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Urban Tourism Development

A Case Study of Accessible Tourism in Arabianranta

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A Case Study of Accessible Tourism in Arabianranta

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The increasing number of special access required tourists willing to participate in tourism and with the growing number of the aging population has made Accessible tourism a growing market. An estimated 130 million disabled tourists in Europe with annual potential spending of about 68 billion Euros has created the need for the upgrade of tourism facilities in different destinations to meet the accessible needs of this customer's segment. Only those countries with efficient accessible policies and modern tourism facility will be able to tap into this new tourism potential which will in turn generate huge revenue for its economy.

The primary goal of this Bachelor thesis is to examine the current facilities and services in Arabianranta and give recommendations based on global accessible standards for integration into the standardized development of Arabianranta as an urban destination. This thesis also tries to provide the Helsinki City Planning Department and tour operators including the hotels with all vital accessible information needed to carry out a successful business.

The study was based on qualitative participatory observations which were carried out on two different seasons. A quantitative statistical secondary data was also extracted to further establish a strong understanding of the subject matter. The entire result of the observations and interviews were examined with the help of some tourism accessibility theories in establishing a recommendation for the Art and Design Helsinki Ltd for future integration into Arabianranta development plans.

Although the Helsinki City Planning Department thinks that making a destination accessible to all is not realistic, the study shows that Helsinki as an urban area is partially accessible at some point but some policies need to be implemented to meet the global accessible needs of the disabled tourists.

Key Words: Accessible tourism, Global Accessible Standards, Customers Segments, Urban tourism.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

The strong potential contribution of tourism towards economic development is the reason why both developed and developing countries are channeling their resources to the tourism industry. Developed countries are channeling their resources towards the upgrade of more sustainable urban tourism facilities and services in their respective countries. This is seen in the city planning techniques used in these countries to cater for the accessible needs of both the disabled tourist and their growing aging population. “The potential contribution to development is the justification for establishing tourism”. (Sharpley & Telfer 2002, 1)

Despite the fact that tourism accounts for about 10% of world total Gross Domestic Product (GDP), there is still lots of untapped aspect that has been neglected of which if properly looked into would give tourism a considerable boost and consequently impact on global economy. (WTO 1999) Efforts to bridge this gap made many stakeholders to start looking into several means and ideas that could be employed to achieve an optimum integration. In the course of doing this, several phrases such as “visitor friendly tourism” and “barrier free tourism” were introduced which later gave birth to what is currently known as accessible tourism. “Accessible tourism is a form of tourism that involves collaborative processes between stakeholders that enables people with access requirement, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism product, services and environment” (Buhalis & Darsy 2011, 10).

It was discovered that certain group of people i.e., people with disabilities and other access requirement problems which by estimation are more than 650 million are not adequately considered whose by virtue of human rights, have rights to participate in tourism as a normal people but due to inadequate access to tourism facilities and services at various levels fettered their constitutional enablement. Having identified these lapses in the tourism sector, the United Nation World Tourism Organization made it universally mandatory to all stakeholders at various levels to embrace accessible tourism as a unique way of providing suitable tourism facilities and services at various destinations to all categories of visitors without or with minimum restrictions (UNWTO 2009).

A high estimate of every country’s population will need access requirements at a point of their life and will require accessible facilities in order to cope with this condition. This means that providing critical recommendations for a better accessible policy in Arabianranta Helsinki will not only cater for the disabled visitors and the aging senior citizens but will also enhance

the living standard of the entire population thereby making the “Helsinki for All” slogan a realistic concept.

Helsinki Finland have both winter and summer tourist inflow with different weather conditions will be the World Design Capital in 2012. This means that there will be a huge number of tourist inflow that includes the access required tourist visiting destinations in Helsinki such as Arabianranta which is a major Art and Design district in Helsinki. This indicates that there is a need to provide accessible information and innovative ideas for tourism organization within this district for a better way of managing different tourism segments according to the Universally Design Principles.

1.2 Research objectives and Questions

The Objective of this study is to examine the current accessible facilities and services within and to Arabianranta district under strict analysis based on global design principles and provide recommendations for further development of these observed facilities. This will in turn improve the market value of Helsinki as an urban tourism destination and thus improve the health wellbeing of the entire aging population.

The core research question for this study is how the Helsinki City Planning Department and the Art and Design Helsinki Ltd can make the district a friendly environment to all customers segments. This core research question is sub-divided into three basic questions as listed below;

- ✓ What is Universal design and accessible standard?
- ✓ How accessible is Arabianranta Helsinki?
- ✓ How can Arabianranta Helsinki be made more accessible?

2 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical background

The movement of people away from their usual environment to undergo several activities is the idea behind tourism. Since people must eat, sleep and feel comfortable in beautiful surroundings during their stay in these destinations is the reason behind the existence of several tourism services like accommodations, transport and restaurants.

Tourism business encompasses the use of various facilities and services like transportation, accommodation, restaurants and other recreational facilities to satisfy the holiday experience of visitors during their stay in a destination. This is why tourism is the fastest growing economic catalyst as it uses all available resources to satisfy these visitors and at the same time improve the living standards of the growing population. Such that in 2009, international tourism generated 852 billion USD (611 billion Euros) in export earning superseding other export sectors of the world. "The business volume of tourism equals or even surpasses that of the oil export, food product or automobile.

Tourism has become one of the major players in international commerce and at the same time one of the main source of income for both the developed and developing countries"(UNWTO 2010). This is why tourism has been associated with development such that developing countries are beginning to develop their tourism service and amenities with an aim of promoting economic growth. The following Figure 1 table shows the international tourism arrival from 1950 to 1998.

Year	Arrivals (000s)	Receipts (USD Mn)	Year	Arrivals (000s)	Receipts (USD Mn)
1950	25,282	2,100	1991	463,951	277,568
1960	69,320	6,867	1992	503,356	315,103
1965	112,862	11,604	1993	519,045	324090
1970	165,787	17,900	1994	550,471	353,998
1975	222,290	40,702	1995	565,495	405,110
1980	285,997	105,320	1996	596,524	435,594
1985	327,188	118,084	1997	610,763	435,981
1990	458,229	268,928	1998	625,236	444,741

Figure 1. International Tourism Arrival and receipt 1950-1998(Sharpley & Telfer 2002, 16)

As seen in Figure 1, it is clear to say that tourism has been at an increasing rate from 25,282 arrivals in 1950 with enormous number of destinations springing up until 1998 when the tourism receipt got to its climax at 444,741 million United State dollars. The international tourism arrival receipt is expected to reach 1.8 billion by the year 2030 which will be as a result of 43 million additional tourists participating in tourism activities. (UNWTO 2011)

Considering the above analysis on the rate of tourism growth, it is obvious that tourism will continue to increase as it has been in recent years. As new destinations and new tourism service continue to spring up, there seems to be a growing interest of disabled and old people undergoing tourist activities which is a very huge market potential if proper innovative service measures are taken. World Health Organization (WHO) bulletin 1970, estimated that about 650 million people which is about 10% of the world population have some forms of disability. This figure has increased to 15% in the last few years which signifies a potential profitable niche market for the tourism industry (WHO 2010). In Finland for example, there seems to be a huge amount of funding going to the social service sector because of the Finnish aging population.

Accessible tourism in Europe is a very good niche market such that if properly developed will help create more tourism job opportunities for the tourism industry and will in turn improve the health wellbeing of the disabled people and the entire aging population. People with disabilities represent a growing population of travelers. Figure 2 chart below shows disability statistics in selected regions which explains the huge potential attributed to accessible tourism implementation

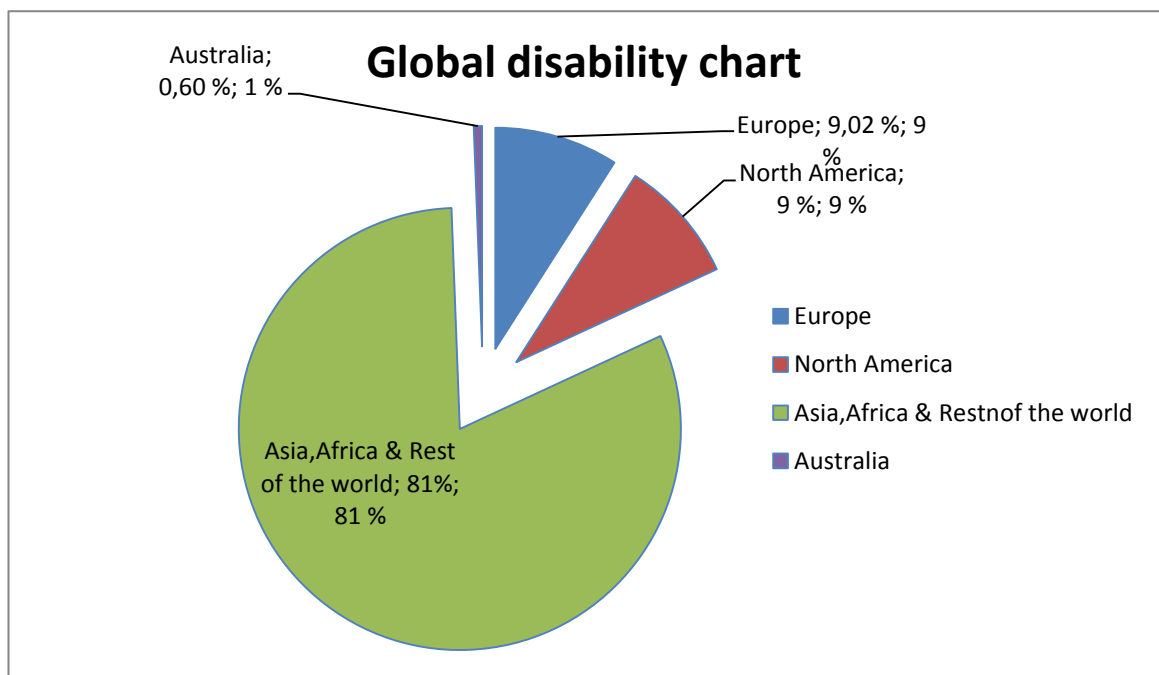


Figure 2: Global disability chart (WHO 2011)

From the Figure 2 pie chart above, it is quite clear that Europe constitute about 9% of the total world disabled population which means that there are more than 60 million people with permanent or temporary disability. North America which include the United States and

Canada constitute disabled population of about 54 million and 4.4 million respectively which is one of the major tourist generating regions.

The largest portion of the chart represents the disabled population in Asia, Africa and South America constituting about 528 million of the total disabled population which accounts for about 81% of the world disabled people. Australia which is the leader in accessible tourism implementation has a disabled population of about 4 million representing 1% of the world population as seen in Figure 2.

In the researchers' opinion, traveling to Australia is a very expensive holiday decision and today's tourist are becoming more and more price sensitive in their travel decision such that they will be willing to travel to destinations with cheaper cost but valued services. If proper accessible technique is employed in the Helsinki city planning process, Helsinki Finland will be made an "Easy Access Market" thus becoming one of the best urban tourism destinations in the world.

2.2 Relationship between disability and aging

It is estimated that there will be one billion people worldwide who are 65 years and above by the year 2030. This unique set of aged people regarded as senior citizens of a country will require accessible facilities during this age period (NIA 2009). This estimation was based on the statistics collected from the 2006 information that estimated the people who were 65 years and above to be 500 million which is a 140% increase in aged people worldwide. "A person is 14 times more likely to have a form of disability at 65 years than they are as a four-years-old" (Buhalis & Darcy 2011, 5)

In the researcher's opinion, disability is agreed to be increasing among Finnish aging population. Short retirement age makes them to live longer as a result of reduced stress. According to Edmondson in Businessweek.com dailies, The Nordic countries workforce of 2.3 million is aging so fast that expert are predicting that it will shrink by 900,000 in the next 15 years (Edmondson 2005) for which the researchers thinks it is a good market opportunity for the Helsinki tourism industries if properly considered. The retiring workforce has high spending potential as a result of pension cares, they will retire and at some stage have some form of disability requirements.

The relationship marketing concept has it that marketing has moved from the product centered marketing to the consumer centered marketing (Peck 1999). This means that meeting the needs of every individual consumer is the utmost success of any product or service. So there is a great need to provide more accessible facilities for this tourism segment and provide an open door for this new tourism market. Accessible tourism is not restricted only to the physically disabled tourism segment, providing accessible facilities will be

beneficial to Families. A pregnant woman requires some form of accessible product and also parents with babies will require a good accessible road and ramps for their babies when using a pram.

One of the major problems associated with the provision of accessible tourism is the problem of information formulation and gathering. Most destinations have some form of accessible services and product but seldom neglect to publish it when providing information for their prospective tourist. This affects the travel decision of a disabled tourist as what he needs to know about the disability services offered are not highlighted on the information platform of the tour operator. Also, many employers do not educate their employees on how well to provide information for disabled tourist when they arrive at their destination. This creates an unsatisfactory travel experience for the tourist on arrival.

Information is very vital when delivering tourism services. If adequate pre-information is well provided to the access required tourist before or during their visits, it will go a long way in improving the travel experience of the disabled tourist and encourage repeated experience.

3 Key Terminologies

This concept is used to describe basic terms used to analyze the case study. They include the primary and the secondary terms which is a core term to the subject of study. The following terms below were used in describing and generating discussions for the case study.

3.1 Tourism

Tourism has been explained in different terms in the past as the movement of a person or group away from their usual environment. Some writers have studied tourism in economic, holistic and technical perspective. The economic approach to tourism views tourism as both a business and an industry, the technical approach to tourism views tourism in a way through which data is collected and the final holistic approach has viewed tourism to include the entire essence of the subject of tourism.

Tourism according to some scholars can be defined based on three main phenomenon firstly, the purpose of the trip, secondly, the distance travelled and the third which is the duration of the trip (Theobald 1998, 5). The different purposes of travelling according to this writer has erased business tourist out from the term tourism. Also the scholar stated that those

people whose journey does not exceed 0-160 kilometers away from their home are not regarded as tourist. Therefore local people who visit tourist destinations in their area are not officially regarded as tourist. The duration of the trip has also been criticized by most scholars as some definition as stated that the duration of the tourist trip must be over night. This overnight activity has excluded one day trip which has generated more business for leisure attractions like amusement park and restaurants.

With this conflicting definition of tourism, tourism will forever remain a term that is subject to different interpretation. However, the definition generally accepted by most scholars is the one defined by the world tourism organization(WTO) 1989 to be “the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal place of work and residence, the activity undertaken during their stay in this destinations and the facilities created to cater for their needs” (Rätz & Puczko 2002,15).This definition is mostly accepted by scholars because it includes both leisure and business travelers and it is not limited by duration or distance.

For the purpose of this study, the researchers defined Tourism as the temporary movement of all categories of people away from their residence or place of work to undertake activities and use facilities created to cater for their needs with ease or minimum assistants. This definition to some extents includes both the able bodied and the physically challenged or disabled travelers.

Domestic and International tourist

Domestic tourist is also regarded as the local tourist who visits destinations within their own environment, region or country. Domestic tourists are usually the frequent visitors of a destination as they do not need to make any long travel plan. They can also be referred to as day travelers or visitors. On the other hand, International tourists are tourists who visit a tourism destination outside their home environment, region or country. Long travel planning process is usually a major factor when taking an international trip and accommodation issue is usually the main consideration when planning for an international holiday trip. A tourist destination is an area, region or country that disposes all the tourist services needed to satisfy the demands of every tourist segment. (WTO 2011)

3.2 Customers Segmentation

Customers segment is a term used by marketers like tourism experts to identify different categories of tourist according to their various needs in order to make tailored services for their customers. For the sake of this research, the researchers classified the tourist into two major segments. The able tourist who are tourist with no disability and the disabled tourist

also known as the access required tourist who are tourist with permanent or temporary disabilities. In the researcher's opinions, the major discussion encountered during the implementation of segmentation in respect to disability is the view that this set of people is only a small market segment of the entire population.

Aging Population

The aging population is frequently referred to as the "matured travelers" in tourism. They are senior citizens of a country who are at or over 65 years of age (Buhalis & Darcy 2011). Matured travelers are very important to the tourism industry because of the growth in this tourism segment and their wealth and availability as they tend to spend more time on vacation than the usual tourist. Nevertheless, health factors related to disabilities tends to affect the matured travelers and limit their tourism activities. They require some form of accessible facilities and information in order to undergo their tourism trip of which these facilities are not readily available at some destinations.

4 Accessible tourism

"Accessible tourism is a form of tourism that involves collaborative processes between stakeholders that enables people with access requirement, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism product, services and environment" (Buhalis & Darcy 2011, 10).

In the researcher's own definition, accessible tourism is tourism for all that enables all part of the tourism segment to engage in tourism activities with ease or minimum assistance. The tourism segment includes both the healthy, disabled, aged citizen and temporary disabled people of the society. Accessibility in tourism can be in different forms that include the physical accessibility like transportation, accommodation, attraction etc, and the attitudinal barrier which is the tour operators and city planners' attitude towards the disabled segment of the tourism group. And the last accessibility barrier is the Lack of accessible information provided to the disabled people about the accessibility of the destination being advertised. Tourism industries should provide an accessible tourism education for their staff so as to be able to provide reliable information for the disabled tourist before or during their trip.

Easy Access Market is defined by the researchers as any tourism destination that is accessible physically and economically based on the tourist generation point. This definition stresses out

the importance of the economic aspect of the tourist income and encourages the comparative advantage principle of international trade.

4.1 Human Right Approach to Accessible tourism

In order for accessible guidelines to be effectively implemented, it has to undergo the process of statutory law enactment agreed upon by every member of the organization. International, regional and national legislations have been enacted on the right of people with disability and guidelines to cater for their needs have been enforced. Such regulations include and are not limited to the recent United Nation (UN) convention of which most member nation jointly signed the law highlighted the need for disability rights (UN 2008). This law has not been fully enforced because most countries have not yet signed this disability right in their way of conduct which is making accessible tourism a hard project to implement (Kolb 2006).

Nevertheless, most countries like Australia, New Zealand and Germany have managed to implement this law to a greater height because of the growing number of people with disability and the fact that they are fully aware of the relationship between aging and disability. A number of tourism destinations like Australia, UK and the USA have identified the implementation of the human rights legislations as an important organ of improving tourism condition for visitors and citizens with disability.

Other legislation on human right includes the Regulation (EU) No 692/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2011 concerning European statistics on tourism and repealing Council Directive 95/57/EC. The regulation forecasts that by 2014, statistics on same-day visits will be introduced and household surveys will reveal more information on reasons for not participating in tourism.

New Zealand Sign Language was formally recognized as the third official language of New Zealand along with English and Maori in 2006 under the New Zealand Sign Language Act. (deaf.org.nz 2011) Disability right in Finland are based on UN General Assembly which was adopted in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - CRPD) 13.12.2006. Finland signed the first agreement among the states of 30.3.2007. Agreement has been ratified by 87 states and the ratification process is under way for Finland. (un.org 2011)

In addition to the United Nation (UN) regulations on accessible tourism, the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT) also supervises the implementation of the accessible regulations which has strengthened the awareness campaign among its members.

4.2 Disability and Signalization

Disability includes all forms of impairment, activity limitation and participation restrictions. Impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations (WHO 2008). In the researcher's reflection, it is understandable that disability does not only relate to the physical permanent body function but it also includes temporary disability for. For example, pregnancy or disability as a result of temporary sustained injuries which are a matter of consideration when talking about accessible tourism implementations.

Disability signals are universally acceptable signals used to communicate information to people with all form of impairment and participatory restrictions. Below are some of the major acceptable signals



Category 1.1: Accessible to an independent wheelchair user.



Category 1.2: Accessible to a wheelchair user with assistance.



Category 1.3: Accessible to someone with mobility difficulties, but able to walk up a maximum of three steps

Figure 3: Three Examples of disability signals. (dialkent.org 2011)

5 Universal Design Principles

The concept of universal design is rather a clear and open principle that is simply the “design of a product to be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (Center for Universal Design 1997). The following seven principles were produced to serve as a guideline for product development, environmental planning and communication techniques that will be applicable to all segment of a society and lifespan of every personality. The universal design principle includes

1. Equitable use of product and service by all
2. The flexibility in the use of product
3. Simple and intuitive use
4. Perception information
5. Tolerance of error
6. Low physical effort and size
7. Space for approach and use

In the researcher’s opinion, the principle emphasizes on the problem of segregation faced by the disabled segment of the tourist group during their visits. The disabled people have in one way or the other being segregated from the rest of the society because of their population size. Innovation experts and city planners do not often pay attention to their needs when planning for a new product or an urban society that incorporate all segment of the society. The legislative law imposed on these organizations on the right of people with disability is not often implemented in practice. The Universal Design Principle will be used as a basis guideline for our accessible tourism research to and within Arabianranta but only some few principle of universal designed will be considered during our field trip because of our restrictions and limitations to personal right issues. Figure 4 below shows the beneficiaries of the Universal design principles



Figure 4: Beneficiaries of the Universal design and Accessible tourism Principles (Buhalis & Darcy 2011, 9)

The above picture is a descriptive estimation of the beneficiaries of the universal design principles in relationship to disability. 31% of the total disability population of a country will in some way or the other benefit from these Universal design principles if it is properly implemented. These 31% beneficiaries include an 8% of the Aging population, 3% of families with pregnant women or children who use prams and 20% of this disability beneficiaries will be the naturally or physically disabled people. Others may include temporary disabilities as a result of temporary injuries at work or home which is not stated because the numbers are not specific.

6 Universal Accessible standards and Criteria

Accessible tourism is a global issue that involved the participation of the United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in the regulation and supervision of the activities undertaken by member organizations. During its sixteenth General Assembly (Dakar Senegal 2005), titled “Accessible Tourism for all”, a city accessible standard and criteria was adopted for all member countries as a guide for accessible tourism implementation. These guidelines include:

- ✓ Information and Communication
- ✓ Staff education and Training
- ✓ Public facilities and services
- ✓ The built environment and public spaces
- ✓ Transport and related infrastructures

The information and communication guideline highlights the important of information and communication in the area of literature and promotional material used by tourism industry which as stated must be a clear in addition of accessible services and facilities supported by easily recognized and understandable universal symbols. All reservation systems used in the tourism sector should comprise unambiguous data taking into account the accessibility level of the facilities and services in order to ensure accuracy in information and facilitate reservation process. Accessible Reservation systems are necessary in other to ensure user friendly concept. Reservation systems and Webpages should be designed in a manner that would be usable by all. Complaint should be observed and promptly treated without negligence.

Those entrusted with receiving and following up on tourism consumer complaints should register and resolve complaints concerning the failure to provide services and facilities promoted or advertised as accessible, by a clearly designated procedure. (accessibletourism.org 2011)

The staff education and training guideline helps tourism companies and tourism-related companies to train and prepare their staff to understand and be able to deal with the problems facing the access required customers. It entails that adequate training must be given to service personnel for proper provision of services to access required customers in discharging their official duties regarding the use of facilities designated for customers with disabilities. (accessibletourism.org 2011)

The built environment and public spaces guideline entails that people with disability should be provided with accessible desk for check-in and information desk clearly marked for users with reduced mobility. Furthermore, they should be provided with special parking area close to the building for easy entry and exit and such areas should be restricted to other users. Information should be communicated in verbal manner with visible notice board or electronic media and universally accepted signs and symbols of adequate size and in chromatic contrast with the background as shown in the figure 5 table below. (accessibletourism.org 2011)









Signals	Description
	Mobility access is available offering a clear path of travel throughout the venue including an accessible toilet and parking space
	A clear path of travel throughout the venue for those who are blind or have low vision
	Audio description is available
	Hearing loop or audio induction loop is available
	Sign language interpretation is available
	Text captions provided for audio content. This sign is usually found on accessible web pages like the Laurea University website at www.laurea.fi
	Braille availability for blind tourist.
	Telephone Typewriter (TTY) is available

Figure 5: Specific Universal accessible icons (Wikipedia.org 2011)

In addition to the above, the guideline stresses the need to install adequate number of elevators/lifts in multi storey buildings which must be wide enough to accommodate movement of person on wheelchair. This must also be strategically designed and positioned for easy access to users. For example, user guidelines should include brail, sound and boldly written text. Telephones at every public place should be suitably designed and positioned in a manner that can be accessed by all users irrespective of their disabilities such as mobility, height and sensory problems. (accessibletourism.org 2011)

Accessible standard toilet stalls and washbasins should be fixed at suitable locations. The size and technical supports required for easy movement of wheelchair within the toilet should be carefully considered during installations. Customers with disabilities shall not be surcharged

based on the extra cost that may require supplying these accessible facilities and services. (accessibletourism.org 2011)

The transport and related infrastructural guideline entails the need for stations, terminals, platforms and other related facilities to be made accessible to all passengers with reduced mobility. With this in mind, stations and terminals should as well be built and equipped with ramps and elevators where necessary. All directives and information provided should be able to cater for the persons with special needs at these points. Noise and other possible interference must be equally considered so that information can be well communicated and perceived by all. The same consideration should be given to those travelling on major roads and at all toll gates. (accessibletourism.org 2011)

For the purpose of persons with sensory problems to be able to cross roads independently and safely, there should be traffic lights with acoustic and visual symbols in place. Easy access to all means of transport should also be possible with well trained staff readily available to offer assistance when needed. All transfer processes of wheelchairs users should be professionally handled to avoid errors or damage to these facilities in order to be promptly available upon arrival at their destination. (accessibletourism.org 2011)

Hotel accommodations should have a considerable number of rooms suitable for persons on wheelchair in a manner that will enable the users to utilize those facilities provided independently in terms of locating, moving, handling and communicating. Bathrooms should be equipped with needed devices. The installation of functional alarm systems suitable for blind and deaf customers and communication system between the reception desk and to all rooms should be technically easy, clear and effective. Movement on passageways should be made easy at least, for free passage of two wheelchairs with little or no hindrance. Restaurants, cafes, cafeterias, and bars at these points should be made accessible such that toilets, seating arrangements, menus and service desk are usable by all. (accessibletourism.org 2011)

The facility guideline specifies that Museums, historical buildings, cultural and religious interest provided for tourist should be usable by visitors with reduced mobility in all manners by providing elevators, escalators and ramps as it may require. Information provided should also cater for the needs of both the deaf and blind visitors and all forms of information should be made available in both written and acoustic format. During excursions, all buses meant for conveying visitors should be able to accommodate all tourists en route. There should be a suitable outlet for visitors with reduced mobility for hiring wheelchairs and some other supportive devices. (accessibletourism.org 2011)

In addition to these aforementioned distinguishing features applying to buildings, conference centers should be furnished with adequate seating facilities suitable for all including people on wheelchairs as well as supporting devices for people with sensory problems. (accessibletourism.org 2011)

Advantages of Universal Standards and Accessible Criteria

The advantage of these Universal standards and accessible criteria can be simplified into ethical, economic, ecological, aesthetics and educational criteria known as the 5e criteria in accessibility which is summarised as follows

- ✓ Ethical criteria: expresses the rights of physically challenged people for proper implementation of accessible services in order to improve the quality of live and leisure time.
- ✓ Economic criteria: entails that accessible tourism can be a major economic contributor by expanding the market share and the creation of more job opportunity.
- ✓ Ecological criteria: objects that when structures are built according to these guidelines, it protects and promote and sustains the environment.
- ✓ Esthetic criteria: entails that the harmonization between design aesthetic criteria and accessible services offered by a tourism establishment will help beautify the environment.
- ✓ Educational criteria: Creates awareness concerning the specific needs of disabled people & accessibility issues and specific training of the human resource working in tourism organizations.

7 Introduction of the research area Arabianranta

To enable the researchers answer the second research question on “How Accessible is Arabianranta Helsinki?” some facts have to be understood about the research destination.

Urban tourism is the visit to city centers for city holidays. Tourist are attracted to urban centers by the modern facilities and services available such as shopping malls, casino, and architectural and art designs, Good transport network, zoo, hotels, museums and business purposes. Arabianranta is a good example of an urban destination. As an urban tourism destination, Arabianranta offers many attractions for tourist to see, experience and do during their stay in Finland. This attractions range from nature attractions, Art and design city holidays, family

attractions, museum, Galleries, church and parks which makes this Urban destination a memorable destination for both local and international tourists.(Page 1995,6-7)

Sequel to the Information gotten from the official Arabianranta website, the Arabianranta district is a home for about 10,000 people, a work place for 5000 workers and also a student district for about more than 6000 students which includes researchers. As an art and design district, Arabianranta has been constantly developed into “Art and Design City” for over 10 years by the Helsinki art and design city Ltd which was founded to manage the projects together with the Helsinki city planning organization. Their works can be seen in so many residential design housing units like city villas and loft buildings which are full of design and rated among world art and architectural housing designs. (Arabianranta 2011)

Furthermore, Arabianranta buildings also accommodate groups with special needs like the aged senior citizens, mentally challenged juvenile and the disabled guest which is the researchers’ subject of interest. The Arabianranta district heads and residents have a laboratory for product and service testing known as the Helsinki living Lab. The district also serves as a business and production home to 300 enterprises. Their future aim is to attract business in the field of creative industry to operate and develop together with the educational institute in the region which is the largest sector of the district. As a tourist destination, Arabianranta receives a numerous number of tourists to their district of which most of the tourist are Japanese tourist visiting the old Arabia production Factory in the district. These groups of tourist are usually old and matured visitors interested in souvenirs and art works. (Arabianranta 2011)

Finland receives an increasing number of tourists yearly as a result of its sophisticated technologies in the art and design structure of the city planning process, Such that it was nominated by the International Society of Industrial Design (ICSID) to be the world design capital in 2012 (Helsinki 2010). This means that setting a universal standard that will encompass all the tourism segments will go a long way in making Helsinki a memorable urban destination. Figure 6 below shows the map of Arabianranta, Helsinki Finland. The study of urban tourism will not be complete if the accessibility level of the urban destination is not fully analyzed. The map below represents Arabianranta



Figure 6: Arabianranta Map (Arabianranta 2011)

7.1 Research Plan

In order for the researchers to achieve their objectives effectively and efficiently from the customer's perspective, visit to the destination was initiated by the researchers to observe the case destination by way of photos and documentations so as to be able to have a closer view of the subject in its natural setting, to explore the perceptions of the observed subject and for the report to be accurate. This method is called systematic observation which involves a set down rules in data collection that enables any data collected to be valid and the same for different researcher. In a systematic observation, a decision rule is set in place before the data collection process so that any researcher who decides to make that research on that particular topic will get the same result. It involves adequate adherence to particular time, number, place and situation of the case being studied. (Summer 2006)

The researchers' decision to use this type of method was as a result of the different weather conditions accrued to Finland which is usually a big issue when researching a destination as the projected expectations might turn out to be different under different weather conditions. An interview was also arranged with some accessed required visitors in order to extract facts based on user experience. Observations were carried out on two different occasions. The first observation was conducted in the month of February 2011 during the snow fall Season and the second part of the research was done during the summer in August 2011. The result of these

field trips enabled the researchers to evaluate the various challenges encountered by different categories of tourist experience during these seasons.

A classification model was developed by the researchers to enable them present the result of the research in a simple but well phrased manner. The researchers subject that a destination can either be “Inaccessible”, “Partially accessible” or “Totally accessible”. Inaccessibility means that the place or object of study cannot be reached with minimum effort or the road path to the object is not easily accessible and there are no pre-information given. This is usually as a result of the lack of awareness and legislation concerning accessible tourism by the government, city planners, service operators and the educational institution. The researchers opined that Nigeria which is the researchers’ home country is a good example of an inaccessible destination.

Partial accessibility implies that the destination or object of study is accessible, pre-information are well detailed but the road path to the destination is not accessible or is not easily accessed with minimum effort. Destinations with this type of accessibility level are destinations with legislations concerning disability issues but a lack of proper adherence to these legislations on the part of the players as a result of the small population size of the disabled segment of the population.

On the other hand, Total accessibility is considered by the researcher to be the complete accessibility level that follows all the Universal Design Principles and guidelines in a way that the object of study, the road path to the object and information about the object is well presented to prospective visitors. The researchers’ accessibility classification is illustrated in the diagram below

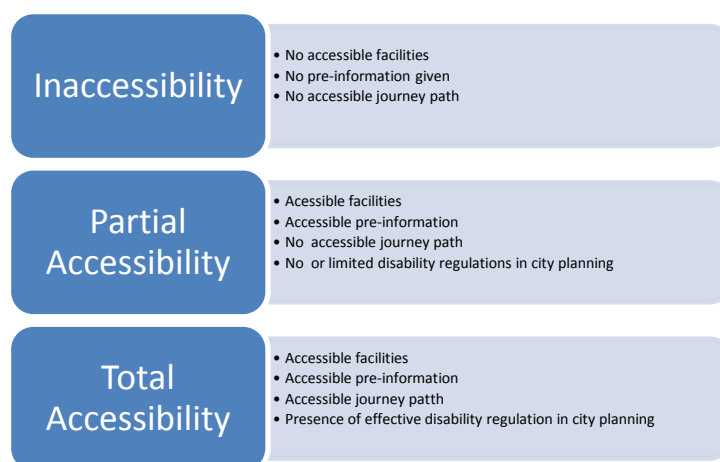


Figure 7: Destination Accessibility model

The illustration above shows the accessibility classification based on users experience and perceptions. Most destinations can be inaccessible or partly accessible as a result of uncontrollable environmental factors like weather and the general earth structure which are uncontrollable. Inaccessibility can also be as a result of lack of knowledge, awareness and strict regulations given to the city planners which are sometimes ignored because of the nature of the accessed required individuals as discussed in our previous headings. Total accessibility is the total compliance to the accessibility guideline. It implies adequate accessible facilities, information and an accessible journey path that gives a visitor a perfect experience and encourages repeated visits.

7.2 Research Method and analysis

The subject of this research was purely based on innovative compliance to the regulated Universal Design Principles. This research is a continuation of an earlier knowledge derived from the study module "Service Innovation in Tourism Industry" centered on Accessible tourism which is a new concept in tourism and city planning development. The concept of primary research approach, both internal and external was used to collect existing research data on the subject of accessibility which was used to build a foundation approach to studying the subject. The research plan is illustrated as shown below

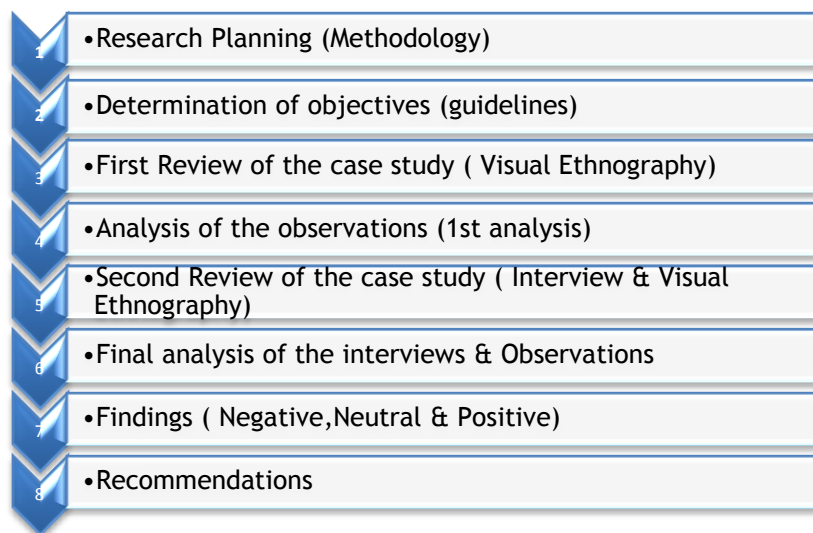


Figure 8: Research plan

During this research, various methods of qualitative data collections were utilized like interviews, seminars, lectures and observations to evaluate the accessibility level within and to Arabianranta as stipulated by the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT) and

United Nation World Travel Organization (UNWTO). Qualitative research was necessary because it is used to study the in-depth understanding of human attitude towards products and services. (Myers 1997) Aside from the qualitative information utilized in this study, a concrete quantitative statistical data were also extracted from different secondary source (government media, books, disability websites and tourism agencies) which were used to further strengthen the subject of the case study.

However, the researchers' main research method was qualitative in nature (Visual ethnography). A visual ethnographic research method is very effective and efficient as it helps the ethnographer convert rear fiction and turn them into facts in the process of partaking in the scene. Three types of data collection are involved when carrying out an ethnographic research. These include: observation, interview and documentation. The total result of these data collected produced a descriptive, quotation and selected documents which in turn translate to one narrative description of the subject being studied.

This type of observation is one of the most common methods of qualitative data collection and it is more demanding because it requires the presence of the researcher in the environment or culture being observed. (Trochim 2006) Visual ethnography is the only plausible way to study social and cultural phenomenon in action as it helps the researcher to gain a closer view of the subject by involvement. (Murchison 2010, 4) The researchers recorded their observed data using a digital camera and a notebook which were essential as it enabled the researchers to compare the observed destination Arabianranta with other well-known destinations.

7.2.1 Target group

The researchers' target group was a wheelchair user, mothers with pram and an Aged senior citizen. These sets of people were necessary as they were at the core of accessibility. We targeted wheelchair users because they are the first people considered during the implementation of accessible guideline. Pregnant women and mothers with pram were necessary as they represent people with temporary disability which could as well include people with temporary or permanent work injuries. The researchers also considered the aged senior citizens as their target group to buttress the different forms of disability associated with this categories of people.

7.2.2 Interview Questions

The researchers conducted an interview to enable them gain a deeper understanding about the user experiences of a particular disabled category. This interview was necessary as none of the researchers had any form of disability so it was difficult to get a deeper perception of a particular facility without being in the same dilemma of the target group. Two persons were interviewed on their perceptions about Arabianranta as an accessible destination. The interview questions were in a simplified and open structured manner which in our opinion was well selected as constructed below

- i. Do you live within or outside Arabianranta district?
- ii. How often do you visit Arabianranta?
- iii. Did you get any pre-information or assistance before and on arrival to Arabianranta?
- iv. Do you think the road path and transport facilities are well designed to enable easy movement?
- v. Do you face difficulties in door entrance and elevators?
- vi. Are the museum well spaces to enable free movement within and around the displayed products?
- vii. Do you think the signs and signals are adequately placed to convey information?

Though the subject of accessibility was new to them, we were able to explain further the concept of the subject matter to ensure valuable responses. Interviewee (A) was a pregnant woman in her mid-20s and was vision impaired. She was taken to the case destination to observe the signs and signals and her E-Accessibility level was also tested after allowing her to visit the official website of Arabianranta. She also assisted the researcher in translating important signs and signals which were not in the language of the researchers. The result was analyzed and documented according to ethnographic principles.

Interviewee (B) was a disabled wheelchair user met at the case destination. In the researchers' opinion, he was in his 60s thus his disability was related to his age as analyzed in our previous theoretical discussions above. His perceptions on the road path within and around Arabianranta was collected, interpreted and documented.

7.2.3 Observations

Aside from the seminars and lectures undertaken by the researchers, we also scheduled a visit to the case destination Arabianranta which was carefully planned according to time and seasonality. Timing was necessary to enable the researchers understand the effect of different weather conditions on the area and as well the developmental construction process of Arabianranta. On the other hand, Seasonality enabled the researcher to capture the importance of the case destination through an estimation of the number and categories of visitors that visit the destination in different season (Off-peak & Peak). The diagram below illustrates the researchers observed areas

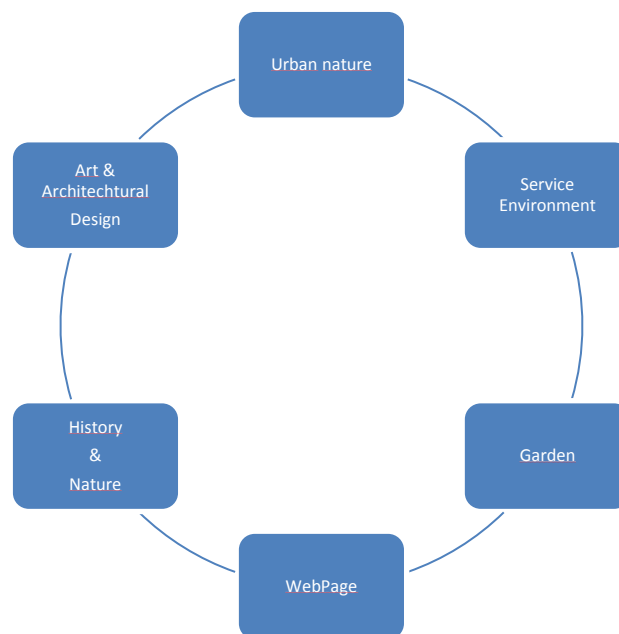


Figure 9: Observation structure within Arabianranta

Observation structure of service chain

For the researchers to ascertain the visitors experience in the old district, some group seminar, lectures and field trip were undergone to observe the service chain within and to Arabianranta. The following service chains were observed and analyzed using the Universal design and accessible standard already discussed above with major focus on the Accessible road network, Parking Facilities, Refreshing room facilities available, Sign and signals, Customers service center, Information desk availability and transportation facilities.

I. Observation of Helsinki-Vantaa Airport

- II. Observation of Olympia Terminal and Viking Line terminal
- III. Observation of Helsinki Central railway station
- IV. Observation of Scandic hotel Simonkatu Helsinki

Another point of interest visited by the researchers includes City market in Arabianranta and the Helsinki Zoo in Korkeasaari. Urban Tourism is a broad language than encompasses various forms of travel activities like city tours, and city wildlife tours. Since tourists have the possibility of spending a night or more at an accommodation service of their choice, the researchers identified a famous hotel which was also accessed based on its accessible rooms, customers' service and facilities available for disabled tourist at the accommodation unit.

7.3 Research Limitations

This research was limited to the following access required tourist group

- ✓ People with disability (Wheelchair Users, sight impaired people)
- ✓ Aged / Seniors citizens
- ✓ Visitors (Language Barrier)
- ✓ Families with children (Pregnant women & Ramp users)

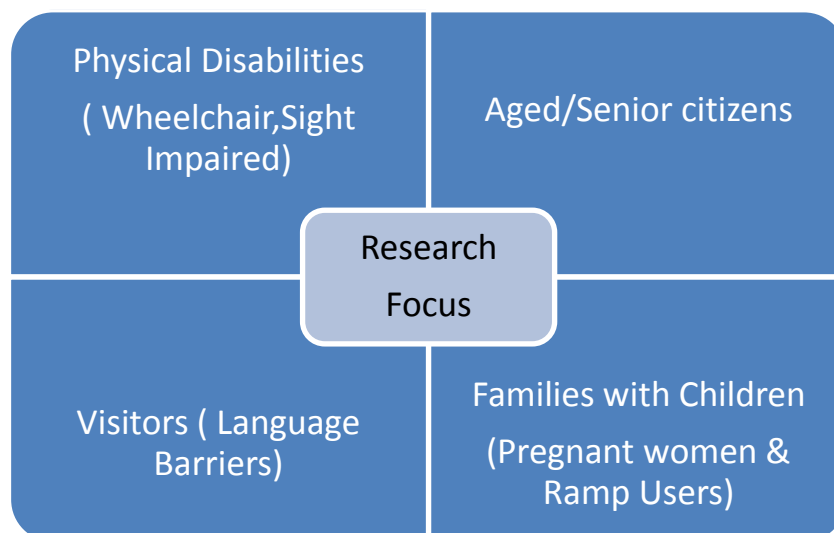


Figure 10: Research Focus

People with disabilities are people who need help as a result of temporary or permanent enablement of their physical or mental health. This disability group includes but is not limited

to the vision impaired or blind tourist, physical disabilities like broken or malfunctioning body movement, obese people and the rest of them. People always have problem with some types of website. This makes it difficult for them to read pre-information regarding the destination they want to visit so that they can have in mind their expected encounter when they arrive at the destination. This type of disability is known as Electronic Accessibility which is referred to as the ease of use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as the Internet, by people with disabilities. Websites need to be developed so that disabled users can access the content with ease. For example, the use of visual images and voice program on website will help disabled blind people access valuable information about a destination. Another example is the use of adjustable computer program which helps people with low vision when accessing a webpage. A sign language video on a webpage can convey audio content to deaf or hard hearing tourist thereby making the website more accessible.

Our research was also limited to the disabled tourist considerations when making a travel decision. The following factors are considered by the access need tourist when making their travel decisions

- ✓ Availability of disability aids at the destination (hire car facilities, taxi services, cares, equipment and supplies).
- ✓ Presence of continuous pathways and the accessibility of public transport (low floor buses, accessible train platforms and trains)
- ✓ The overall accessibility of the destination—including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions.
- ✓ Accessible accommodation as a foundation for any visit.

The above limitations were the considerations taking during our accessible investigations on the accessibility of Arabianranta.

8 Research Results

After deep analysis of all the data collected, we were able to answer the second research question of ‘How accessible is Arabianranta?’ The Photo taken during the visits were rated as either “Positive”, “Neutral” or “Negative” as postulated by Jokiniemi to be used to demonstrate the experience of human friendliness as seen on the Photo appendix.(Jokiniemi 2007) The result shows that Arabianranta Helsinki is partially accessible at some point. Weather conditions are a significant factor that hinders the whole accessibility of a particular pathway which is a problem that cannot be controlled at the moment. The next heading explains the research result.

8.1 Interviews' result

In the opinion of the interviewee (B), long snow fall in Finland is one of the major challenges faced by people of this category despite the limited accessible facility available in Helsinki. He also added that the signs and signals were too high for him making it difficult for him to see it. He recommended that the signs should be displayed down to enable easy and clear access. The researchers opined to the opinion of the wheelchair user on the weather condition problem that affects road paths and prevent entry to certain places during winter periods. Photo A and B below shows the two different situation perceived by a disabled wheelchair user during summer and winter season



Figure 11: Footpath/ Wheelchair Path way to Arabianranta nature area (Gbindin & Nnadiukwu 2011)



Figure 12: Accessible Footpath/ Wheelchair Path way to the museum of technology (Gbindin & Nnadiukwu 2011)

Figure 11 and 12 above is a footpath and wheelchair path way to the nature and museum area in Arabianranta. It is clear that the weather conditions can go a long way in affecting the travel experience of a wheelchair user making it impossible for them to enjoy all available services as seen in Photo A and B respectively.

Interviewee (A) considered the Arabianranta website to be inaccessible to vision impaired segment of the disability group. A visit to the official website of Arabianranta showed an inadequacy of accessible information provided for prospective visitors as the website is not user friendly as stated by the universal design concept of “Tolerance for error”. She also added that most of the text used in the Art and design district to describe works of art were too tiny and this makes it impossible to read. In the researchers’ opinion, the website should have some reliable information regarding the accessibility of the case study so as to enable prospective visitors have some pre-knowledge about their disability practicalities at the destination. The warning signs were only in Finnish and Russian which was not enough to make it universally acceptable sign.

8.2 Specific challenges in Arabianranta

The outcome of the research exposed the defects in the current state of the case study (Arabianranta), the researchers analyzed the interview and the field trips results and the following were revealed about the accessibility level of the Arabianranta district

- ✓ Inaccessible or partly accessible website
- ✓ Inadequate availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles

- ✓ Limited number of well-adapted hotel rooms in the hotel visited
- ✓ Lack of professional staff capable of dealing with accessibility issues
- ✓ Lack of reliable information about the accessibility level of the district
- ✓ Lack of accessible restaurants and bars
- ✓ Lack of adapted toilets in restaurants and public places
- ✓ Inaccessible streets and sidewalks due to weather conditions
- ✓ Inadequate technical aids and disability equipment such as wheelchairs, bath chairs and toilet raisers in some areas visited
- ✓ Language barrier as most of the information were in Finnish, Swedish and Russian

In the opinion of the researchers, some of the observed areas were quite commendable in compliance to the universal accessible designs. During the visit to the Helsinki Vantaa airport and the Helsinki Seaport (Etälä Satama) which is major entry points for international tourists, the facilities and services were accessible as the publications were written in multiple languages such as Finnish, Japanese and English as seen on the photo below. Specialized personnel services were available to all categories of tourists including the access required tourist. There were accessible toilets and packing facilities and also global accessible signs and signal for incoming and local tourists which were properly displayed at these observed places according to the accessible guidelines stated above.

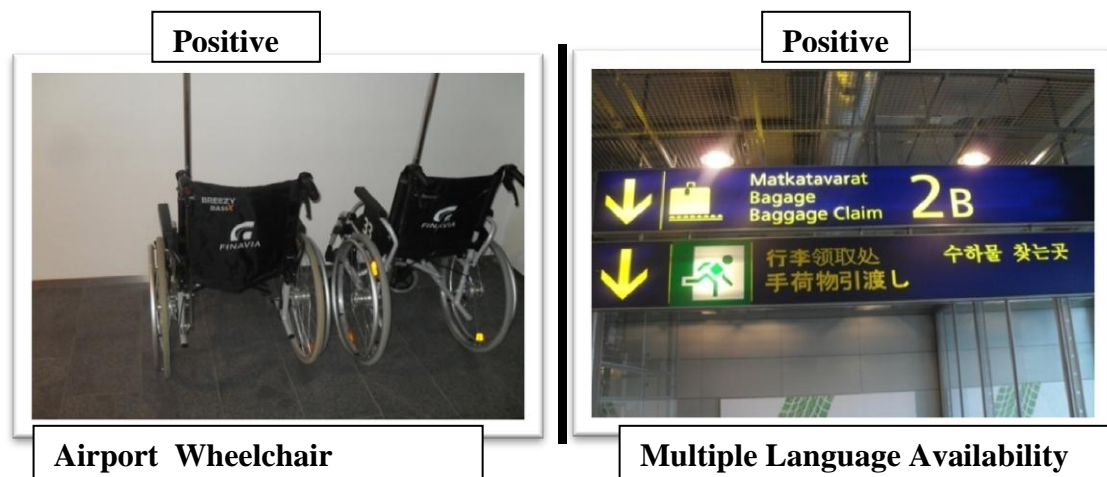


Figure 13: Airport Wheelchair and Multiple language sign

Nevertheless, there were also some inadequacies in the places observed. Inadequate technical aids and disability equipment such as wheelchairs, bath chairs and toilet raisers in the hotel and public areas visited. An interview with a staff of Scandic hotel confirmed that they could not cope with more than two wheelchair user in a day that the researchers considered to be inadequate. The researchers also observed that adaptable toilets in restaurants and public places are limited (Please refer to Appendix on visual ethnographic photo result).

9 Ideas to develop Accessible tourism in Arabianranta

During the course of this study, it was revealed that New Zealand is one of the leading destinations for access required tourist in compliance to the universal accessible standard. The Universal signs and signal were adopted as their third official language to enhance their disability rights and awareness. This can be seen in their city planning technique, accessible facilities and tourism destinations and services. Another unique accessible destination observed by the researcher in the course of study was the Norwegian Oslo city center which has a total accessibility level such that there was no stair case that did not follow with an escalator or a sloped construction for wheelchair users differently constructed as compared to Finland's Arabianranta with a side or No accessible escalator or slope path.

To this end, for a destination like Arabianranta to be globally accepted as an accessible destination, The Helsinki City Planning Department, Helsinki Art and Design Ltd and all other stake holders in the tourism industry should consider the following recommendations

- ✓ Provision and improvement of Lift/Elevator in suitable places to make it easily accessible by all people and the use of Chairlift in old monumental buildings while maintaining the natural heritage of the structure. A corresponding slope path should also be constructed on new buildings so as to improve the journey experience of the access need visitors.
- ✓ Provision of Ramps at various suitable places to ease accessibility. The introduction of brail guide in the information system like the map and flyers .
- ✓ Provision of Hearing loops for hearing impaired people for their support and the use of multiple languages at least, English which is an accepted tourism language.
- ✓ The renovation and relocation of some common places on the ground floor like the Sauna which was located on the top floor in one of the Arabianranta building visited making it inaccessible by all categories of people.
- ✓ Encourage tourism packages for old and accessed required people with Provision of well-trained guiding team capable of handling all accessibility issues.

- ✓ Provision of modern modes of transportation such as low floor Busses, Trams and Trains.
- ✓ Encourage rental service outlets for disability equipment.
- ✓ Accessible tourism should be introduced as a course in all post-secondary institutions to educate students in order to increase public awareness.

10 Validity of Research

The research was carried out by international students who are not originally from Finland and most of their observations were based on ethical guideline of bachelor's thesis and the subject guidelines given by the principle of Universal Accessible standard. The first part of the research was carried out in February during the snow fall and the second was conducted in the month of August in 2011. According to the personnel met at the Helsinki City Planning Department, development is a continuous process in Arabianranta. The whole research was analyzed based on the current developmental stage. A possible developmental project was planned to be carried out but the researchers did not ascertain any future accessible development plan during their research.

11 Conclusions

After this whole research into the study of the accessibility level of Arabianranta, we realized that the struggle to provide more accessible destinations and services for all segments of the tourism group is clearly a difficult task. The imposed legislation is not always met especially in the tourism sector making the accessible requirement difficult in its sense that the disabled segment is still regarded as a different market forgetting that the disabled segment of tourism group is found in all homes with elderly people and little children as buttressed in our research. The observation shows that Arabianranta and Helsinki in general is partially accessible. In a nutshell, the outcome of the entire research can be simply summarized as Economical, Educational, Esthetical, Equity and Ecological known as the 5 E's.

We hope that the result of this thesis will be useful to Helsinki Tourist and Convention Bureau, Helsinki City Planning Arabianranta, the Art & Design City Helsinki ltd and product developers in both the private and public sector of the Finnish tourism industries. More research into a related field of study like sustainable accessible tourism should be made in the near future after an accessible boom has been experienced.

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14 Appendixes

Appendix 1: Interview Question

Urban Tourism development: Accessible Tourism in Arabianranta Helsinki

Interview Questions

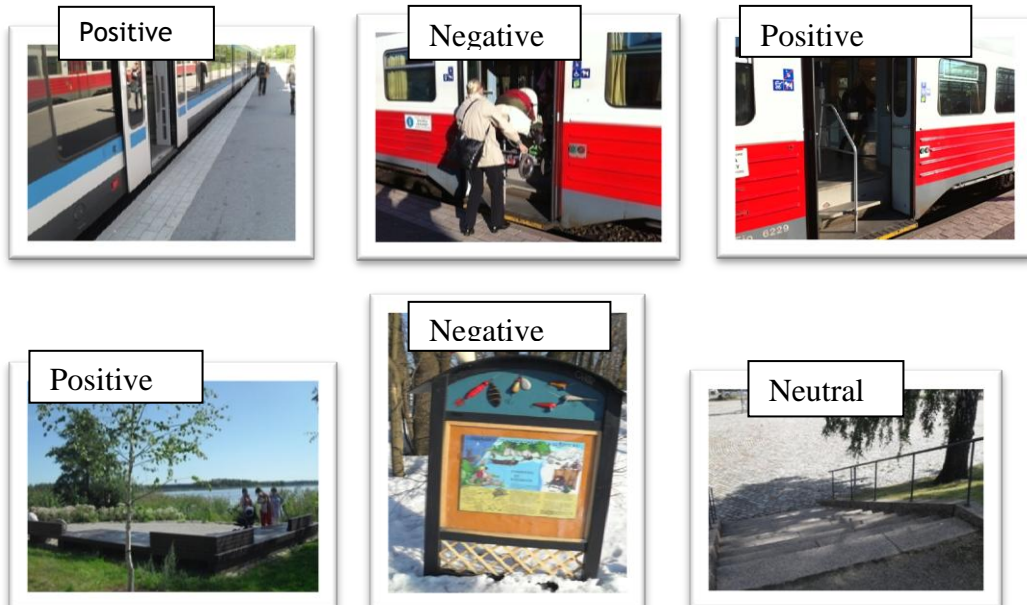
- i. Do you live within or outside Arabianranta district?
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- iv. Do you think the road path and transport facilities are well designed to enable easy movement?
- v. Do you face difficulties in door entrance and elevators?
- vi. Are the museums well-spaced to enable free movement within and around the displayed artifacts and monuments?
- vii. Do you think the signs and signals are adequately placed to convey information?

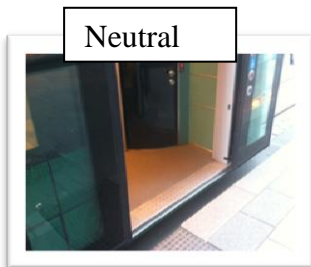
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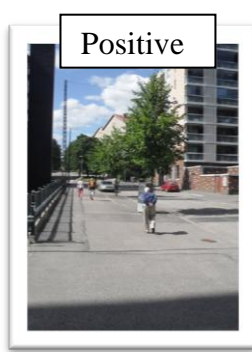
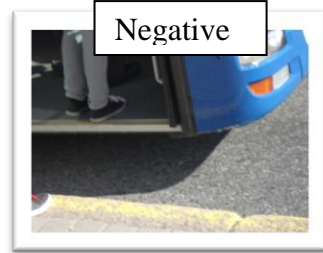
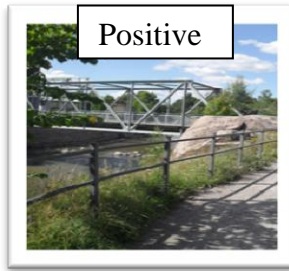
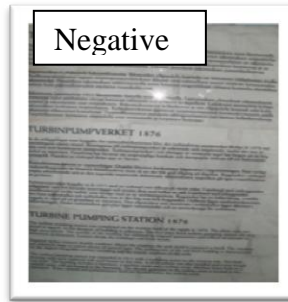
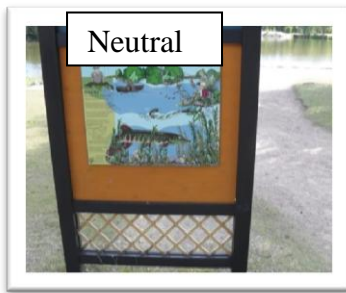
Helsinki Vantaa Airport



Helsinki Railway station & Arabianranta







Positive



Positive



Positive



Positive



Negative



PRESS RELEASE

Better days ahead for disabled visitors in Arabianranta!!!

As the year runs out, Helsinki prepares herself to be crowned the World Design Capital for 2012. Helsinki which is the capital territory of Finland has been examined to partially meet the Universal Accessible standards. This statement was confirmed by two tourism researchers from Laurea University of Applied sciences Kerava after a documented visit to Arabianranta in their final year Bachelor's thesis research titled Urban Tourism Development- A case study of Accessible Arabianranta.

According to Ernest Nnadiukwu and Tunde Gbindin the researchers', There is a coinciding relationship between aging and disability. As people continue to grow old, they begin to have some form of disabilities in both movement and vision which result to their strong demand for accessible facilities to enable them cope with this condition. Families with children are not left out in this disability issues as they require a good road network and transportation facilities to enable them use their prams.

Interviews and visual observations were conducted which were later analyzed based on the United Nation World Tourism Organization guideline considerations for the protection of disability rights in city planning process. The result shows that Arabianranta is partially accessible which implies that Arabianranta is quite accessible in its structural layout but there are some lapses among the observed facilities. Accessible tourism is tourism for all that enables all people to engage in tourism activities with ease or minimum assistant. The researchers identified weather condition as one of the major challenge in the Arabianranta district as the destination was observed in both winter and summer seasons. The study considered the implementation of the Universal accessible principles necessary in respect to the disability rights, awareness creation, sustainable environment, revenue, job creation and the beautification of the environment at large.

The researchers hope that the recommendations of the research will be implemented in the urban planning process to boost the health and social wellbeing of disabled people in Arabianranta and the Helsinki region in general. The researchers also encourages the introduction of disability education in all educational institution as it will further strengthen disability awareness thereby making Helsinki the pride of the disabled in Finland. For more information about the research output, contact

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