

# The uk disability discrimination act tourism essay



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The aim of this paper is to address the potentiality, requirements and expectations of people with disabilities and its implication on customer satisfaction in hotels.

#### Design/Methodology/Approach:

This article is based on secondary data collection: journal articles, websites, textbooks, pamphlets on people with disability, customer satisfaction and hotel marketing. The methodology of this article is by analysing the people with disability as potential market segment to the hospitality industry and identifying approaches, that hotel could inculcate for better customer satisfaction.

#### Findings:

In the hotel sector people with disabilities are tend to be seen as a marginal segment with limited service options available, thus the motivation, experience and satisfaction is greatly affected. However, suggestions provided addressing this issue could enable hotels improve on customer service thus facilitating satisfaction.

#### Research Limitations:

This paper exclusively based on secondary data brings out limited outcomes and limits the findings and interpretation compared to primary research data collection.

#### Practical Implication:

Hotels catering to tourist with disabilities than just being compliant with the law can do more in order to increase satisfaction and loyalty. This article is useful to organisations to understand this market segment and help develop better service operations.

What is original / value of paper?

The paper addresses the issue of customer satisfaction focusing on particular tourist segment i. e. people with disability in hotels. The main target audience are hotel managers and employees desiring to understand and achieve customer satisfaction through services offered to tourist with disabilities and in-addition would help hotels aspiring to open doors to this niche market segment.

## **Introduction**

Customer satisfaction is of utmost importance, often given high priority and frequently is of a matter of concern to managers, employees, marketers of hotel and hospitality service providers (Yuksel and Yuksel, 2001 and Oh and Parks, 1997). Hospitality industries such as hotels strive towards making guest feel more than welcome, provide customer service in such a manner that would satisfy, delight, and make guests come back. Hotels commonly serving non-disabled customers could take step ahead and provide customer service to older and disabled people by making services offered more than accessible, providing accurate information and assistance in a friendly manner, which would enable the industry to secure a more loyal niche growing clientele that remains not quite touched upon (ADA Business Connection, 2006).

From the late 80's until early 90's researchers focused on, people with disability within the hospitality and tourism context, yet the study in this area lost impetus (Yau, McKercher and Packer, 2004). However recently Burnett and Baker (2001), Darcy (2002), Ray and Ryder (2003) and McKercher, Packer, Yau and Lam (2003), have recalled this area of study. Hence, research regarding People with disabilities in hospitality context is limited (Burnett and Baker, 2001; Darcy, 2002; Ray and Ryder, 2003 and Israeli, 2002). People with Disabilities are an emerging market segment, which is of interest, with approximately 50 million individuals and expected to double by 2030 (Stumbo and Pegg, 2005). Moreover, the growth of People with Disabilities would also comprise majorly of ageing senior citizens or ageing baby boomers and this market segment would gradually prove to be of importance for the continuing success of the travel and hospitality industry (Burnett and Baker, 2001).

Hence, this article focuses on customer satisfaction of people with disabilities as holidaymakers in hotels, which is of importance in order to capture a loyal market not only from a business point of view but also as a responsibility towards society. Moreover, the impending 2012 Paralympics games would certainly witness large number of disabled players and an increase in arrivals of disabled tourist. If hotels wish to exploit the benefits from the disabled tourist, it would be of importance to provide an exceptionally satisfying welcoming experience that would capture a loyal market and ensure return in the future (Department for media culture and sport, 2007a). Thus, customer satisfaction of people with disabilities becomes all the more important.

## **Review of Literature:**

### Disability Defined:

Disability under the UK Disability Discrimination Act is defined as a 'physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities' (Office of Public Sector Information, 2009a, p. 2).

However, British Council of Disabled People defines disability as a 'disadvantage or restriction of activity by a society, which takes little or no account of people who have impairments- that is caused by physical, mental or sensory condition; and thus excludes them from mainstream activity' (Busby et al., 2000, p. 3); 'Thus, disabled people are with impairments disabled by society'(ibid).

Types of disability would include people affected in mobility, manual dexterity, speech, hearing, eyesight, memory or ability to concentrate learn or understand, also people suffering from diabetes, arthritis, multiple sclerosis, HIV, cancer are some of the conditions considered under disability (Department for Work and Pension, 2006). Hence, people with disabilities are not a small group but varied and hotels to achieve customer satisfaction will have considered serving the needs of people with different disabilities.

The implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act to an extent has drawn the attention of the hospitality sector towards People with disabilities and have gradually begun to identify them as profitable potential tourist (Shaw and Coles, 2004). The act enforces that service providers do not discriminate people with disabilities whilst providing service (Office of Public

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Sector Information, 2009b). Business or organisation that provides service, offer facilities or supply goods to public are liable to duties of the Disability Discrimination Act under Part III and this does include hotels (Department of Health, 1996).

The duties of this act for the service providers were rolled from 1996 to 2004 in three stages. The main essence of the duties that were introduced in three stages were that service providers discriminating or treating people with disabilities less favourably than non disabled customers was unlawful. In addition, service providers had to make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled customers such as providing extra help or making changes to the way service is provided and reasonable adjustment to make the premises barrier free (Disability Rights Commission, 2002).

Reasonable changes as stated by the legislation could be one reason as to why service providers just tend to be compliant with law by providing minute alteration such as ramps and tend to do nothing more extensive. Prideaux and Roulstone (2009) express that despite of broad explanation expressing the vitality of accessibility to disabled, the representation of term 'reasonable adjustment' as stated in the UK Disability Discrimination Act legislation is still unclear and service providers tend to relive themselves from the responsibility of having extensive accessible service and facility.

Customer satisfaction and its importance:

Hospitality service providers use customer satisfaction as primary tool, as it helps retain customers, help reduce promotion cost intended to attract new customer since satisfied customers tend to return and aid in promotion of <https://assignbuster.com/the-uk-disability-discrimination-act-tourism-essay/>

the property (Yuksel, 2001). This can also hold true for disabled tourist, as they tend to get loyal to providers that meet the needs, expectation and have facilities that are accessible, and would aid in promotion. Daniels, Rodgers and Wiggins (2005) establish that people with disabilities when loyal to accessible providers that cater to them, promote and learn about new properties mainly through word of mouth, followed by internet sites and at times also through travel guides. Horner (2004) acclaims that industries benefit with retained customers as these customers who are loyal are likely to return and promote the goodwill of the industry to others which may bring in future business. Thus, customer satisfaction has benefits as it helps minimize extra costs, enables industry know their repeat customer better, which could help in improving future service.

Defining customer satisfaction :

Customer satisfaction is based on the involvement of various processes and at times on the customer experience and expectation and this makes it highly complex (Johnston and Clark, 2001). Moreover, customer satisfaction based on components like controllability, emotion, inference, motivation, performance by management or employee or any happening during the service delivery; all of which could work independently or in combination influencing the complex process of satisfaction (Oh and Parks 1997, Bowen 2001, Bowen 2002 and Bowen and Clarke 2002). Being a complex process, it is difficult to pinpoint one single definition and as result, customer satisfaction can be defined in various interpretations (Yuksel and Yuksel, 2001). However, Oh and Parks (1997, p. 37) based on critical analysis of customer satisfaction suggested a convincing definition that 'customer

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satisfaction may result from a very simple or complex process involving extensive cognitive, affective and other undiscovered psychological and physiological dynamics'.

#### People with Disability as Potential Market:

People with Disabilities are potential customers for the hospitality sector and catering to this customer base would tend to generate billions in the sector (Arellano 2003). Moreover, senior citizens are likely to experience disability in some form as they age, and tend to coincide with that life stage when they enjoy a retired life having time to travel with surplus disposable income (Fleischer and Pizam, 2002). United Nations, (2007) claims by 2050 universally the number of old age population would double. Thus, disability in some form would also be increasing (Mann, 2005). Groschl (2004) express that as people with disabilities is increasing so is desire to travel, and this awareness has given rise to the need for making travelling and facilities barrier free as hospitality industries in the future would have to depend on this market segment (Glover and Prideaux, 2009). Based on the research conducted by Oztruk, Yayli and Yesiltas (2008), in the hospitality sector in Turkey made it evident that hotels and travel agents encounter tourist with disabilities and have a positive opinion in the growth of this market segment.

Another market that Huh and Singh (2007) express are families with a disabled members too travel on holidays and choose hotels having facilities that are accessible too all members and this market fails to be realized by service providers. Disabled holiday makers may at times travel with their partner or children who could be normal and would prefer to stay in hotel



room of their choice not in a predetermined segregated accessible room, however disabled tourist have very little option in rooms selection due to limited available rooms (Clark, 2008). This point out hospitality industry such as hotels rarely gives thought to the motives and expectation of disabled tourist whilst designing. Thus, Gladwell and Bedini (2004) acknowledges that hotel employees failing to deliver appropriate service to disabled tourist are not only the ones affected, but also the service affects the family members or individuals accompanying them.

With the introduction of Disability Discrimination Act, work places have accepted employees with disabilities, in addition, media has assisted in the gradual change in ideology, attitude of the society and this has vastly given rise to attempts made in order to understand People with Disabilities as a potential market segments thus becoming a new phenomenon (Burnett and Baker, 2001). People with disabilities being a niche market segment in the hospitality sector, a prime concern that this market segment faces is accessibility to facilities offered, which plays an important role in destination or accommodation decision making; moreover accessibility is measured differently compared to non disabled tourist (Isareli, 2002).

Disability in the U. K.

In the U. K. about 10 million disabled people dwell (Office for Disability, 2008). Possessing an estimate annual spending power of 80 billion (Breakthrough-UK, 2009). This might suggest that having realized the economic value of this market, hotels would cater and try to delight disabled customers.

However an assessment carried by tourism for all estimates that 2% of hotels are found to be wheelchair accessible, moreover the British Hospitality Association assess that out of the new 10, 000 hotel rooms built from 2004 only 1% were wheelchair accessible (Department for culture, media and sport, 2007b). This would make one ponder if very few hotel rooms are accessible only to wheel chair users let alone other disabilities, then it might be possible that the customer service offered to disabled tourist too may not be optimal, satisfying or delightful.

According to Employers forum on disability (2009), survey conducted in 100 UK companies revealed 44% offer accessible products, only one- third front line departmental employees take into account the preference and needs of people with disability and only 44% companies accept the fact that their websites are accessible to people with disabilities. Hence with so little done suggest that hotel consider disabled tourist marginal and customer satisfaction might not be of importance. The reason behind this could also be due hospitality industries fear that an increase in disabled tourist could displace the normal core business (Phillips, 2002)

Attitude towards people with disability:

Darcy (1998) reflects how important is recreation for disabled and senior tourist and their attitude towards tourism, but the outlook towards people with disabilities at hospitality destinations (hotels) are a matter of concern. The attitude of the individuals in society and marketers in industries towards People with Disabilities is likely to be prejudiced and hospitality providers such as hotels aim to just be compliant with the discrimination act, but little

attention is given on how the act can help satisfy the lucrative People with Disabilities tourist market (Burnett, 1996). Attitude against people with disability as in Asia can also be experienced where disabled members are seen as disgrace and believe that people with disability suffer as a result of the doings in previous life (Parker, 2001).

Daruwalla and Darcy (2005) based on study conducted suggests that, the attitude of hotel staff can be changed by organising role play , visual information about various impairments and empowering customer service employees to communicate freely with People with Disabilities would change the mindset, moreover such training could be initiated at hospitality institutions. Kaufman-Scarborough (2001) argues that though the ability and necessities of disabled individuals is addressed, very less attention by hotels is given towards understand their needs and capabilities as consumer. Williams, Rattray and Grimes (2006) suggests organisation must view accessibility as a service beneficial to all members of the society and not just confined to People with Disabilities,, moreover such a service which satisfies all members of society would indeed prove to deliver a competitive edge in the market. According to Israeli (2002) hospitality sectors whilst catering and serving People with Disabilities find it difficult to meet their needs since the service hospitable attitudes does not flow genuinely and hence not able to serve them well. This indicates that tourist with disabilities when on holidays at hotels will certainly evaluate every facility differently from the point of accessibility and if the service towards them does not flow naturally this could leave them dissatisfied.

Thus if hotels take initiative to make- facilities accessible, training employees adequately in order to service and communicate with disabled tourist appropriately will indeed achieve customer satisfaction and be able to capture a growing profitable loyal market.

Barriers and its impact on service:

Although this disability market segment, requiring special needs is gradually becoming of importance to the hospitality sector, majority of the hospitality industry do very little and tend to do adjustments just to be compliant with the law (Burnett and Baker, 2001). Besides that hotel managers do nothing more to cater or meet the needs of this niche market and tend to project indifference whilst meeting expectations and wants (Rice, 2006). According to Sen and Mayfield (2004) lodging facilities have numerous limitations when catering to People with Disabilities such as transportation, misplaced wheelchairs, the issue of accessibility to various public facilities, and the incapability of dealing appropriately towards people with different disabilities. People with Disabilities find it difficult to move around freely and perform activities and gestures within normal time as compared to non-disabled people (Daniels, Rodgers and Wiggins, 2005). Hence A prerequisite at hospitality sites to serve this special market segment so that their desires to enjoy leisure, experience facilities and rejuvenate at hospitality sites which are same as non disabled people is requirement of qualified human resource (Oztruk, Yayli and Yesiltas, 2008).

Non disabled tourist have better experience than disabled tourist and hence if hotels wish to cater and serve people with disabilities then the barriers

faced by people with disabilities such as mobility impaired, visually impaired, mentally impaired must be considered (Thapar et al., 2004). This segment comprises of various challenges that industry may face due to need for special equipments, change in structure, incapability of staff to handle customers (Ray and Ryder, 2003). It is vital that tourist sites that intend to cater to such a lucrative segment must address to special needs and consider barrier removals in order to make facilities accessible and enjoyable (Oztruk, Yayli and Yesiltas, 2008). Which would service not only people with disabilities but other's too such as guests carrying heavy luggage or having baby pushchair (Westcott, 2004). Oztruk, Yayli and Yesiltas (2008) do opine that much more needs to be done for this market segment in order to increase the number of trips taken by disabled tourist, increasing activities in hotels and vitally hospitality sectors need to be educated on interaction and maintaining positive relationship with disabled tourist.

Besides the structural barriers, disabled tourist due to their personality and difference in communication whilst socializing transpire as constraints to have an effective relationship with the society (Daniels, Rodgers and Wiggins, 2005). However, McKercher, Packer, Yau and Lam (2003) underpins that People with Disabilities as tourist are very well capable of establishing relation with people around them. In the tourism industry, service providers, which also include hotels, do little in regards to educating and training their employees in areas of understanding and serving People with Disabilities appropriately (Grady and Ohlin, 2009; McKercher, Packer, Yau and Lam, 2003 and Miller and Kirk, 2002). Lack of communication, knowledge about various impairments and negative prejudice leads to individuals maintaining

distant and tend to have a wrong mindset about People with Disabilities. Thus, at times hospitality service providers having a stereotype view of People with Disabilities assume that a disabled person is incapable of any activities one such example is the assumption that 'wheelchair chair user is unable to communicate' (Daruwalla and Darcy, 2005, p. 552). This suggests that negative attitude and lack of knowledge will indeed put employees in a position not knowing how to react or serve and communicate with disabled tourist.

Smith, Austin, and Kennedy (2001) assert that tourist with disabilities when confronted with barriers that mar their movement greatly lowers their leisure satisfaction and tend to avoid such destinations. Through the survey conducted by Grady and Ohlin (2009) it was evident that hospitality managers find it difficult to cater to the needs of People with Disabilities as tourist since hoteliers lack the knowledge of dealing effectively thus meeting needs and expectation. Daniels, Rodgers and Wiggins (2005) state that hotel employees are prone to be underprepared in effectively dealing with People with Disabilities as tourist as they lack information and training in dealing with them. This points out that with such service delivered would certainly not satisfy or delight the tourist.

Accessibility and impact on customer satisfaction:

People with Disabilities and their quality of life is greatly impacted by recreation and it is vital for such recreational sites to be accessible, since through empirical research it was evident that accessible recreation sites have positive enriching effect on People with Disabilities (Darcy and

Daruwalla, 1999 and Ray and Ryder, 2003). Before embarking on a travel journey, in order to be safe and have an enjoyable experience, people with disabilities must judge and decide on various concerns, determine risks by gathering required information and the criteria's that influence decision process is more complex than for a non disabled tourist (Yau, McKercher and Packer, 2004). If People with Disabilities as tourist are not provided with necessary accessible information by the hotel or through hotel website, the satisfaction of choosing the hotel may not be experienced and this would restrain the motivation and desire to travel (O'Connor and Frew, 2002). This suggests that if initially itself the motivation and desire to travel is not that high, due to lack of information the customer satisfaction could also be at jeopardy.

Moreover, despite of risk evaluation People with Disabilities encounter many hurdles whilst they travel and sites that are inaccessible could have an impact on them, spoil their holiday and could even diminish their travel as well as stay experience (Oztruk, Yayli and Yesiltas, 2008). Hotels in particular though claim to be accessible, are in-fact not completely and easily accessible to disable tourist, and hence disabled tourist lack trust on hotels and rely on personal inspection of accessibility (Ray and Ryder 2003). This indicates that people with disabilities would be apprehensive whilst selecting places. Hence Ray and Ryder (2003) suggests that marketers can reach out to People with Disabilities and can be attracted to destinations is by highlighting them in advertisements, which could encourage the selection of destination. Therefore, according to McKercher, Packer, Yau and Lam (2003) people with disabilities unlike non-disabled tourist face barriers that are

inherent, economic, and environmental - that hinder participation, interactive barrier- that is due to the attitude of hospitality service providers and non-availability of accessible information.

The above-mentioned barriers are ascertained by Clark (2007) based on his life experience he expresses that, holiday for people with disabilities could be miserable. Since often, hotels have few accessible rooms and tend to be occupied by non-disabled people; moreover online hotel reservation websites lack the option for selecting an accessible room and in addition, travel agents charge more for service offered. Thus, Westcott (2004) articulates that people with disabilities tend to be more loyal and would return to those locations, which are accessible, where their needs are catered and make holiday experience memorable.

Hence, it is suggested that to better serve People with Disabilities, which would satisfy and delight them it is important that hoteliers understand what within the establishment would prevent disabled tourist to participate in activities (Goodall, Pottinger, Dixon and Russell, 2004).

Web site barrier:

The advocates of People with Disabilities believe that hotel web sites that fall under the disability discrimination act and must be made accessible, however courts are yet to ensure that (Kreismann and Palmer, 2001 and Sherwyn, Eigen and Klausner, 2000). People with Disabilities such as visually impaired find it difficult to navigate through website (Mills, Han and Clay, 2008). In addition, face way-finding barrier, which can be over come with the help of facilitator (Thapar et al., 2004). This suggests that the satisfaction of <https://assignbuster.com/the-uk-disability-discrimination-act-tourism-essay/>



visually disabled tourist may not be optimal since hotel websites if not accessible would influence the decision and service experience. Williams, Rattray and Grimes (2007) ascertains that hospitality industry when developing websites rarely take impaired users into consideration and hence few websites can be found that are friendly to visually impaired users.

Mills, Han and Clay (2008) says that websites with accessibility barriers pose as a problem and decreases the opportunity of using websites, however websites when made accessible make People with Disabilities independent and can get-into websites for information despite the impairments. Some facilitators that can be used in websites are screen-read software's that convert text on websites into speech or can also convert text into Braille (O'Brien 2005). Web content accessibility must be capable to serve individual in society, which also includes People with Disabilities, however hotel website information accessibility is low and fails to meet the needs of disabled tourist for whom information provided plays an important role in travel decision-making (William, Rattray and Grimes, 2007). Despite this, various hotels fail to make provision for people with disabilities and on inspection by William and Rattray (2005), they discovered that many hotels have their web pages that are not accessible and even if they are, it was found to be compliant only with first level of accessibility addressed by world wide web consortium (W3C). Hence, it is evident that without proper web accessibility and inaccurate information for such a large market of people with disabilities who wish to travel may experience dissatisfaction through the service offered by hotels. Nusair and Kandampully (2008) put forth that service offered through websites that are accessible, helpful and providing

desired information greatly affects customer satisfaction positively. To facilitate accessibility to all including disabled tourist the world wide web consortium have developed web content accessibility guidelines, following which, enables access to all (World Wide Web Consortium, 1999.)

Apart from facilitators that convert text to speech or Braille which is very convenient for people with disabilities such as blindness, deafness but it is also important to address web accessibility for those have reading difficulty. WebPages commonly use option for changing the text size for accessibility but pay little attention to colour, it is important to note that some users cannot differentiate between colours and options must also be available to view text without colour and colour scheme used must be contrasting enough (World Wide Web Consortium, 1999). These simple guidelines in hotel websites could influence satisfaction, help in decision-making and the people with disabilities as tourist may patronize such hotels.

Practically most of the industries universally lose some of their customers to competitors (Devlin, Gwynne and Ennew, 2002). This may be because the competing service provider is likely to meet the customer's satisfaction level and expectation. Forsyth (1999) put forth that suppliers tend to cater to specific wants; however, customers commonly wish to do be associated with suppliers and their employees who are creative, honest, responsive, knowledgeable, approachable and cater to all wants and this makes customers see them as professional and tend to switch and maintain relation with such suppliers.

Influence of hotel service on customer satisfaction.

Customer oriented industries such as hotels place customer at the core whilst evaluating customer satisfaction, however in order to do so is it important to understand the customers needs and expectations which would help maximize satisfaction and maintain competitiveness and profitability ( McMullan, 2005). The study conducted by Danaher and Mattsson (1994) reveals that customer satisfaction in hotels is based on evaluation of various services offered which customers are likely to evaluate them separately and not collectively hence strongly impacting customer satisfaction.

According to Forsyth (1999) in hospitality industry such as hotels, customer service is of prime importance to maintain good customer relation and maintain customer satisfaction. Cartwright (2000) argues that delighting a customer is also of importance and can be achieved when product and facilities serve more than expected. Service providers are now realising that delighting customers is more vital since by just satisfying customers and gaining their loyalty though are primary factors whilst satisfying customers cannot be entirely relied on. Disabled customers too travel and wish to enjoy facilities, services and are delighted when all is accessible, hotels need to keep them in mind whilst assessing their services. Shoemaker and Bowen (2003) revealed that in order to delight, maintain loyalty and connection, and gain trust from customers for the organisation it is important that all services and facilities are designed keeping customers into consideration.

Based on survey conducted by Wei, Ruys and Muller (1999) concluded that people with disabilities and including senior travellers gave more importance to facilities and service that the hotel offered than other attributes such as décor, price, food and beverage, when judging the satisfaction they

experienced during their stay. Zeitmal and Bitner (2003) explains that in order to achieve customer satisfaction, it is important to maintain quality and standard in every customer service encounter, in-order to do so it is important that employees understand specific requirements and priorities of customers during each service encounter.

### **Findings and Suggestions:.**

From the literature it is evident that people with disabilities experience a lot of constraints, and have to consider various risks when planning to travel, also they face with limited options during travel selection process (United Nations, 2007). The lodging facilities such as hotels too are few that are able to cater to their needs and treat them as expected (Vignuda, 2001). Thus, often-disabled travellers are forced to select only those hotels that they are aware of, which will cater to their needs, since other hotels fail to treat them as expected and would fail to provide a satisfying experience. It is apparent that gradually in the future hospitality industries such as hotel would have to cater to this growing market and customer satisfaction would be of importance to ensure repeat business and draw such a niche market into hotels.

Most of the service providers are reactive and implement installation of ramps or automatic door or design few accessible guest rooms, toilets or have special parking space or may implement Braille menu (Kaufman-Scarborough, 1998). However more than physical changes it is worthwhile having implemented welcoming service accessible to all, which would ensure people with disabilities to enjoy d