and travel spending is available for travellers with disabilities in Ethiopia. One character that the tourism sector in Ethiopia is known is its huge reliance on the senior tourist market from the developed nations. According to literatures the relationship between disability and ageing is undoubted and it presents a challenge for the global tourism industry (Darcy, 2006). Conducting a study in this neglected discipline, but underutilized tourism market, will enable countries like Ethiopia to capitalize on their potential market and give additional competitive advantage.

Even though, tourism is one of the fastest growing industry and a phenomenon that promotes integrity, coexistence and solidarity; it has failed to accommodate peoples with special access demand. Today the majority of hotels, transportation facilities, and tourist sites are not physically accessible for many people with disabilities and mobility problems. In addition, accurate information about the access characteristics of destinations and venues is lacking. In general, it is also rare for personnel at tourist sites to be trained in how to "meet and greet" people with a disability (ENAT, 2007). Lack of accessible facilities lead to high expenditure and expensive holiday, Buj found that peoples with access requirement tend to choose more expensive hotels than the cheap one, because of the lack of accessible facilities and services at cheaper hotels (2010). It indicates their preference of high quality hotels influenced by availability of facilities than by their purchasing power; which in turn raise the cost of their holiday.

Despite the fact that, accessible tourism needs additional effort and financial investment; it is advantageous for

businesses and attraction to serve this potential market and equally helping peoples with special access needs. It is also not only disabled tourists' benefit from accessible tourism. Since locals and tourists share transport, public urban spaces, and buildings, making them accessible has the potential to benefit a large amount of people (Buj 2010). Due to the way our surroundings, transport systems, and services are designed, people with disabilities and people experiencing problems regarding mobility or access to information are often unable to enjoy the same freedom to travel as other peoples (UNWTO, 2013). Access problems are universal challenges, but it is worse in developing countries like Ethiopia. If countries in Western Europe are struggling to accommodate people with special access demands, it is easy to imagine how it will be worse in developing nations, whose main focus is still meeting basic facility demands.

Ethiopia is one of the countries that tourism is growing and hotel investments are booming. It is good to see the industry rise but, the question is, are we fulfilling the demand of our tourists. There is no doubt that many of the tourist in Ethiopia are seniors and the senior market is growing and they are becoming more active, have high levels of spending power and are looking for new experiences in their travels. The Population of industrialized countries is stagnating, due to this demographic composition of the population is changing radically while the proportion of young people is falling drastically (Holloway, Humphreys & Davidson (2009); Middleton, Fyall, Morgan, and Ranchhod (2009)). Again the question here is, are we coping up with the growing market and are we designing our booming tourist facilities to the level of our customers' needs.

This study tries to explore accessible tourism challenges and development issues at tourist facilities and attraction sites. There are a number of tourist standard hotels in Amhara region, this study identifies the challenges related to giving access to peoples with disability and mobility problems. In addition, the study also assess the major challenges at selected the attraction sites of Gondar and Lalibela world heritages.

General Objective of the Paper

The general objective of this research project is to assess accessible tourism challenges and development issues in tourist facilities and attraction sites of Amhara region world heritage sites.

Specific Objectives

- To determine existing accessible tourism challenges in tourist facilities of Amhara region world heritage sites.
- To evaluate existing accessible tourism challenges in attraction sites of Amhara region world heritage sites.

- To identify accessible tourism development issues in tourist facilities and attraction sites of Amhara region world heritage sites.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

In this study a descriptive research design is applied to assess accessible tourism challenges and development issue in tourist facilities and attraction sites. The descriptive research design is selected because it gives insight into the present challenges and attempts to determine the status of the phenomenon under investigation. Besides identifying present conditions, it also points out present needs of the condition under investigation (Singh, 2006). So it can help to identify the existing challenges of accessible tourism. It is also an appropriate design to identify possible facility needs in tourist facilities and attraction sites. In addition, a mixed research approach was used in gathering data. This method is chosen because it provides an advantage to adapt the strength and avoid the weaknesses of using a single (qualitative or quantitative) research method (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In this study, the qualitative data gathered from interview of government officials, destination managers, and document analysis has been used to support information and conclusions drawn from checklist.

Population

The populations for this study are hotel managers/ employees, culture and tourism office employees, destination managers, and tourist guides.

Source of Data

This study used both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data was collected through interview, and checklist. The secondary sources of data were other studies, and reports of government offices and associations.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size Determination

To select samples from the hotels, the researchers used purposive sampling method. This method is applied to select the most appropriate hotels which are currently tourist standard and serving most visitors. The sample selection was based on the recommendation of culture and tourism offices in all cities/towns. Similar with the hotels, the researchers selected four cities from Amhara region based on their tourist flow.

For study purpose four cities in Amhara region were included, Gondar, Lalibela, Bahirdar and Debark. These four cities were selected considering their importance in the tourism business of the region. Gondar, Lalibela, and Debark are the home of the three world heritage sites of the region. Bahirdar is also a regional capital and a tourist hot spot. Without any doubt these cities take the lion share of the tourist arrival and receipt of the region. After consulting local culture and tourism offices hotels were selected from the four cities. From Gondar 6 hotels, Lalibela 6 hotels, Debark 5 hotels, and Bahirdar 5 hotels were included.

For the assessment of the accessibility of attraction sites, the eleven rock hewn churches of Lalibela and the royal enclosure in Gondar were selected. The researchers select these two sites based on the nature of the sites and current accessibility needs. The SMNP was dropped out considering the difficulty of providing such facilities and unavailability of access. From attractions in Gondar the Royal Enclosure is selected as for evaluation. From Lalibela the eleven rock hewn churches of Lalibela are selected as a sample.

Regarding the sample size determination, the researchers have applied their judgment to determine the size of respondents for interview. 4 tour guides from Gondar and Lalibela; 4 culture and tourism officials (one from Lalibela, one from SMNP and one from Gondar, one from Bahirdar); 6 hotel managers from Gondar and 6 from Lalibela and 5 from SMNP and Bahirdar were included.

Data Collection Instrument

The research team decided to use check list to identify what facilities are available and which are missing from facilities and attraction sites. A check list including all the necessary accessible tourism facilities was developed based on UNWTO (2013), recommendations on accessible tourism and ENAT, (2007) accessible tourism services and facilities. Even though, the above mentioned recommendations include very diverse facility and services and sophisticated technologies; the check list incorporates minimum requirements to create access for facilities and attractions. All interviews were conducted using open ended interview and it was recorded by voice recorder and notes were also taken throughout the course of the interview.

Data Analysis Procedure

The interpretation of data collected from checklist was done using descriptive statistics. Cross-tabulation was applied to compare the availability of facility in each city, frequency and percentage were used to described data. For the data gathered from interview, descriptive approach utilizing summary data and unattributed quotes to illustrate dominant issues in respondents' own words or legal document is applied. So, the processes of transcribing /interpreting from Amharic (local language) to English as well as identifying themes, coding, and clustering was carried out.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The assessment of accessibility in this study was conducted in two dimensions the first one is from the tourist facilities, hotels, dimension and the second one is from tourist attraction sites perspective. The following discussion reviles the result of this study based on the two dimensions discussed above.

Accessibility of Hotels

Accommodation facilities are required to host people with disabilities, older people, pregnant women, and families with young children and those who have other functional, health or mobility limitations.

Unnecessary barriers should be the starting point for thinking about access. Instead of concentrating on an individual's impairment, tourist facilities and destinations should focus on the barriers to access created by poor physical layout; architectural barriers, such as narrow doors and stairs; the lack of basic equipment; and the way in which services are delivered (Westcott, 2004). This study tried to access accessibility of hotels based on 29 accessibility facilities.

The hotels in the four cities have performed well in some of the facilities and on the other hand they have failed to fulfil some of them. The following tables and discussions uncover the facilities that are available and facilities which are missing in selected hotels of Amhara region.

Facilities Missing from Majority of the Hotels

The following discussion illustrates facilities missing from majority of the hotels as indicated on the table below.

Table 1: Facilities Missing from Majority of the Hotels

	Lifts (elevators) wide and deep with tactile buttons; visual and audible indication of floors		Bed risers (to increase height of the bed)		Baby buggy / pushchair		Shower chair or wall-mounted shower seating		Restaurant furniture designed to be used by wheelchair users		Cooling fan		Fan heater		Support handrails beside toilets		Support handrails beside baths and overhead showers		Flashing or vibrating alerts for smoke/fire alarms		Restaurant furniture designed to be used by children's		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Location of the hotel	4	2	0	6	0	6	0	6	2	4	4	2	4	2	3	3	4	2	6	0	4	2	
	4	1	0	5	0	5	1	4	1	4	3	2	0	5	0	5	0	5	3	2	3	2	
	0	5	0	5	0	5	1	4	1	4	0	5	0	5	1	4	1	4	0	5	1	4	
	0	6	0	6	0	6	0	6	1	5	1	5	1	5	3	3	1	5	0	6	1	5	
Total		8	14	0	22	0	22	2	20	5	17	8	14	5	17	7	15	6	16	9	13	9	13

Source: Survey 2016

Lifts (Elevators) – Wide and Deep with Tactile Buttons; Visual and Audible Indication of Floors

Lifts (elevators) are one of the accessibility facilities included in this study. Among the 22 hotels assessed only 8 of them were having elevators; the remaining 14 hotels do not have elevator or any other lifting machine. The comparison between the four cities indicates that; all the hotels at Lalibela and Debarke do not have elevator. In Gondar only two hotels out of the 6 hotels don't have lift; while at Bahirdar only one hotel out of the five hotels don't have lift. All hotels included in this study are at least one story buildings, but most of them lack lifting machine.

In terms of providing elevator for wheelchair users, senior tourists, and person's mobility problem, hotels in Gondar and Bahirdar are in a good condition. The assessment also shows that, the problem is worse in Lalibela and Debarke.

The problem with most of the existing elevators is; in some of the hotels, even if there is an elevator it become out of service repeatedly. Though, international accessibility standards indicate that elevator control panels shall have visual/audio signals, most of the elevators don't give such signal during evaluation.

Baby Buggy / Pushchair

The above table assesses the existence of baby buggy / pushchair in hotels. The main function of baby buggy / pushchairs is to carry a baby lying down like a low pram and then be reconfigured to carry the child in the forward-facing position. Sadly, all the hotels under this study don't have push chairs. This makes all hotels inaccessible for visitors with infant child/toddlers.

Restaurant Furniture Designed to be Used by Wheelchair Users

The above table shows assessment of restaurant furniture designed to be used by wheelchair users. The result revealed that 17 hotels out of 22 don't have furniture designed to be used by wheelchair users. Only five hotels have restaurant furniture designed to be used by wheelchair users. The problem is almost equally observed at all cities.

Besides the furniture, in restaurants, cafés and bars, aisles should be wide enough to allow visitors to move around easily when the tables and chairs are in use. It is important to have some tables without fixed seating and enough room underneath the table to allow a wheelchair to fit underneath comfortably.

Restaurant Furniture Designed to be Used by Children's

Restaurant furniture's which are suitable for children's offer comfort for the child's and their families.

Regarding restaurant furniture designed to be used by children's, 13 hotels out of 22 doesn't have furniture designed

for children's. Only 9 hotels have furniture designed for children customers. Out of the 9 hotels 7 of them are from Bahirdar (3) and Gondar (4). In Lalibela and Debarke only 2 hotels provided furniture for children's.

Cooling Fan

As the above table shows, 14 of the hotels doesn't have cooling fan in their rooms or public areas. Only 8 hotels have cooling fans. Similar with the other facilities discussed above hotels at Gondar and Lalibela have performed well in this respect. 4 out of 6 at Gondar and 3 out of 5 at Bahirdar have cooling fan in their rooms or public areas. All the hotels at debarke and 5 out of 6 in Lalibela doesn't have cooling fans.

Balancing temperature level based on customer's preference and up to their comfort level is required from facilities which claim they are offering internationally acceptable standardized service. But, it is not the case on the ground, 63.6% of hotels included in this study don't have cooling fans.

Fan Heater

Similar with cooling fan, 17 hotels lack fan heater. Only 5 hotels were reported to have heating fans in their rooms or public areas. All the hotels at Debarke and Bahirdar and only 5 at Lalibela don't have cooling fan. The only positive thing is 4 hotels out of 6 were having fan heater.

Surprisingly, Debarke is known to have a very cool weather; but, there is no hotel which can make the room temperature hot during cold seasons. At Bahirdar, some of the hotel personnel's insist that there is no need to have such facility since Bahirdar is a hot city.

Support Handrails Beside Toilets

Support handrail is a rail fixed to posts or a wall for people to hold on for support. Regarding this, 15 out of 22 hotels lack in their toilets. Only 7 hotels were found to have toilet handrails.

Handrails offer support and stability to a person using sanitary facilities, for example, while sitting down and standing up, transferring to and from a wheelchair, and whilst adjusting clothes. People with mobility impairments will need to know if there are accessible toilets at the facility. Handrails should be provided with rounded forms for better grip. Handrails shall not rotate within their fittings.

Sanitary facilities should be designed to accommodate children and adults of all ages, all sizes and all abilities who may be independent, accompanied, or assisted. When designing a facility, consideration should be given to the diverse ways in which people interact with their surrounding environment.

Support Handrails Beside Baths and Overhead Showers

An accessible guest room should have an en-suite accessible shower room. As the above table indicates, 16 hotels don't have support handrails beside baths and overhead showers. Only 6 hotels have handrails beside their baths and overhead showers. In this regard, hotels in Gondar have performed well.

Many disabled persons rely upon handrails to maintain balance or prevent serious falls. Handrails are extremely important features and must be designed to be easy to grasp and to provide a firm and comfortable grip so that the hand can slide along the rail without obstruction.

Bed Risers (to increase the height of the bed)

Bed risers are designed for anyone with decreased strength, endurance, balance and sleeping problems where they need their head elevated. Many senior age people can fit into this category. Some people sleep better with the head elevated so they only use risers on one end. They are also a great way to reduce falls risk as they make it easier for an aging or disabled person to get in and out of bed.

The assessment of existence of bed risers at hotels indicated that all the hotels (22) under this study don't have such facility.

Flashing or Vibrating Alerts for Smoke/Fire Alarms

Regarding flashing or vibrating alerts for smoke/fire alarms, only 9 hotels have it. The remaining 13 hotels don't have flashing or vibrating alerts for smoke/fire alarms. All the hotels in Gondar have such alarm systems. All the hotels in Lalibela and Debark and 2 hotels in Bahirdar don't have alarms which alert guests during fire accident.

The typical fire alarm consists of a bell or siren. Consideration must be given for alerting occupants with hearing difficulties. An audible alarm is the most usual way of alerting people to an alarm, and is the best way of alerting someone with a visual impairment. Vibrating pillow pads are very useful at hotels,

guesthouses, or anywhere that provides accommodation to alert a hearing impaired person in the event of an alarm. In addition, a visual alarm is a useful addition to the usual audio alarm system to warn those with hearing impairments of an emergency.

Shower Chair or Wall-Mounted Shower Seating

The data on the above table shows that 20 hotels under this study don't have Shower chair or wall-mounted shower seating. Only two hotels, 1 from Debark and 1 from Bahirdar, were having shower seating in their bath rooms.

Wall mounted shower seats assist disabled and elderly peoples during shower/bath by giving comfort; so that washing can be achieved whilst maintaining care and dignity. A shower seat should be provided that is self-draining, non-slip and with rounded edge; should be on the wall nearest to the controls. All seats should be checked and tested regularly to ensure the fixings are secure and that the seat is weight-bearing.

Providing a bathroom that is large enough for wheelchair users will make access easier for all occupants and visitors. The increased space afforded by an accessible bathroom will benefit many households, including families with young children.

On the above mentioned facilities and features some of them are not totally provided by all hotels. On the other hand, some of them are provided by some of the hotels but the majorities lack them.

Facilities Available in Majority of the Hotels

Similar to the above discussion the table below and the discussion under it shows facilities missing from majority of the hotels as indicated on the table below.

To emphasis on the issue all facilities are not missing; some are available in majority of the hotels as part of their physical buildings or services they offer.

Table 2: Facilities Available in Majority of the Hotels

	Telephone	Drop-off area for motor vehicle passengers at or near the front entrance		Access routes that are flat (without steps) and with a stable surface		Entrance doors with level access, sheltered from rain and well lit		Door handles – easy to reach and operate		Wide doors		Wide Corridors		Wide space to pass between dining tables, display stands		Clear turning spaces in rooms, meeting rooms, entrance halls		Free space beside toilets for side transfer		Clear general signage and understandable pictograms		No smoking policy or designated non-smoking zones in all service areas	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Location of the hotel	Gondar	6	0	4	2	4	2	6	0	6	0	5	1	5	1	5	1	5	1	6	0	4	2
	Bahirdar	5	0	4	1	2	3	5	0	5	0	5	0	5	0	4	0	4	1	5	0	4	1
	Debank	4	1	4	1	2	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	5	0	2	3	0	5
	Lalibela	3	3	6	0	3	6	6	0	6	0	6	0	6	0	6	0	6	0	4	2	6	0
Total		18	4	18	4	14	8	20	2	20	2	19	3	18	4	17	4	20	2	17	5	14	8

Source: Survey, 2016

Drop-off Area for Motor Vehicle Passengers at or Near the Front Entrance

Regarding drop-off area for motor vehicle passengers, almost 18 (82%) of the hotels have accessible drop-off area near the front entrance. Only 4 hotels were labeled having inaccessible entrance for motor vehicle passengers.

Accessible drop-off areas are beneficial for picking up and dropping off people with physical limitations, parents with children, people carrying loads. Generally speaking, most of the hotels don't have drop off area problem.

Access Routes That are Flat (without steps) and with a Stable Surface

Access routes that are flat (ramps) and with a stable surface, 14 of the 22 hotels assessed have ramps. The remaining 8 hotels don't have such facility. The crosstab table shows that, hotels in Bahirdar performed well in providing access routes that are flat; all the hotels in Bahirdar have ramps as alternative for steps. In Gondar 2 hotels, at Debarke 3 hotels, and at Lalibela 3 hotels don't have ramps to be used by wheelchair users.

Ramp is a sloping surface joining two different levels, as at the entrance or between floors of a building. Whenever possible, the built environment should be at the same level or equipped with ramps where there is a change in floor levels. Though, ramps are easy to build, the existing ramps at hotels are limited to entrance doors. There is a great need of ramps at every area which is accessible only by stairs. Ramps should be provided with landings for resting, manoeuvring, and avoiding excessive speed. Handrails should be provided for steps and ramps wherever possible.

Ramps facilitate not just wheelchair users but also people with buggies; people with suitcases or shopping trolleys; people using walking or mobility aids; and people with visual difficulties.

Entrance Doors with Level Access, Sheltered from Rain and Well Lit

Having level access sometimes will not make the hotel accessible; the levelled access has to be near entrance doors. As per the above table, 16 hotels out of 22 have entrance doors with level access, sheltered from rain and well lit. The entrance doors of the remaining 6 hotels don't have either level access, a shelter which protects customers from rain/sun or it is not well lit.

In terms of providing accessible entrance doors, hotels from Lalibela are good; all the hotels included have accessible entrance door. At Bahirdar, 3 hotels entrance door is labelled inaccessible out of 5 hotels. In Gondar, 2 out of 6 and at Debarke, 1 out of five hotels were also found having inaccessible entrance door.

Revolving doors and entrances are very difficult for many visitors, and it is important that there is an alternative direct access point.

Door Handles – Easy to Reach and Operate

As it is illustrated in the above table, door handles of the 20 hotels under investigation are easy to reach and operate. Only 2 hotels are labelled as having door handles which are hard to reach and operate, all the two hotels are from Debarke.

Door handles have to allow user to maintain a neutral body position, use reasonable operating forces and minimize sustained physical effort. It should be selected such as not to require fine finger control, grasping. Handle should be of a lever type rather than circular knob. If possible, automatic doors, swing or sliding, to be preferred to manually operated doors.

Wide Doors

Regarding wideness of hotel room doors; 20 of the hotels under this study have a wide enough door to accommodate wheelchair users, while the other 2 hotels have small doors. Similar with the above description of door handles, the two hotels with small doors are from Debarke town.

Wide Corridors

Based on the data indicated on the above table, 19 of the 22 hotels under this study have a wide corridor. Only 3 hotels have a narrow corridor, 1 hotel from Gondar and 2 hotels from Debarke.

In locations required to be accessible to wheelchair users, corridors and passageways need to be wide enough to allow for wheelchair manoeuvre and for other people to pass.

Wide Space to Pass Between Dining Tables, Display Stands

Concerning the space to pass between dining tables, display stands, 17 hotels were considered as having wider space and four hotels were having a narrow space between dining tables and display stands. One hotel from Bahirdar was partially wide, since some of the sections have wide space and some of them are narrow. 3 hotels from Debarke are the least performer in this aspect.

With relation to space between dining tables and stands, almost all the hotels have a movable space for wheelchair users, people with crutches. Even though the disabled using walking aids can manoeuvre themselves through door between dining tables, display stands, for a comfortable gait a wider passageway is desirable.

Clear Turning Spaces in Rooms, Meeting Rooms, Entrance Halls

Similar with turning space between dining tables and display stands, 17 hotels are found having clear turning spaces in

rooms, meeting rooms, entrance halls and 4 hotels were found having narrow space in their rooms, meeting rooms, and entrance halls.

All areas of buildings and facilities (walks, halls, corridors, aisles, and other spaces) required to be accessible by general public shall be made barrier-free.

Clear General Signage and Understandable Pictograms

Regarding assessment of the existence of general signage and understandable pictograms, like signage indicating rest room, café, restaurant, meeting hall..., the analysis shows most of the hotels (17) have general signage's. The remaining 5 hotels don't have. All the hotels in Gondar and Bahirdar have general signage and pictograms. At Debarke only 2 hotels out of 5 have general signage; while at Lalibela 2 out of the 6 hotels don't have general signage and pictograms.

Signage includes information signs, directional signs, identification (locational) signs and warning (safety) signs. Existences of such signs help customers easily identify the required area or service. Similarly their absence creates confusion on the customers. Clear, well-placed signage that uses recognized symbols or pictograms helps people with reading or cognitive difficulties, and those whose first language is different.

Free Space Beside Toilets for Side Transfer

Sufficient space is required for a wheelchair user to manoeuvre within cubicles and bathrooms, with enough space to enable a wheelchair user to transfer from the wheelchair to the toilet, bath, or shower with or without the help of an assistant.

As the table indicates 19 of the hotels have free space beside toilets for side transfer. Only 2 hotels 1 from Gondar and 1 from Bahirdar were found to have narrow space in their toilets.

Telephone

Telephone is one of the necessary accessibility facilities that have to be provided in hotels. In case of emergency or room service the visitor can contact through phone. In this study 18 of the 22 hotels have telephones; only 4 hotels don't have it. At Lalibela 3 of the 6 hotels don't have telephone.

No Smoking Policy or Designated Non-Smoking Zone

Concerning the no smoking policy or designated non-smoking zone, 13 hotels have non-smoking policy and designated zone. 8 of the hotels don't have any smoking policy and designated zone. One hotel at Bahirdar has non-smoking policy but they don't have a designated non-smoking zone. This problem is worse in Debarke; all the five hotels don't have a policy and non-smoking zone.

To protect and enhance indoor air quality and to contribute to the health and well-being of their guests and employees,

hotels need to apply is the no smoking policy or designated non-smoking zone. In the hotels which have such rules, smoking is prohibited in all the enclosed areas within the facility. This includes guest rooms, common areas, conference and meeting rooms, elevators, stairs, restrooms, pool areas, outside entrance and lobby areas and all other enclosed facilities.

In support of such efforts, the tobacco Control Directive of Ethiopian Food, Medicine and Healthcare Administration and Control Authority (2015) forbids smoking cigarette indoors including recreation places such as hotels, night clubs, restaurants, work places, cinemas, tourist sites, youth centres, metro stations and terminals, hospital and schools. It also allows smoking tobacco at designated smoking areas in some of the facilities.

Summary

Even though, most of the hotels have tried to provide the above mentioned facilities and features; it doesn't mean that all of the hotels are providing them. Some of the hotels are still missing such facilities and features.

The other assessment conducted in this study is comparison between the four cities. Generally speaking hotels in Bahirdar and Gondar are more accessible than that of hotels from Debarke and Lalibela.

In addition, some of the facilities are available in balanced condition. It is to mean that, they are available in almost half of the hotels and missing in the other half. The facilities and features are the following.

- Signage indicating accessible areas and features:
- Manual wheelchair
- Choice of hard/soft mattress
- Remote controls for TV
- Glass doors and large windows marked with contrast warning signs or patterns

ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ATTRACTION SITES

Different studies show that for travellers with activity limitations, the availability of adequate means of moving in and around tourist attractions, access to information, personal care influences their choice of destination.

Accessibility of the royal enclosure (Gondar) and the Eleven Rock hewn churches of Lalibela were assessed based on twelve criteria mentioned below.

1. Parking spaces clearly designated for disabled persons
2. Access routes that are flat (without steps) and with a stable surface
3. Entrance doors with level access

4. Enough direction signs
5. Clear general signage
6. Signage indicating accessible areas and features
7. Manual wheelchairs
8. Guiding service with sign language
9. Guides with required language skill (English, German, French...)
10. For customers with a visual impairment, information provided in alternative formats such as large print (16 point fonts and larger), audiotape or in an electronic version and Braille.
11. For people who are deaf or have a hearing impairment, information provided in written formats, such as presentation of text messages on TV screens
12. Information about the attraction presented through pictograms

The assessment which is conducted based on the above twelve criterion indicated that, the royal enclosure of Gondar is less accessible than Lalibela.

Gondar (The Royal Enclosure)

Among the criteria mentioned above, the royal enclosure fulfils only one. The only fulfilled criterion is availability of guides with multilingual ability. The guiding service in Gondar is one of the best throughout the country. There are guides who can speak multiple international languages.

Comparatively, the royal enclosure is easy to move inside than rock hewn churches of Lalibela. But, it still fails to provide flat access routes. It is possible to make the walk ways flat and easy to push over wheelchairs, baby buggies, and even to allow peoples with visual problems walk safely. Though, the walk way is there, it is not flat.

The other main problem is absence of both general and accessibility signage's in the compound. There are some signages but if it is compared with Lalibela it is not significant. The signage is mainly directional and indicating the name and year of construction of the palaces. There is no accessibility signage inside the compound.

Lalibela (the eleven rock hewn churches of Ethiopia)

Lalibela is hugely improving its accessibility. There is a new construction around the church which is making the churches and their surrounding beautiful and accessible. The project which is supported by World Bank is conducting resettlement, road construction (walkways), signage, rest places for guests, pictograms, toilets (including wheelchair toilet), beautification.

Among the above mentioned criterion, Lalibela fulfils the following

- Enough direction signs
- Clear general signage
- Signage indicating accessible areas and features
- Guides with required language skill (English, German, French...)
- Information about the attraction presented through pictograms

The biggest improvement at Lalibela is provision of direction and general signage around the churches. The other good experience from Lalibela is provision of pictograms which provide information about the churches and ceremonies. There is also signage indicating accessible facility like the toilet.

Though, Lalibela is improving a lot in terms of making the attractions accessible; it is far from being accessible for all visitors. The main challenge is it is not easy to move inside the churches, it is also difficult to make it easy. It is understandable that it is not easy to build new facilities by changing the features of the heritage. So that, it is a must to find out alternative ways of making it accessible; like arranging personal support for peoples who need assistance; arranging visiting points for peoples with mobility problem.

The site also needs to improve providing ramp at some places, for example the museum. The museum is a newly constructed building but, it doesn't have ramp. So that, it is easy to build ram at the entrance.

Similar with Gondar, there is no one who could give guiding service through sign languages. Even though there are professional tour guides who are equipped with multi language abilities; it still lacks interpretation with sign language.

The other challenge at Lalibela is the existing pictograms might be difficult to read for some of the visitors. There must be also provision of information presentation of text messages on TV screens. It is also better and inclusive if information's are provided in large print, audiotape or in an electronic version and Braille.

CONCLUSION

Accessibility refers to how easy it is for everybody to approach, enter and use buildings, outdoor areas and other facilities, independently, without the need for special arrangements. At tourist facilities and attraction sites accessibility is very crucial. Even if accessible tourism needs additional effort and financial investment; it is advantageous for businesses and attraction to serve this potential market and equally helping peoples with special access needs.

The study found that most of the hotels in the four cities failed to provide elevators, pushchair, restaurant furniture

designed to be used by wheelchair users and children's, cooling and heating fans, support handrails beside toilets, baths and overhead showers, bed risers, flashing or vibrating alerts for smoke/fire alarms, shower chair and glass doors and window markings.

On the other side, most of the hotels performed well in terms of providing accessible drop-off area for motor vehicle passengers, entrance doors with level access, easy to reach and operate door handles, wide doors and corridors, clear general and accessibility signage, free space beside toilets for side transfer and designing no smoking policy or designated non-smoking zones.

In addition, the comparison made between the four cities shows that, generally speaking hotels in Bahirdar and Gondar are more accessible than that of hotels from Debarke and Lalibela.

Accessibility assessment of the royal enclosure (Gondar) and the Eleven Rock hewn churches of Lalibela indicated that the royal enclosure of Gondar is less accessible than Lalibela rock hewn churches. Lalibela is hugely improving its accessibility. There is a new construction around the church which is making the churches and their surrounding beautiful and accessible. Though, Lalibela is improving a lot in terms of making the attractions accessible; it is far from being called accessible for all visitors.

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