

## Tourism For Visually Impaired

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**Abstract:** This research sought to develop additional understanding to Tourism for Visually Impaired persons in Davao City through qualitative case study, evaluating the expectation, experience, reason and barriers of participation of a person with visual impairment. This study aims to understand and respond to their needs by focusing on the accessibility of tourism in all aspect. The eight primary respondents of this study were from the Word Opportunity towards Reformation and Development for Person with Disability (WORD – PWD), an organization in Davao City which cater the needs of the visually impaired persons. The result of the in-depth interview showed that the participants are more concerned about unequal treatment of the establishments. Accessibility of attraction sites transportation which was the reason for not involving and participating in tourism activities.

*Keywords: Accessibility, Tourism, Visually impaired, Word of Opportunity towards Reformation and Development for Person with Disability*

### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, tourism destinations are increasingly developed and integrate a challenging market to everyone. As travelling becomes more attainable, more people are encouraged to travel around the world. UNWTO (2017), shows over 1,186 million are travelling worldwide, it indicates that at least 4.6 percent increase in tourists who traveled internationally compared to the recent years. However, an issue arising involving the visually impaired are undervalued and neglected in Tourism market.

According to the World Health Organization (2014), there are an estimated number of 285 million people to be visually impaired worldwide. Tourism development is moving to a new critical issue such as quality, sustainability, image, innovation and accessibility (Kong W. & Loi K., nd). In other words, the value of accessibility is important to be considered in tourism however, persons with disabilities including the visually impaired are often neglected or ignored as a significant tourist segment, even though they have their desire to travel as well (Lawton & Weaver, 2010). In addition, Lockwood & Medlik, (2001) said that tourism and hospitality industries are generally poor at catering for disabled populations. Humanly, the people with disabilities have the right to participate fully in the community and enjoy the same quality of life as people without disabilities, the right to travel and participate in leisure activities (Packer, Small, & Darcy, 2008).

In Australia, United States and European Union are becoming more concerned about the tourists with disabilities and they are being considered as an important part of the tourism market, and the attention was being turned to the accessible tourism market

that presents a challenge to the global travel industry in terms of improving policies and mobilizing the investment to carry out the necessary improvements across the board in the short and long term (World Tourism Organization, 2013). However, in United Kingdom a research had been undertaken was revealed that the visually impaired people were repeatedly feels ignored (Richards, et al., 2010). It highlights the barriers among the visually impaired for not participating tourism. Including the individual's emotional and psychological factors, social factor such the attitude between the other tourists and staffs, and environmental factor wherein the inaccessibility of a place or in transportation hinders them. Among these barriers, the visually impaired people suggested that tourism industry must train staff to know how to interact with people with disabilities. In the Philippine scenario, The Republic Act No. 7277 is a Magna Carta for persons with disability that have protected the rights for accessibility to buildings, establishment as well as public transportation, employment, education, auxiliary social services. In section 4, people with different disabilities such as a result of mental, physical or sensory impairment, has the right to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. However, with all those legal provision and assistance on public transportation, employment, education, social services and accessibility, Philippines has no attraction sites that could enable the visually impaired to experience the quality of life enjoying the tourism products as well.

With these underlying concerns, the researchers of this study would like to know if the expectations and experiences of the visually impaired people in tourism will enable and help them boost their travel leisure as being part of wider market in tourism industry with respect to accommodation, attraction and transportation, to know the reason as well as the barriers their participation in the tourism activities. Thus, this study will support the tourism industry as well as government to strategize and improve accessibility to tourism in Davao City for the visually impaired person and to participate fully in tourism activities.

This chapter presents the general methodology in this qualitative case study. Specifically presents research design, research participant, and role of the researcher, data sources, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, trustworthiness, and credibility.

In this study, the researchers determined and analyzed the tourism for visually impaired. The study explored the expectation and experiences of people with visual impairment through in-depth interviews among selected focus group in Davao City. This study employed thematic analysis to identify themes, ideas and topics (Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2012).

The participants of this study are the partially and fully visually impaired focused group from Word of Opportunity towards Reformation and Development for Person with Disability (WORD – PWD) organization in Davao City during 27<sup>th</sup> day of May 2017. They were asked regarding their expectation and experiences on accommodation, attraction and transportation in Davao City, the reason of their participation as well as the barriers of their participation in tourism with the permission so as to be the perfect subject of this research.

The researcher of this study aimed to understand the value of the visually impaired people as a part of tourism segment. The researcher of this study played a role of an interviewer and recorder of at least eight respondents from the selected organization for the visually impaired people group in Davao City, suitable and perfect for this research. As interviewers, researchers used the interview guide questions and followed the questions given to get deeper answers on the participants. The transcriber who made a record of the testimony or the data gathered was accurately assured that all transcripts are precised and properly coded. Lastly, the focus group interview was voice recorded with due permission and recorded in a written journal.

Researchers of this study were assured that adequate details were saved and that the research questions were clearly written and stated. Researchers used a self-made questionnaire and were validated by experts from the College of Hospitality Education of the University of Mindanao and that the research questions and data gathered was properly evaluated systematically.

In this study, data was collected through in-depth interview which is common to qualitative research. Researchers made the interview guide questions which were being based on the research questions. The Visually impaired person from the selected organization is the selected participants for this research. The main objective was to determine the expectation and experiences of the visually impaired person in accommodation, attraction and transportation, the reason of their participation as well as barriers of their participation in tourism.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Discussions of the results were based on the thematic analysis done by the researchers (Please see appendix I for General Thematic Analysis table). The collective answers was discussed, and the following are the themes which emerge from the interviews:

### **Appendix I. General Thematic Analysis**

<b>Questions/Topic</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Frequency of Responses</b>	<b>Core Ideas</b>
<b>Expectation in accommodation</b>	Guidance/ Assistance	<b>5</b>	<p>They need an assistance or guidance from staffs every time they will enter to the establishment</p> <p>The establishments should be accessible, no obstacles in pathways and hallways</p>

	<p>Accessibility of establishment</p> <p>Accommodating and can cater the needs of a PWD</p> <p>Rights of PWD should be implemented</p>	<p>1</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Staffs in hotel and restaurants should be accommodating and can cater their needs</p> <p>Their rights should be fully implemented</p>
<b>Expectation in attraction</b>	<p>Enjoyable and accessible</p> <p>Tour guide</p> <p>Can experience through other senses (feeling and visualizing)</p> <p>Accessible pathways</p>	<p>4</p> <p>2</p> <p>1</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Attraction must be enjoyable and accessible for the visually impaired</p> <p>Attraction should have a tour guide</p> <p>Their expectation is to experience the attraction through other senses (touch, feeling and visualizing)</p> <p>Pathways and hallways in attraction sites must be accessible and be no obstacles</p>

<b>Expectation in transportation</b>	Implement/apply reserved seats for PWD	<b>4</b>	Reserved seats for Disabled passengers must be implemented and useful for them  Drivers or conductors should be able to assist them
	Assistance from drivers or conductors	<b>2</b>	Drivers or barkers of public transportation must able to help them whenever bad situations arise
	Drivers/barkers must able to help	<b>1</b>	Do not have any expectation
	No expectation	<b>1</b>	
<b>Experience in accommodation</b>	Untrained/ Ignorant staffs	<b>3</b>	The staffs are ignorant and untrained
	Accommodating and responsive staffs	<b>3</b>	The staffs are accommodating and responsive
	No experience	<b>2</b>	Do not have any experience
<b>Ex perience in attraction</b>	Staffs are accommodating and other tourists are friendly	<b>6</b>	The staffs in the attraction sites are accommodating and the other tourists are friendly to them
		<b>1</b>	Staffs in the attraction sites are ignorant and are unwilling to assist them

	Ignorant/ Unaware staffs  No experience	<b>1</b>	Staffs in the attraction sites are unaware and ignorant
<b>Experience in Public Transportation</b>	Drivers and barkers are helpful	<b>2</b>	Divers and barkers are helpful to them
	Reserved seats for PWD did not apply	<b>2</b>	They cannot make use of the reserved seats for PWD
	Dishonest passengers and drivers	<b>2</b>	Passengers and drivers are not honest in terms of their fare  Passengers are inconsiderate/insensitive especially when asking favor for a seat, they are not able to give way or move forward
	Inconsiderate/Insensitive passengers	<b>1</b>	Do not have any experience
	No experience	<b>1</b>	
<b>Reason of Participation</b>	Inclusion and social interaction	<b>4</b>	Inclusion of activities like sports and parades cause them to participate
		<b>3</b>	

	No experience/Lack of interest	1	They do not have any experience due to lack of interests
	Enjoyment with companion		They enjoy tourism with their sighted peers
<b>Barriers of Participation</b>	No travel companion/ Lack of confidence	5	No travel companion and lack of confidence hinders them to participate tourism
	Lack of budget	2	Lack of budget hinders them to participate in tourism
	Discrimination from untrained staffs, inaccessibility of a place		Discrimination from untrained staffs, the way other people treats them and the inaccessibility of the places hinders them to participate in tourism

## **Expectation**

In this section, the result of interview on the interviewees' expectations to tourism related establishments is presented and arranged according to topics: *Accommodation, Attraction and Transportation*.

## **Accommodation**

In terms of their expectation in accommodation and service of hotel and restaurant establishments in Davao City, the findings just confirmed that most of the respondents need guidance and assistance from staffs every time they enter to the establishment. While few of the respondents said that staffs should be accommodating to cater their needs. This indicates that staffs in hotel and restaurant establishment in Davao City should strongly offer guidance and assistance directly to the visually impaired person especially when they are coming alone.

Accommodation in relation to the accessibility of hotels and restaurant establishments as well as services offered and attitudes of the staffs is very important to consider the needs of a visually impaired. It does not include only the physical facilities of an establishment but the social aspect as well. This was also supported by Kokkonen,

(2016) that the social responsibility, customer service and broad minded attitude meaning of respect and equal treatment among the visually impaired customers or guests must also been considered in tourism establishments. Staffs in tourism establishments must include employees who have the knowledge, trainings on how to treat and assist people with disabilities including visually impaired people in courtesy. Thus, staffs should be attentive of the way to assist, help and serve a visually impaired person, not avoiding them in service situations.

## **Attraction**

When the respondents were asked about their expectation on the different attractions in Davao City, most of them are expecting that attraction sites must be enjoyable and accessible to experience. While few of respondents just demonstrated that attraction sites must have a special tour guides.

Attractions are the elements of a tourism destination that motivates the purpose of a journey and visit, it is important to understand that the visually impaired have the same needs and desires for tourism activities as others and they are traveling also for leisure and enjoyment with peer. Focusing on accessibility of the sites and attractions is important for future benefits (Boes, 2014). This was proven by Kokkonen, (2016) that special tools such as Braille, tactile and audiotapes must be present and available in attraction sites, thus a helping tool for the visually impaired to experience the attraction. In site activities, they need a product that can be fitted for them as a tourist with visual impairment, the fact that they are not able to see what is in that attraction they need a special tour guide who can give explanation, details and who can describe the attraction itself.

When it comes to accessibility on attractions, Davao City has no attraction site that the visually impaired can fully access because there are no special built in facilities and equipment such as information in braille, tactile, extra cane and special tour guides in the attraction. This showed that there is special need which must be done to improve accessibility of attraction sites in Davao City enabling the visually impaired people to experience as tourism product. This was supported by Bisschoff & Breedt, (2012) that the provision of accessible facilities is the most important area of concern for achieving a barrier-free tourism experience for people with disabilities including the visually impaired people. Hence, visually impaired person should be treated by tourism industry as an important influence on how the attraction site is experienced.

## **Transportation**

When the respondents were asked about their expectation in transportation, most them said that reserve seats for disabled passengers must be implemented since they are always relying to it. While few of the respondents said that drivers or barkers of public transportation should able to help and assist them.

The Magna Carta Republic Act No. 7277 has protected the Disabled person which stated that jeepneys shall prefer front seats as designated seats for disabled persons and other passengers may be use these designated seats if not occupied and yield them to incoming disabled passengers only if the yielding passenger can still be accommodated at the back. However, this implementation found to be very critical for



the visually impaired person who does not make use of the implemented rights to be seated at front seats. The respondents mentioned that they cannot make use of the reserved seats for disability because there were passengers that occupy the seat in front. This showed that drivers, barkers as well as the passengers of public transportation in Davao City were not considering the rights of people with disability which must necessarily been considered by society. To be able to have a total participation in tourism activities it has to be more accessible for the visually impaired people. This was also supported by Mothiravally et al. (2014) that accessibility of transport is needed for tourism to take place at the destination wherein it is the most important for all people who travel. Without considering this transportation people with visual impairments could never do everything they wanted to do for their daily life activities as being part of tourism because they are incapable of moving to a destination without it.

## **Experience**

In this section, the result of interview on the interviewee's experiences on tourism related establishments is presented arranged according to topics: *Accommodation, Attraction and Transportation, Reason of Participation and Barriers of participation.*

### **Accommodation**

In terms of the respondent's experience in accommodation and service of hotel and restaurant establishment, the findings just confirmed that they experienced an accommodating and responsive staff. However not all of them had experienced this helpful manners on staff. Some of the respondents said that they experienced staffs that were ignorant, untrained and unable to offer those help and assistance. This showed that the visually impaired people as a guest are more concerned about the attitude of staffs in hoteliers. This was supported by Mothiravally, (2014) that hotel and restaurant establishments must prominently give special attention among the untrained staffs in handling travellers or guests with disabilities to increase their stay. They also mentioned that there are hotels or restaurant establishments in Davao City which are ignoring their rights as person who have disability. This showed that those establishments are giving no importance to accommodate a special need and attention to the visually impaired people. UNWTO, (2013) was also supported that this could be a barrier for a visually impaired person when they cannot overcome if the staffs are poorly trained and unable to give the service in non-discriminatory way.

### **Attraction**

In terms of the respondent's experience in attraction, some of them said that the staffs are accommodating and other tourists are also friendly however, they did not experienced accessibility on the attraction itself.

They mentioned that they were not interested when it comes to visiting attraction sites in Davao City because they cannot appreciate it since there are no opportunities for them to experience those. Additionally, the respondents also mentioned that Museums in Davao City are not worth experiencing because they cannot enjoy the art and history about it for the reason that touching the arts and sculptures are strictly prohibited even just for the sake of the visually impaired visitors. With all of these concerns, this

showed that Davao City's attraction sites are not accessible and does not have special tour guides particular for visually impaired visitors, does not have special facilities like audio information, braille or other equipment which allow them to experience the attraction. This was supported by Tatic, (2015) that the government must provide any assistance and mediators including guides and readers to facilitate accessibility to buildings and other facilities open to the public. Likewise, Tryzno & Piechotka, (2016) also proven that it is very important in historical sites or museums that can be touched like the Gallery by Touch and information provided in Braille or in audio format in which this is another way for the visually impaired to be included in the attraction site and sculpture demonstrations in museums should be implemented to experience contact with the art and gain knowledge. This implementation could enlighten the visually impaired to participate fully in tourism. To better understand this, accessibility is to develop a positive tourism experiences and building a capacity in the tourism industry to cater for all levels of disability.

### **Transportation**

When the respondents were asked about their experience in transportation, some of them said that there were drivers and barkers who are willing to assist them, however some of them said that they also experienced drivers as well as passengers who are not being fair by taking advantage of their condition and tricked them when passing their fare. This showed that Davao City's accessibility on transportation is not just a matter of being able to ride on it but more concerns on the attitudes of drivers and people towards people with visual impairment. The preconception against visually impaired will hinder the success of even the best exertions to develop access Rickert, (n.d). This was supported by Crudden, Hierholzer & McDonnald, (2015) that it is better to have a transportation that can help all passengers, a vehicle that could serve and give important priority to people with disabilities especially for the visually impaired who preferably used public transportation. By then, the inaccessibility of public transport has been identified as a common weakness from a lot of countries in tourism for people with visual impairment.

### **Reason of Participation**

In terms of the reason of their participation in tourism activities, most of the respondents said that inclusion of activities like sports and parades enables them to participate in tourism. The respondents who were been part of the national team player for Persons with Disability mentioned that Sports like goal ball, shot put, dash sport, javelin throw and running is their passion and it motivates them to participate in tourism activities.

Tourism educations nowadays are more concerned about removing the barriers to access the tourism sites and attractions, but it is also important to emphasize that social tourism should be considered to enable the visually impaired to become active in full participation (Kong W. & Loi K., nd). This showed that sports related activities are generally needed by the visually impaired people for tourism participation to be motivated and to have courage to participate in tourism. Inclusion covers a movement to build up the same chances for all people and guaranteeing access to the different needs for the interests including the quality of life. This was supported by British Blind Sports, (2016) that physical activity like sports can be a very effective catalyst to

ensure a healthier and happier lifestyle and participation in sport is a positive experience for a visually impaired person since it provides physical and psychological benefits to a person with visual impairment such as social flexibility, community activities, develop quality of life, self-confidence and esteem, and social acceptance.

When other respondents were asked about their tourism participation, few of them said that they do not have any experience of involvement in tourism because they were lacking interest to participate in sport and recreational activities. This showed that visually impaired people are considered themselves as decrease in leisure activities because of social interaction and the condition of having a disease. It is important to believe that every person with a visual impairment has the right to participate in sport and physical activity and to have the same inclusion as a sighted person. This was supported by Slater (2013) that the tourism sector needs to provide an alternative and effective ways which the disabled people including visually impaired can engage tourism activities, for the greater opportunities, and providing more choices to encourage visually impaired to participate.

Least of the respondents said that they enjoy their participation in tourism activities with their sighted peers. This showed that they were enjoying going out with their sighted peers to tourism destinations in Davao City. Peers and companions gave them confidence in getting involved in tourism activities as tourism and active recreation nowadays are increasingly popular among those people with disability and impairment acquaintances. This was supported by Oliveira (2008) in (Tomio Dreher, da Silva Machado Carrion, & Kuczmynda da Silveira, 2013) social inclusion is what we call affirmative attitudes in order to include the less privileged in the social circumstance. Likewise, tourism and recreation exemplifies the important factor of the rehabilitation of disabled and impaired people because it helps them overcome their limitations (Kaganek, et al., 2017).

### **Barriers of Participation**

In terms of the barriers of the visually impaired participants' participation and involvement in tourism, the findings just confirmed that most of the respondents do not have travel companion and lacking confidence which hinders them to participate in tourism.

Many people have negative and ignorant attitude, the physical appearance of disability sometimes hinders us when we interact a person with disability, knowing that they have the same needs as others also. This can be viewed as an issue that affects the visually impaired to participate and experience tourism activities, inner doubts occur whether travel is seen as the right thing to do. This was supported by Neckarova (2016), that a society of people without disabilities are often sees disabled people as having the life that is less worth living and so the visually impaired are being suffered by the negativity of the world's perception which stops them from participating tourism activities and mostly limits them also.

Few respondents said that lacking budget or expensiveness of travel hinders them to participate and least of the respondents said that the discrimination from untrained staffs, the negative treatment of other people, and the inaccessibility of the places hinders them to participate in tourism. Sometimes, the visually impaired person could

not travel because they do not have travel partners or could be an income is their primary reason as travel always requires money, unfortunately not all visually impaired can provide over this kind of expenses. This showed that not all visually impaired can provide over expenses to travel as it always requires money. This was supported by the (World Health Organization, 2011) that people with disabilities have lower educational attainments, less financial chances due to their impairment also and so higher rates of poverty are rampant for them is the reason they will not involve in tourism.

Additionally, discrimination from untrained staffs, the negative treatment of other people, and the inaccessibility of the places hinders them to participate in tourism. A respondent said that because of their disability, the staffs in tourism establishments were discriminating and giving no importance to them, staffs were not well informed about their rights especially to them as visually impaired. This showed that the negative attitude from staffs with an impaired customer feeling they had experienced discrimination and the criticism of other people is one also of the reasons that limits the visually impaired in participating tourism activities (Richards, 2014). Finally, the tourism and hospitality industries have a social responsibility to provide people with disabilities with an adequate service experience. This responsibility is especially relevant as an important aspect in the quality of life of the visually impaired people.

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