

**MAKING A TOURISM DESTINATION ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL:
PERSPECTIVES FROM TOURISM PROFESSIONALS AND NGO
MANAGERS - THE CASE OF IZMIR**

Işıl Özgen *

ABSTRACT

According to WHO (World Health Organization) 15% of the world population has a sort of disability. The population of the disabled people is increasing due to aging population, wars, disasters and accidents. This situation leads the built environment and transportation accessibility as a basic need. The study has been conducted to identify how accessible tourism activities can be realized in a destination like Izmir, based on the point of view of tourism professionals and NGO's working on disability. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Data was analyzed according to content analysis technique and classified as measures for accessible tourism destination.

Keywords: *Accessible tourism, Disabilities, Destination, Izmir*

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INTRODUCTION

Based on World Health Organization's facts and figures, people with disabilities (PwD) around the world are about one billion (WHO, 2013) which is a significant rate that can not be ignored. PwD have the similar needs and wants for tourism activities as others. At this point accessible tourist destinations is not a 'minority issue' and compliance with accessibility standards is a must. (Eichhorn & Buhalis, 2007; Kim *et al.*, 2012). While some PwD never travel, there are also actively travelling ones (Yau *et al.*, 2004) which constitutes accessible tourism as an emerging segment of the tourism demand (UNWTO, 2013).

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Accessible tourism is referred under different names such as 'disabled tourism', 'inclusive tourism', 'barrier-free tourism' and 'tourism for all'. Under which name it is referred accessible tourism is about '*making tourism easy for all people, irrespective of their gender, age, physical status and income level to enjoy tourism experiences*' (Münch & Ulrich, 2011). PwD that have been neglected or partially ignored from tourism activities in the past is now welcomed by destinations with the ongoing attempts of global organizations, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGO). United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities provided the base for European Union's Disability Strategy 2010-2020. European Union is encouraging accessibility both for tourist destinations and cities to create a barrier-free Europe and promote Accessible Tourism by preparing necessary legislation, supporting non-profit organizations (for e.g.: ENAT -European Network for Accessible Tourism), publishing handbooks specific to tourism sector, co-financing and launching awards such as Access City Award, Excellence Award for Accessible Tourism. The activities mentioned above are to inspire projects, highlight innovative measures and share know-how in order to meet the needs of the disabled people (EU, 2013).

In terms of accessible cities and destinations, EU's disability strategy covers four key areas of accessibility: built environment and public spaces, transport and related infrastructure, information and communication (including new technologies), public facilities and services (ICEVI, 2011). Without those key areas to be solved, accessibility issues could be neither complete nor convenient for a destination.

Destination Decision Process for Disabled Travelers

PwD have much more details and challenges to consider before and during travelling to a destination (Yau *et al.*, 2004). Travel agents still play a significant role in the destination choice and their success depend, mostly on the ability to provide products that is suitable for their customer base needs and wants. A travel agent, that has knowledge about hotels, transportation modes and attractions whether they are suitable or not for different types of disability can be much more helpful to customers with disabilities (CwD) and able to orientate the clientele or organize the right tour for them. McKercher *et al.* (2003) remarked in their studies that PwD are largely dissatisfied with the performance of the retail travel agency sector and their failure to service this market affects them to benefit from tourism. Öztürk *et al.* (2008) also stated that travel agencies and hotels should have necessary literature to introduce themselves to PwD customer base.

Travel within a destination involves many aspects such as: mode of transport (by private vehicle, car rental, air, train, cruise, bus etc.),

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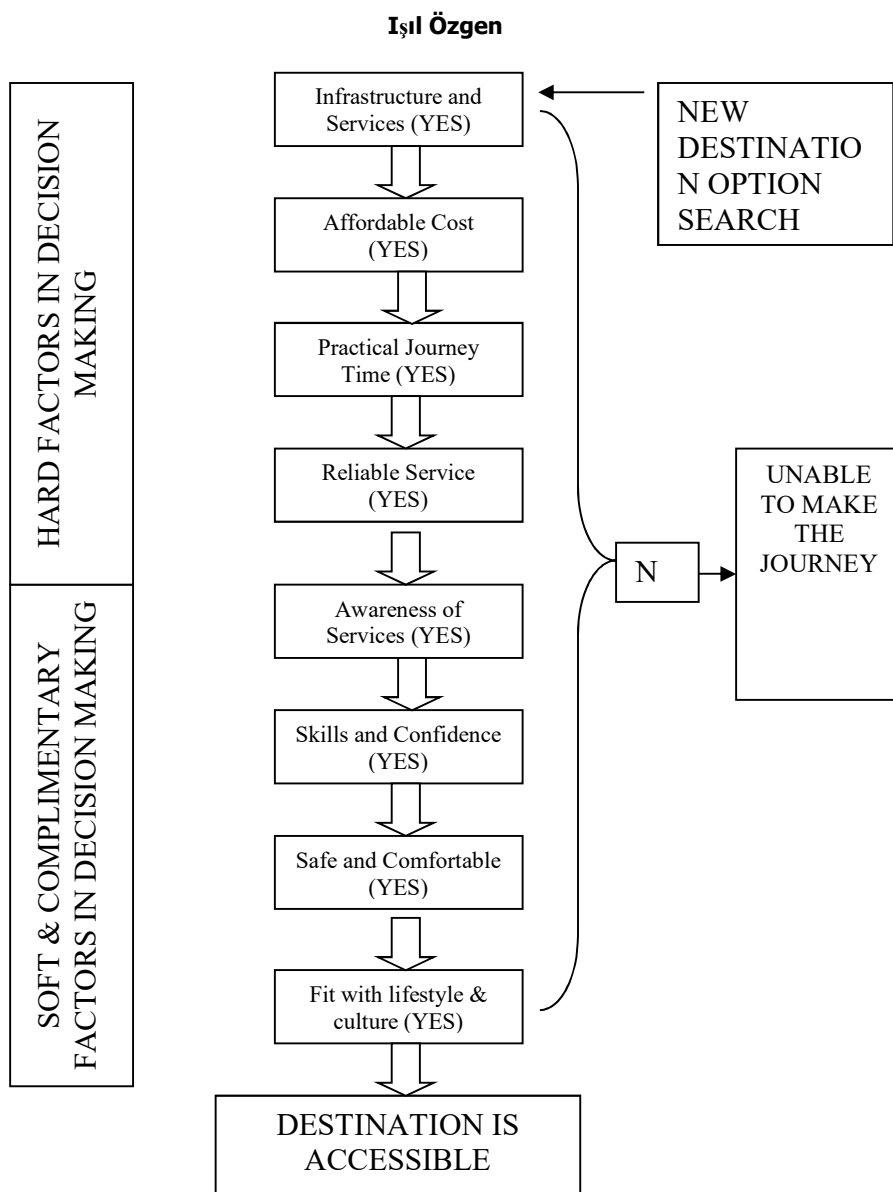
accommodation at the destination, purpose of travel, accessibility of attractions at the destination, the cost of the travel etc. (Woodside & King, 2001). To be acceptable by the disabled traveller, both supply side and the demand side factors need to be collaborative. Supply side factors are referred as: *infrastructure and services, reliable service, awareness of services, skills and confidence, safe and comfortable* whereas demand side factors are referred as: *affordable cost, practical journey time, fit with life style and culture*. Factors such as cost, time and reliability are key components for a travel decision and referred as hard factors. Soft and complementary factors are changeable according to traveller but these factors should also support the travel decision. Figure 1 demonstrates the destination decision process for disabled travellers.

In general the choice of an accessible destination among PwD are conditioned by cost constraints. Costs for accessible tours are much higher than the mass tours. For the disabled segment, which have limited budget, holidays became impossible because of financial restrictions (Shaw & Coles, 2004).

Information Gathering for Accessibility

With the rapid development of information technologies it is much more easy to gain information. Facilities can be accessible unless they provide relevant, accurate and detailed information regarding access issues for several types of disabilities, in case disabled travellers will not be able to complete their planning process and engage in travel (Michopolou & Buhalis, 2013).

Web accessibility refers to web site design, which aims for maximum inclusion for disabled users such as visual, hearing and cognitive impairments. Among other types of impairments web accessibility is more understood for visual impairments (blindness, partial/poor sight, color blindness). This group has difficulty with visual media in websites, such as; graphics, photos, flashes, movies, small text sizes, certain fonts and colors (low saturated colors, colors together in hue like orange and red, blue and green). Web designers should be aware to include in the website that, whenever there is an image, there should also be a text or audio description giving information about the image, W3C standards (Web accessibility standards for people with disabilities) provide a detailed guideline for designers. For users with hearing impairment, providing written transcripts for audio content is generally solve most of the problems and for cognitive impairments simple language and manageable size chunks are required (Shi, 2007).



**Figure 1: Destination Decision Process for Disabled Traveller
(Adapted from Thompson and Ferguson, 2006: 44)**

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When booking a holiday typical concerns of the disabled traveller starts with transportation information which include accessible airport, train, cruise and coach transfers. There are differences in acceptance criteria of disabled passengers between airlines, trains, cruises and coaches so boarding procedures should be carefully examined by the disabled tourist himself or by the travel agent. Most of the airlines give disability information in their website.

In this study it is focused on air travel and other modes of transport are ignored since flights become cheaper and popular (Poria *et al.*, 2010). Table 1 demonstrates the important questions to be asked when gathering information about air travel for PwD.

Table 1: Accessibility Inquiry Gathering for Air Transportation

TYPE OF DISABILITY	AIR TRAVEL
Mobility Impairment (Wheelchair users)	Availability of manual for disabled passengers, Early seat allocation before check-in Availability of an escort Low level check-in desks Free use of wheelchairs Arrangement made when no airbridges available Wet cell battery wheelchairs acceptance and whether special arrangements are held Carriage of powered wheelchairs unfolded without weight/size restrictions Portable medical equipment carriage Power supply for respirator Restricted number of disabled carried on flight exists Availability of seats with extra leg-room
Vision Impairment (Blind/ Deaf-Blind)	Braille information and cabin orientation guide Confirmation with airline that guide dogs are allowed in the passenger cabin Quarantine regulations in destination countries for international flights for guide dogs

Source: Adapted from EU, 1996:135.

The needs of impairments are changing accordingly the severity level and disability type. In their study Chang & Chen (2011) identified facilities and services for air travel concerning different impairment and priority levels.

Prior to travel, the disabled tourist have to face many challenges such as; hotels, local and private transport at the destination, reliable and detailed information about a destination’s attractions, public spaces, restaurant/bars

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and availability of rentable disability equipment (Münch & Ulrich, 2011). Among those challenges accommodation is much more substantial.

Table 2: Importance of Accessibility Issues for Air Travel Among Different Levels of Impairments

Importance Level	Severe Impairment	Moderate Impairment	Minor Impairment
Most Important	Barrier-free ramp Slip resistant floors in airport	Slip resistant floors in airport	Exclusive customs counter Waiting area at check in counter
Important	Barrier-free lift Airline wheelchair services Check-in counter staff's service attitudes Boarding priority Assistance in boarding Ground service staff's attitudes Cabin crew's service attitudes Consignment and retrieval of the wheelchair	Barrier-free ramp Barrier-free lift Barrier-free restroom Check-in counter staff's attitudes. Boarding priority Assistance in boarding Ground service staff's attitudes Cabin crew's service attitudes Consignment and retrieval of the wheelchair	Slip resistant floors in airport Service bell Seat selection Check-in counter staff's attitudes. Cabin crew's service attitudes
Low importance	Service bell Seat selection Exclusive customs counter Waiting area at check-in counter Cabin seat Distance between cabin seats and restroom on board User friendly on board restroom Information on emergency evacuation	Barrier-free telephone Service bell Seat selection Exclusive customs counter Waiting area at check-in counter Cabin seat Distance between cabin seats and restroom on board User friendly on-board restroom Information on emergency evacuation	Barrier-free ramp Barrier-free restroom User friendly on-board restroom Cabin seat Boarding priority Distance between cabin seats and restroom on board Information on emergency evacuation Consignment and retrieval of the wheelchair
Least important	Barrier-free restroom Barrier-free telephone	Airline wheelchair services	Barrier-free lift Barrier-free telephone Airline wheelchair services Assistance in boarding Ground service staff's attitudes

Source: Adapted from Chang & Chen, 2011: 1216.

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Access Requirements for Accommodation

In every part of the world perfectly designed accommodation for disabled guests is scarce, detailed information about access statement of hotels are missing and generally the information is usually compiled by unqualified people with no independent verification of inspectors (EU, 1996). In summary the constraints to accessible accommodation is the lack of accessible accommodation, accessible accommodation that did not comply to access standards and the inadequate level of detail and accuracy of information (Darcy, 2010). In Turkish context according to the Act of Tourism Establishments' Investment and Qualifications of Ministry of Culture and Tourism, hotels that have more than 80 rooms are required to build 1% of the rooms as an accessible room, general issues of accessibility for hotels based on the act are mentioned at Table 3.

Table 3: General Issues of Accessibility for Hotels

Ramps	Surfaces with different levels should be connected with ramps. Ramps slope should not be steeper or more than % 5 with handrails and clear opening width of 100 cm.
Entrance	Entrance door should be minimum 100 cm width
Toilets	Toilet door entrance should be minimum 85 cm width, recommended not to have a threshold. Closet, sink, and flush, faucet should be arranged for wheelchair users. Mirrors should be inclined 10-15 degrees within eye level Internal dimensions should be arranged for wheelchair user to maneuver with slip resistant floor material.
Rooms	Rooms should be decorated and furnished with a space left to maneuver easily around the room Door width of rooms should be minimum 85 cm Room and bathroom floor should be slip-resistant and no thick-pile carpet. Fixtures such as wardrobe rails should be maximum 140 cm height. Light switches and electrical sockets should be minimum 40 cm, maximum 100 cm above from floor level. Light switches should be bedside. Shower units should be arranged to wheelchair users. Shower seats and grab rails should be in bathroom.
Lifts	Doors should be photocell, lift control buttons should be 100 cm and grab rails should be 90 cm above floor level, inside lift cabin there should be no carpet.

Source: Adapted from The Act of Turkish Tourism Establishments' Investments and Qualifications.

Accessibility issues about hotels according to the act, is the only legal arrangement that considers wheelchair users and have many missing points

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about accessibility. Without necessary legislation and control it is difficult to talk about accessible built environment and accessible tourism for Turkey. At this point the paradigm of universal design principles become more than an issue for tourism establishments and should include: design without barriers into planning process, acquire knowledge of disability laws and worldwide recognized standards, include PwD and accessibility experts as planning members with the famous motto 'nothing for us without us', exceed standards wherever possible, incorporate accessibility not only for indoor activities but also for outdoor environments and plan for a continuous way of travel (Darcy *et al.*, 2010). By achieving the above- mentioned principles, accessible tourism would no longer be the market that is ignored by the tourism industry for PwD and those with access needs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to figure out the appropriateness of Izmir as a destination for PwD, a qualitative research has been held. In-depth interviews with total of 45 participants is conducted with hotel managers (HM) (n=15), travel agency managers (TA) (n=7), tour guides (TG) (n=7) representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOR) about disability (n=8), and public officials (PO) from Izmir Municipality (n=8). Participants were recruited judgmentally through the author's personal network and through the contacts from Izmir City Council Disability Assembly. The target audience for the interviews were divided into two groups; hotel managers, travel agency managers and tour guides generating tourism supply side, where NGO's generate the demand side as they are the 'voices of tourists' with disabilities. In addition to interviews, formal and informal discussions were carried out with eight public officials from Izmir Municipality two of whom have visual impairment and two of whom with mobility impairment. Interviews are recorded with the participants' permission and notes have been taken during the discussions, which then turned to transcripts. Interviews are lasted approximately 1 to 2 hours. Themes released from content analysis include: accessible transportation and built environment, accessible tourism demand, training about accessibility, staff attitudes, online information accessibility and cost restrictions in accessible tourism.

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RESEARCH FINDINGS

Accessibility Issues on Transportation and Built Environment in Izmir

All the respondents reported that accessible transportation and built environment is the most cited issue of accessibility. It is also well recognized in the literature that the dilemma of transport understandably focuses on wheelchair users problems rather than sight, hearing or other disabilities (Horner & Swarbrooke, 2004) The consensus of opinion in interviews is that, Turkey is not suitable for people with disability especially for the wheelchair users. It is mentioned frequently that Izmir is improving day by day.

Transportation is the key component of accessible tourism which Izmir Metro and local bus transport is cited as accessible by most of the participants. While there are positive opinions about Izmir's local transport, there are also negative issues regarding local transport especially the ferries, lack of tour vehicles and accessible taxis. Travel agencies mainly focused on the lack of equipped van or tour bus for wheelchair users, for vans and taxis with portable ramps these problems can be solved but for tour buses it should be manufactured at factory or modified.

Hotels constitute the second key component of the tourist experience (Navarro *et al.*, 2013) and have a strategic importance in the destination choice. Table 5 demonstrates large scale hotels in Izmir whether they are favorable or not, based on accessibility standards (Kirlar, 2013).

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Table 4: Interview Responses about Accessible Transportation and Built Environment in Izmir

Accessible Transportation	<p>Positive Responses: Interview 16 (NGOR): 'I believe that Turkey in general is not suitable for people with disabilities especially for wheelchair users, of course there are some places and cities which are accessible such as Alanya but not completely, Izmir is improving for example in Alsancak and many places around, the municipality is making pavements for blind people this is good and the pavements are rearranged for wheelchair access and most of the public buses especially the new ones have wheelchair access' Interview 33 (PO): 'As a person with visual impairment, Izmir Metro is accessible for blind people with reflected surfaces, in train announcements, braille boarding and with a helpful staff'. Interview 44 (PO): 'I am a lawyer and wheelchair user working in Izmir Municipality, I use metro, I am lucky that Izmir metro is wheelchair friendly especially the route I use but I prefer to go early in the morning or late in the evening not to deal with rush hours, I don't use bus or ferry. Interview 43 (NGOR): 'I have hearing impairment and using hearing aid, in Izmir Metro with the induction loop system¹ used I can easily hear all the announcements made' Interview 27 (TG): 'I see improvements in Izmir, more disabled people are outside, with online billboards municipality is giving information about what is done for disabled people, everyday in Karşıyaka and Alsancak pier many people are informed and metro is modern, even braille boards are in the stations' Interview 4 (TA): 'ESHOT buses from airport are wheelchair friendly. Negative Responses: Interview 2 (TA): 'Izmir sightseeing bus is good for cruise visitors but it doesn't have wheelchair access and you can't use ferries for wheelchairs the only option is man-handling.' Interview 32 (PO): 'I can't use ferry on my own because I have to be carried with my wheelchair and I don't like be carried by people, but I know that piers in Izmir will be renovated and new wheelchair access ferries are ordered, this is good for people like me.' Interview 17 (TA): 'There is no legal requirement for taxis to be wheelchair friendly, in Izmir there is no taxi available at airport with lifts or ramps, but most of the taxis are large enough to carry folded or unfolded wheelchairs especially the X model. Interview 28 (TA): 'There are few vans equipped to transfer people with wheelchairs in case we rent from municipality, I don't know a travel agency in Izmir, especially organizing tours for wheelchair users but I know there is one in Kuşadası.' Interview 1 (TA): 'On our tours we use X company tour buses and most of the other travel agencies use too, they are not equipped for wheelchairs but city version of that models I mean for local transport has factory manufactured for wheelchairs, In Izmir the only travel agency I know is X Turizm, since they have a contract with a cruise ship company, they have modified a midi-bus for wheelchair access' Interview 42 (TA): 'We don't organize tours for disabled tourists such as wheelchair users our tour buses are not equipped for this.'</p>
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^a An **induction loop** is an electro magnetic communication or detection system, which uses a moving magnet to induce an electrical current in a nearby wire. By turning hearing aids into 'T' position, the other voices are ignored and people with difficulties in hearing can effectively hear.

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Accessible Built Environment	<p>Positive Responses: Interview 29 (TG): 'I have lately visited izmir Archeology museum with a tour group which make me very happy on behalf of people with visual and hearing impairments, the museum is equipped with audio and visual guide I have seen these kind of audio-visual guides in Europe and also audio-mobile guide exists in Ephesus what is different is visual guide for hearing disability include Turkish sign language, audio guide include Turkish, English and German and there is no extra fee. Later I found it was a co-project good things happen also in my country' Interview 25 (NGOR): 'I'm working as a lawyer and I'm blind, sometimes I have to go to other cities I'm lucky that I live in izmir, the city is getting better for blind community'. Interview 40 (TG): Nowadays in Ephesus audio guides and wooden ramps are available for wheelchair users also Izmir airport is accessible for wheelchair users and people with visual impairments. Interview 13 (HM): We have launched induction loop system in our hotel for the reception area and conference rooms I think in Turkey it is the first hotel that have this systems it doesn't have a very high cost and there are also portable ones of this system, from our foreign guests we are taking positive feedbacks. Interview 14 (HM): Our accessible rooms are not having great difference compared with other rooms only bathroom and toilet differs. All other furniture and materials are the same. Interview 13 (HM): You can create an accessible environment in an aesthetic way for example there is a ramp in our hotel entrance but no one realizes that it is a ramp. Interview 16 (NGOR): 'Hotel designers and builders should consult disability associations in order to achieve accessibility in hotels a person who had never sit on wheelchair or who doesn't have a visual impairment do not understand what disabled people want and how they feel.' Interview 35 (TG): 'New hotels are much more accessible for guests since there are some obligations by law' Negative Responses: Interview 12 (HM): 'Last year, an accident happened in front of my hotel entrance a tour van driver injured a pedestrian, with the court decision my hotel entrance is now closed to all vehicles what happens if an emergency occurs even ambulance or a fire truck can not access to my hotel.' Interview 20 (PO): 'We don't have accessible public toilets in Izmir'. Interview 34 (PO): 'I think all arrangements at hotels are made for wheelchair users and for the blind only the lift buttons' Interview 5 (HM): 'We are lucky that our hotel is out of city center we don't face problems like parking or entrance for vehicles but in city center especially Alsancak area the main problem is the lack of drop of zone'</p>
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Table 5: Izmir Hotels' Accessibility Scheme, cont.

<i>Restaurants and bars</i>			
Self-service and open-buffet units	8	15	23
Tables	17	14	31
Bar seats	16	15	31
Braille restaurant menus	0	34	34
SPA's and sports areas	11	17	28
Entertainment and other recreational activities	14	16	30
Swimming pools	8	14	22
Beaches	5	6	11
Web-site accessibility	0	34	34
Staff training	5	29	34
Having a wheelchair	25	9	34
Accepting guide dogs	5	29	34

Source: Kirlar, B. (2013). A Situation analysis of hotel establishments' compliances with accessibility standards and hotel manager's perspectives on accessible tourism: Case of Izmir. (Unpublished masters dissertation). Izmir: Dokuz Eylul University Social Sciences Institute.

Built environment for hotels in Izmir are generally favorable, missing issues exists but they can be handled with minor renovations. Respondents also pointed that while protecting the rights of one person or the rights of one disability type, the rights of others should not be ignored. Hotel managers reported that they are willing to welcome their guests with disabilities but they generally suffer from the lack of demand.

Demand for Accessible Tourism in Izmir

Based on the statistics the total number of people stayed in Izmir hotels in 2010 is 4.830.593 (IZKA, 2010) but there is not any statistics existing whether the guests that stayed in these hotels have some sort of disability. Hotel managers, with one exception, reported that they rarely recognize guests with disabilities and they mainly sell accessible rooms to non-disabled visitors. Selling accessible rooms to non-disabled guests, low occupancy rates of accessible rooms and existence of non-disabled guests that do not like using accessible rooms is also pointed out in the literature (Darcy, 2010). While most of the hotels in Izmir stated that they have few

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disabled guests and suffering from low occupancy rates a hotel which is serving for health tourism exactly remarked the opposite.

Table 6: Interview responses about demand for accessible tourism in Izmir

Negative Responses	<p>Interview 41 (HM): 'We have disabled guests especially wheelchair users in our hotel, but very few.' Interview 37 (HM): 'We have wheelchair user guests coming for banquets or meetings but to stay relatively few'. Interview 39 (HM): 'We have accessible rooms but the demand for these rooms are not so much, we are also selling these rooms to guests without disability by giving prior information, some of the guests are refusing to stay in these room'. Interview 38 (HM): 'We don't exactly know how many disabled guest stay in our hotel since we sell this room to non-disabled so I can't give you some statistics.' Interview 10 (HM): 'We didn't think of disability market, Izmir is not a holiday destination it can be for meetings or congress, maybe in the future' Interview 13(HM): 'Sometimes we are selling accessible rooms to non-disabled guests especially when we are at short of rooms we inform them before arrival, some guests are refusing, I don't understand why, maybe it will be helpful for them to realize what they have in hand. Interview 12 (HM): 'Most of our guests staying in accessible rooms are non-disabled we don't have any report of how many disabled guest stayed in our rooms, I think this can be handled by putting special notes on registration cards but we never thought of it' Interview 11 (HM): 'Some of our guest react to stay in accessible rooms, some of our guest doesn't care it changes from person to person but we always tell them before they arrive to hotel' Interview 24 (NGOR): 'My son is suffering from autism a holiday is a dream for us, children with autism don't want to change their rituals and routines or the places that they used to, they became aggressive, I don't want to take all other people looks or disturb them so I prefer to stay at hotels where people like my son have their holiday. Interview 3 (HM): 'I think disabled guests will have much for freedom in hotels which are especially designed for them and most of the guests which are staying are having a sort of disability'.</p>
Positive Responses	<p>Interview 36 (HM): 'Our hotel is serving for health tourism our rooms, pools and all the areas in the hotel is accessible and we have high occupancy levels which is % 90 except January and February, these two months we have approximately %70 occupancy word of mouth publicity is our main promotion I know many guests coming again and again. Interview 36 (HM): Most of our guests are third age generation and wheelchair users we rarely have guests with vision or hearing impairment. But we have guests with mental diseases. Interview 9 (HM): 'I don't think disabled people would like to stay in an hotel completely for disabled guests they prefer to go to hotels where non-disable stay too, they are trying to integrate to community don't they'. Interview 8 (HM): 'We will be pleased if more guests with disabilities prefer our hotel, this means that we are able to serve for their needs and wants and create a difference among other hotels' Interview 15 (HM): 'We are not separating guests as disabled or not all our guests are special for us.'</p>

At this point the respondents were asked whether hotels only for disabled guests should be considered or not. While most of the respondents

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disagree with the idea that special hotels for disabled should exist, there are also the ones that agree with this idea. Ignorance of the needs of people with disabilities can lead to sort of discrimination, to prevent discriminatory conduct, tourism service providers should start with cognitive, attitudinal and knowledge based-competencies of employees about disability with open and honest communication at all levels of organization, between the web-site and potential disabled customer. This can be achieved through training (Grady & Ohlin, 2009; McKercher *et al.*, 2003).

Training about Disability Issues, Staff Attitudes and Online Information Accessibility

Meeting the needs of people with disabilities in service encounter require personal responsibility (Chang & Chen, 2012) which involves knowledge of disabled guests potential needs and requirements and the expectations of the disabled guests are not something extraordinary. Attentive service can make a difference and memorable experience for any tourist. Unfortunately staff can be lack of confidence and skills, comprehensive training and information when serving for tourists with a disability (Daniels *et al.*, 2005). Awareness training and communication skills demonstrate that guests with a disability are essentially no different from other guests and satisfying their needs is not so difficult (ENAT, 2007). Training employees about several types of disabilities and their needs, types of assistive devices, disability etiquette will enable communication barriers and reduce discomfort among CwD and front-line employees. Most of the respondents of hotel managers and travel agencies concluded that they did not give or take any training about disability or web-accessibility. Where as government officials mentioned that, they give training to local bus drivers in Izmir about disabilities.

In order to figure out web accessibility of Izmir hotels, an online web accessibility evaluation tool, achecker.ca is used, 31 hotels (3, 4 and 5 star hotels) in Izmir is checked online according to web content accessibility guidelines by their URL's. The most rated problems are;

- Non-text content for images
- Lack of simpler layout
- Lack of resize text option
- Empty label texts
- Missing valid alt texts (which identifies the purpose or function of the image)
- Invalid document language.

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Information technologies and Internet worldwide play an important role for facilitating transactions between hospitality service providers and guests, most of the guests rely on the Internet in search for their lodging options (Grady & Ohlin, 2009).

Table 7: Interview Responses about Training, Staff Attitudes and Online Accessibility in Izmir

Negative Responses	<p>Interview 4 (TA): 'I don't give training to my travel agency staff about disabilities.'</p> <p>Interview 14 (HM): 'We are not giving training to our staff concerning about disabilities and how to communicate with disabled guest'</p> <p>Interview 9 (HM): 'As a society we are helpful and hospitable I think this is what other cultures try to teach to their staff but all of our behaviors to disabled guests are instinctive we don't give special training.'</p> <p>Interview 6 (TG): 'I don't exactly know how to behave to a blind guest but I think the best way is to ask to the guest'.</p> <p>Interview 5 (HM): 'I am working in tourism sector for a long time but I didn't take any type of education concerning disability or give any education to my staff but I think I should make search about this issue and a specific training about disability should be given in hotels'</p> <p>Interview 2 (TA): 'We don't have any personnel who knows sign language and we are not giving special training of sign language, but nowadays there are improvements on media about sign language.'</p> <p>Interview 1 (TA): 'I don't know whether our web site is accessible or not, I have no idea. To tell the truth I never thought of web-site accessibility, when accessibility is mentioned, what I understand is about ramps, rooms, toilets and lift'</p> <p>Interview 19 (NGOR): 'I'm always going to same resort in summer which is completely accessible to wheelchair users, I don't want to face with surprises since most of the mentioned hotels in Internet as wheelchair friendly is in fact not friendly'</p> <p>Interview 7 (NGOR): 'Before going to a hotel I always call the reception to gather information but most of the time I don't get the necessary information and be prepared to surprises. Hotel web-sites don't give detailed information all I need is a room video I can then figure out whether it is accessible for me or not'</p> <p>Interview 16 (NGOR): 'Disabled population is aware that there are borders of accessibility what they want is reasonable issues, I know people who had never been to sea shore accessible beaches are not so difficult to arrange we have in Çeşme, Kuşadası and Alanya, why not in other shores'.</p> <p>Interview 30 (NGOR): 'As a blind person what I look for hotels is helpful staff especially in restaurants with open buffet and detailed information given about the room and environment'</p> <p>Interview 25 (NGOR): 'When I go to a restaurant I don't want a waiter read all the menu I can read in braille, but I never encounter with braille menus in Turkey'</p>
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Positive Responses	<p>Interview 31 (PO): We are arranging awareness education meetings for bus drivers with disability NGO's, wheelchair users explain their needs and wants from bus drivers and bus drivers also talk about from their side, meetings are like chatting with each other both sides have positive attitude to each other and we are getting positive feedbacks ESHOT has arranged 45 itineraries and schedules of the wheelchair access buses which is on their website' Interview 45 (PO): 'I am working as phone operator in Izmir Municipality and I'm blind, with my wife we wanted to have a honeymoon in one of the hotels nearby I searched from Internet (search from internet can be done by screen readers with special JAWA program for blind people) but all the hotel web sites are mostly with images. We found a hotel with the help of our friends, informed the hotel while booking. When we arrived the receptionist helped us a lot, informed about the hotel, tell everything about the room in detail we felt very happy' Interview 26 (PO): 'Technology is helping blind people a lot, I can surf at Internet with screen readers, download e-books and read them' Interview 18 (NGOR): 'Disabled people are brand loyal people and their communication between each other is strong, so winning one guest means winning much more guests without any effort for example; most of the disabled drivers choose XXXX to buy oil since staff is very helpful'</p>
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The relationship between tourism and visual impairments is one of the least searched topics since most of the academics empathize on 'travelling anywhere without seeing means not so much' disregarding the aural realm of the blind (Richards *et al.*, 2010). With the help of the technology it is now much more easy for people with visual impairments to enrich their own world.

Finding a suitable accommodation meeting the accessibility needs is not so easy, so in many cases accessible hotel become the main holiday determinant for PwD tourists (Darcy & Pegg, 2011). According to TURSAB (2008) report about disability market, in Turkey, 1176 room is referred as accessible but most of them did not comply with accessibility standards. To ensure an equivalent hospitality experience for disabled guest some modifications in tourism product should be done. This result with cost differences especially in tours, the respondents stated that disabled tours are expensive than other tours.

Costs Restrictions in Accessible Tourism

While the respondents of hotels declared that there is no price differentiation such as reduction or an increase among accessible rooms and others, tour guides and travel agencies concluded that disabled tours are much more expensive.

Mckercher *et al.* (2003) also pointed out in their study that additional service charges for customized tours are not affordable and mass tour products do not serve for the needs of the disabled tourists. Although the majority of the disabled segments are cost oriented but this segment's need

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for economy should not mean that lower quality is accepted (Burnett & Baker, 2001).

Table 8: Interview Responses About Cost Restrictions in Accessible Tourism

Negative Responses	<p>Interview 42 (TA): 'For deaf community I don't know any tour guide in Turkey who knows sign language, none of our foreign partners demand a tour like this, if it is arranged I think it will be much more expensive than other tours' Interview 40 (TG): 'I have once a private tour for two, one of the tour participant is blind we have visited Ephesus his companion, was giving information about the environment and by touching the statues he tries to figure out, I feel pity for him and the tour took much more longer, compared with my other tours, private tours are expensive for tour participants' Interview 23 (TG): 'Accessible tours are not easy to afford, I was a guide for a private tour of a couple, which one is at wheelchair, they told me that they pay 300 Euro, not every tourist can pay this amount.' Interview 22 (TA): 'In Turkey, income level of the disabled population is low and government support is not enough they don't have enough money, tourism is then a luxury for them, first problem is the employment of the disabled, with the right attitude and right job for them they can be productive and also benefit from tourism' Interview 21 (TG): 'I have once met a tour member from U.K. he was married and have two children he was early retired since he has rheumatoid arthritis he was able to walk the government supported him financially by giving him several aids he became rich with that disability aids, I thought to myself the difference between two countries and the importance given to human being' Interview 10 (HM): 'We don't have a special reduction for disabled tourists or for accessible rooms this kind of behavior means discrimination'. Interview 22 (TA): 'We don't have discounts for disabled tourists but some bus companies and transportation firms have discounts on tickets'</p>
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CONCLUSION

The services provided to people with disability is gaining importance especially in Western societies with aging populations. In this study, the appropriateness of Izmir as a destination has been examined in terms of build environment, transportation, demand from disabled market, disability awareness training, web accessibility, cost restrictions for accessible tourism, based on opinions of hotel managers, travel agencies, tour guides, public officials and NGO's representatives. It is determined that both hotels and travel agencies in Izmir ignore the potential of disability market. A number of conclusions and recommendations in general, strengths and weaknesses specific to Izmir have been indicated.

Transportation and built environment are key components of accessible tourism. Izmir municipality is making investments on this issues Newly bought local buses, ferries, metro and arrangements on pavements, curb cuts and piers according to standards, accessible airport are among the strengths of the city management but weaknesses also exists especially for

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private restaurants and bars. The restaurants excluding the ones in shopping centers are not accessible for PwD in Izmir. The municipality, so arranging amendments in the legislation, gives operation licenses for restaurants and bars and making accessible standards as obligatory for these establishments can help to improve accessible tourism. Introducing removable ramps to historical buildings and other attractions, providing city brochures remarking accessible areas, providing talking signaling systems can also be recommended (Sen & Mayfield, 2004). Preparing a roadmap in the form of a manual or detailed legislation specific to tourism establishments and transport systems about accessibility is a necessity. It should be prepared by government or related associations covering a detailed list of standards including all types of impairments for hotels, restaurants, bars and attractions. 'Red Flag' award which is given to establishments for those requiring accessible standards by Izmir Metropolitan Municipality can be competitive advantage among tourism establishments but this award should be promoted and announced such as at online billboards at Karşıyaka and Alsancak.

Disability training and disability etiquette is one of the neglected issues most of the respondents agreed that they don't give or take any form of training. In order to overcome this problem, associations such as TÜRSAB (Association of Turkish Travel Agencies), TUROB (Turkish Association of Hotels) and TUREB (Turkish Association of Tour Guides) with collaboration of disability NGO's or disability consultants could prepare necessary documents or training videos for their members. Also for web accessibility the above mentioned associations can provide documentation covering examples and standards. With this kind of effort attitudinal and communication barriers facing accessible tourism can be settled. Lack of available transportation vehicles such as vans and tour buses are one of the main barriers, by special funding or incentive allocated by government this problem can be resolved. Government can give incentives to tour companies which provided modified vehicles for wheelchair users. Finally accessibility and accessible tourism requires a holistic approach from legislation to build environment, transport, communication, education, sports and employment. Izmir as a destination is having the minimum requirements for accessible tourism which is improving everyday but, further studies should be made covering attractions such as museums, restaurants, shopping malls, cinemas and sports areas.

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