



Accessible Tourism: Impact to the local economy of promoting Northern Ireland as an accessible destination

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Attestation

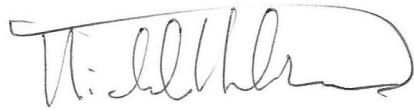
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Signature: Gavin Toal

Date 5th February 2016

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Holden". The letters are cursive and connected.

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Date 5th February 2016

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Summary

Aim

Accessible Tourism is a relatively new phenomenon within the tourism market as a whole. We look at evidence to see if Northern Ireland can benefit economically by promoting itself as an accessible destination.

Objectives

The above will be achieved by: -

1. To review literature to gain an understanding of the meaning 'accessible tourism' and its relevance to Northern Ireland.
2. Check current tourism strategies to see if Northern Ireland is currently developing a policy for this market.
3. Identify the potential market through the use of published statistics.
4. To look at the approach of neighbouring jurisdictions, to examine how they have provided for this market and examine any results that they have been able to produce.
5. Consider Northern Ireland as a region, to ascertain if it has the infrastructure and capacity to welcome visitors in the accessible tourism market.
6. Understand some of the needs of the market by asking relevant questions of a selection of travellers who identify with accessible tourism.
7. To use the information so as to give a conclusion to the question of whether the local economy could benefit from the promotion of accessible tourism.

Literary review

Since this area of study is relatively new, finding varied material that isn't often using the same quotes from the few scholars who have written in this field has been difficult. Yet the leading thinkers in this area such as Simon Darcy (University of Technology, Sydney, Australia) who specialise in developing inclusive organisation structures for diversity groups are opening up the idea of accessible tourism. 'There is very little research that shows how the tourism industry can benefit from making changes' (S.M. Luiza, P1155). Yet according to Darcy the number of disabled people will reach 1.2 billion by 2020. Whilst most literary content discusses the benefit of accessible tourism, there is no major research with the exception of an Australian project, from which to draw upon substantive evidence.

Lots of material discussed the terminology of accessible tourism and even goes on to list best practice in the area. These tend to include features of those who have a physical or sensory disability, but lack depth on mental or those with a more dependent need.

Internet contributions such as those discussing, 'universal design' etc. have also been a useful source of information, but they are tailored to a scholarly view point and would have little interest to the tourism industry directly.

Journals are the major source of information with European bodies such as the European Network on Accessible Tourism, producing much of the written work in a European context. The rest of the information is based upon figures provided by national agencies such as those similar to Visit England. What this does not account for, is the economic transfer because of improvements or despite improvements as the information has no historical longevity.

This lacking of information, for accessible tourism was the inspiration behind this small project as an entry into the possibilities in Northern Ireland. Without having a policy in place it would be rich pickings for a survey to be completed and the information used to develop further insights as the market is affected by considered changes.

However, we have been able to talk extensively with agencies who operate in this area such as Chris McCoy – accessible tourism manager at Visit Scotland, Ross Calladine – accessible tourism dept. at Visit England, Brenda Murphy – digital information at Tourism NI and Brian Seaman – access consultant. All of whom have helped with background knowledge and statistics.

Key Issues

The understanding of the term 'accessible tourism' is differs between academia and business. Indifference to the market is wide spread in the commercial world, but appears to be more readily adopted in the public sector, who appear to be the driving force.

- What is accessible tourism?
- Are strategies easily adopted?
- Do current accessible Infrastructures already make Northern Ireland an accessible destination?
- Is there more to the supply and demand of the market than just information?
- Is it an expensive market to get into?
- What is important to those who identify as accessible tourists?

Research Questions

Qualitative questions for interviews were quickly identifiable

- What is your interpretation of accessible tourism?
- How do you manage this in your region?
- Is it costly to be an accessible tourism business?
- Do you have a code of minimum standards?
- How do you promote the sector?

Quantitative questions involved a questionnaire of random people who identified as being an accessible tourist. As well as questions about current impact.

- What information about accessible tourism exists about Northern Ireland?
- Does NITB actively promote accessible tourism?
- Do you have any statistics to back up its economic impact?
- Are there statistics to back up its economic impact?

Questionnaire

1. Thinking about yourself, would you identify as being
 - A. Disabled
 - B. Carer
 - C. Advocate
 - D. None of the above

2. Thinking about holidays were a member of the group has a disability. Have you ever considered visiting Northern Ireland as an accessible tourism destination?

3. When considering a destination, what is your preference
 - A. Organised trip
 - B. Own arrangements
 - C. Mixture of both

4. Would you know where to find detailed accessible tourist information about Northern Ireland?

5. If you answered yes to question 4, please state where?

6. Would a service offering comprehensive information about accessible tourism in Northern Ireland be of use?

7. If you answered yes to question 6 please explain why?

8. Would having detailed information about Northern Ireland encourage you to visit?

9. Please explain your answer to question 8?

10. Ranking in order of importance what would you consider to be most important when choosing a destination. 1 being the most important.
 - A. Accommodation information
 - B. Attraction information
 - C. Local transport information
 - D. Equipment hire information
 - E. Travel to information
 - F. Destination information
 - G. Dining information
 - H. Outdoor activity information.

Research Methods

When choosing the kind of research needed for the area we were examining, we had a number of options available to us. Firstly, we had to identify what we were trying to find out. We hoped to shed light on the following questions throughout our research:

Our research methodology would require gathering relevant data from a number of sources and analysing the material in order to attain a better understanding of the need for accessibility in Northern Ireland and the impact to the local economy of promoting Northern Ireland as an accessible destination.

Data collection methods

The use of Quantitative research was engaged in the form of a questionnaire in order to first of all establish the needs as wants of those who identified as an accessible tourist. A short list of questions was adopted, together forming a mixture of factual, subjective and contingency. "Factual questions are designed to elicit objective information.... subjective involves the respondents' beliefs, attitudes, feelings and opinion.... contingency only applies to a sub group of respondents." (Frankfort-Nachmias C., Nachmias D., p. 230,231 & 235) Allowing for the collection of numerical data to show the relationship between theory and research. A hypothesis is deduced from the theory and tested. There is a brilliant description of (Business Research Methods, Alan Bryman & Emma Bell, fourth edition, 2015, P161), where they describe the different stages and processes in quantitative research.

Expanding our research further, using qualitative research, we made contact with industry professionals to seek out their opinion on need and trend. We also relied heavily on 'secondary data'; with limited scholarly material available, data collected from other tourism regions formed a large part of our Body of Knowledge (BOK). "secondary data, if reliable and accurate, provide opportunities for replication" (Frankfort-Nachmias C., Nachmias D., p. 278).

However, the need to temper the use of secondary data was important so as not to taint the result with bias. Gaining a knowledge base of this qualitative data, opened up ideas for further research opportunities, coding the information helped us to eliminate research which would have taken us too far from the project objective at this stage. Personal testimony and videography also proved to be an excellent way of gaining data, although personal opinion, needed to be tempered with cultural expectation.

Our research has been a collection of qualitative and quantitative Research to date. The quantitative research we used involved a range of research into accessible tourism and tourist attractions throughout the world and compared it to here in Northern Ireland. We have populated our findings from our survey into tables and figures giving our important findings, all of which are carefully titled and labelled and all sources of our data are acknowledged. The data that we used was both primary and secondary, i.e., some we collected ourselves from scratch and some we used data that was already available and at hand.

Socio-cultural factors are a mixture of cultural aspects, such as customs and values, and social aspects, such as population growth rate and age distribution. This is to be looked at in our research. Socio-cultural values are different in each country.

We chose these methods because there are some similarities between them, in that they both are concerned with answering the questions we wanted to field in our research and they both related data analysis to the research literature. We feel that by using both methods, they are going to be appropriate to the research questions.

After gathering of data it is then up to us to get the results in order to analyse them in conclusion, data analysis can be conducted with two methods manual or computer based data analysis. We will check our findings for precision and soundness.

Reporting Results and Presentation

The Last and final part of research procedure was to write down our findings in a logical format that was able to lead to a conclusion of the original question. Making sure that the report was concise and answered the questions posed. Reading and editing was also an important factor to ensure that there was a meaning flow to the report and it could hold the attention of the intended reader.

Project management

This project did not develop naturally. First considerations were given to the scope, and quality of the project. Costs, integration of the team, communication skills and risk planning each played a part. “The PMI Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) is one of the corner stones of project management” (Burke R., Barron S., p.8) Planning was the key in the early stages and we focused our attention using a Project Initiation Document (PID). This allowed for a snapshot and once we’d all agreed with the outcomes of the PID, we were able to move forward with confidence. (*PID, P39 in the appendices*). To keep the project on track our Key Performance Indicators (KPI) needed to remain visible. “(KPI’s) give everyone in the organization a clear picture of what is important” (Marks T., p.53). We opted for the use of a Gantt Chart to aid us with this visual focus. It was interactive and worked well with Microsoft applications which we were all comfortable with. It also proved invaluable when we lost one of our team member, a risk we hadn’t considered earlier in the planning. However, that planning helped us to push on with the project without any difficulties.

Risk	Outcome
Lack of knowledge	Background study was essential
Limited reading resources	Engagement with the library to find journal papers
No industry contacts	Reach out to the govt. agencies
Time constraints	Use a project management tool to assist with planning.
Adequate research	Background reading specific to social sciences
Fusing different writing style	Collaboration at each stage to read and edit for smooth flow of style

Introduction

Since the ratification of the United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD); its impact has become the area of many different studies. One of these developing studies is the appraisal that the convention would have on the tourism sector, both domestic and inbound. Within the context of Europe, forty-seven countries have signed up to the ten-year strategy of the Council of Europe to improve the rights of persons with disabilities. This also included a section relating to what is widely known as 'accessible tourism' and as a 2006 – 2015 implementation document, is currently being evaluated as to its overall success. This was in direct response to article thirty of the Convention which asserts the right to access all areas of *cultural life* including that of tourism. (UNCRPD 2006, P22, Darcy Cameron & Pegg, 2010)

In the wider world 159 countries have ratified UNCRPD, leading to a development of their own policies of accessible tourism. Countries such as the U.S.A. who have had the legislation of the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) since 1990, or the U.K. with similar legislation since 1995 – Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)*, in some ways have had a head start in this area. However, whilst these laws have allowed for disability access on a day to day basis, they have largely relied upon the medical model for disability rather than the emerging social model. Both of which will be discussed later in the paper.

What was not considered until recently was the economic impact of a more socially mobile disabled community and the spending power of the Purple Currency. With an aging world population, having more spending power than the previous generations, the economic benefits from government organisations (tourism offices) and the private sector to invest in this emerging market is seen as having a good return.

This niche market has become the focus of many academics and tourism experts such as Darcy, Burnett, Baker, Ray, Ryder, Daniels, Ozturk, Eichhorn, Freeman, Selmi, Richards and Bizjak to name a few. They have amongst other things brought out the thinking behind the links between accessible tourism and the triple-bottom line (TBL). With the TBL, being examined to better understand the social, environmental and financial considerations that arise from accessible tourism. Darcy, Cameron and Pegg go on to argue to properly satisfy the accessible tourism market, a more sophisticated understanding of accessible destination experiences is needed by tourism operators.

We are hoping to adopt case study research from other regions to show how this might have a similar effect on the Northern Ireland tourism market. However, an independent study specifically for Northern Ireland or the island of Ireland would be a preferred way forward. This is because the nature of engagement with consumers and the social and environmental factors are different here to those of other study regions.

One of the important factors which must be considered are those of concept by the industry of what accessible tourism really is; together with the support as well as access needs of the market. This also has further infrastructure implications for business as a whole as the World Health Organisation (WHO) tries to prepare the world for dealing with an ageing population. Having good infrastructure and social policies in what is now termed as universal design could also make the difference when wanting to maintain sufficient staff level, for those with a mild level of need.

It was on the 8th of June 2009, when the United Kingdom ratified the UNCRPD, the Republic of Ireland is much further behind as they have yet to ratify the convention to date. We in Northern Ireland however, cannot take comfort from our neighbours lack of movement in this area, as the tourist board here did not have an inclusion strategy for accessible tourism in their 2011-15 Corporate plan and neither does it feature in the draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020.

In England and more recently Scotland, accessible tourism has been formally recognised and specialists in their tourist boards have been employed to develop accessible tourism policy. They now accept that people with disabilities and seniors are part of a large, growing and lucrative market which is largely ignored by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. It must be conceded that in other regions, market research has been completed with industry and government agencies working together. The industry in Northern Ireland has largely ignored this niche market place and have therefore not given a lead to the tourist board to make moves in this direction. Yet like many other regions we have the high standards of building codes, and discrimination law to support such a frame work, however the imaginative thinking is kept firmly out of the way. Until disability is on the agenda of all levels of the government tourism agencies and the private sector, even the most effective advocates are likely to achieve only ad hoc outcomes rather than building a more strategically grounded approach to making Northern Ireland an accessible tourism destination.

What is Accessible Tourism?

To date there has been no universally agreed definition of what accessible tourism is; the concept is evolving as it is being applied in more area specific situations across the world. That said a meeting of a United Nations Committee in 2009 came up with the following.

“Accessible Tourism” (also known as “Access Tourism”, “Universal Tourism”, “Inclusive Tourism” and in some countries such as in Japan “Barrier-free Tourism”) is tourism and travel that is accessible to all people, with disabilities or not, including those with mobility, hearing, sight, cognitive, or intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, older persons and those with temporary disabilities” (Takayama Declaration - Appendix, UNESCAP, 2009)

As part of this detail, figures of the world population that is considered to have a disability at the time was approximately 650 million and set to increase over the next 40 years.

(See figure 1., P.26 of the appendices for the full international population estimates)

The biggest mistake business makes when reviewing this information is the single construct approach to disability and the assumption that they are all the same, with no difference in access needs. “The main barriers for SMEs are a low level of awareness and misconceptions about disability and access.” (HMG Office for Disability, P20). This couldn’t be further from the truth and lots of destinations are now making adjustments to the fact that accessible tourism needs to cater for the multi-dimensional needs of disability covering the areas of

Hearing, vision, mobility, cognitive, mental health, and social needs.

Since making a progressive approach to this market the industry in England has with the help of their national tourist Board, Visit England produced a report of the impact on domestic tourism.

In the period 2009 – 13 overnight trips saw a 19% rise by volume and a 33% increase in monetary terms.

(see Figure 2. Trip groups were a member of the party has an impairment P.26 appendices)

This had been able to reflect the positive impact on both volumes in numbers as well as value in added sales since 2009. This is as a direct result of the industry recognising the market place and making their business universally available to all and not an increase in business, specialising in tourism solely for disabled customers. This cuts across all sectors including business, leisure and visiting friends and family.

Universal Design

As mentioned earlier, most business' and government agencies alike, have too often been handling disability and disabled people in a single dimensional approach. This has meant that disabled people have had to endure policies and protocols based around a medical model of disability.

This indicates that the persons' disability is the focus of the reason why they may not access goods or services and thereby partake fully in society. It was this model that was used to formulate many of today's standards and attitudes to disability and also structured the legislation around these standards. This has also had an attitudinal effect on the perception in society of the disabled community and employment based training to support them.

EXAMPLE 1.

Access to a Ravenhill sports stadium. A wheelchair user cannot use a seat, therefore we will create a space in a wheelchair zone and allow a seat for a carer.

The alternative and preferred method, which is a multi-dimensional approach is known as the social model, which gives rise to the universal design outcome. Here the person is at the centre of resolving a problem and not the disability; designed by the disabled community this model was endorsed by the government and Equality Commission in 2014. This allows for complete integration into the activity rather than segregation, by asking what barriers may be removed to allow for inclusion, rather than what separate facilities may be designed.

EXAMPLE 2.

Access to the Grand Opera House. A wheelchair user cannot use a seat; therefore, we will create removable seats in the main auditorium; this will allow the wheelchair user to enjoy performances with their entire group.

The striking difference between examples 1 and 2 is that the wheelchair user has been fully enabled to enjoy a performance with all companion in the main arena in example 2 whilst in example 1 the wheelchair user has been enabled to watch the game, but has been segregated from other companions and does not get the same value for money as the rest of the stadium.

Creating this universal design within the context of the travel industry is a new phenomenon, in many tourism regions, but one that is being taken up rapidly by those who see the potential in the market place. The paradox is what will come first, the universal design of a tourism area or the promotion of accessible tourism for a given region? Many of the larger hotel groups operating throughout the world have been well used to universal design coming from the United States of America, where disabled people have had the privilege of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) since 1990. Yet these same business failed to commit the same resources to their properties outside of the USA!

Was this because there wasn't a need or because there wasn't anyone creating a need? In the main, it was because it wasn't required by law! Whilst most legislation now overlaps with universal design, it still only provides for the bare minimum rather than a complete service/product for everyone. In Great Britain, the need for universal design was created in 2014 and most hotel chains are adapting to the market, this is being closely followed by the independent hotel groups who are seeing the benefit and spending power of the disabled community both now and in twenty years' time.

Hotels aren't the only sector affected by the universal design concept. If a disabled person wishes to visit a region, they want to have a complete holiday experience, not just spend their time in the chosen accommodation.

Universal design is defined as;

“Universal Design involves designing products and spaces so that they can be used by the widest range of people possible. Universal Design evolved from Accessible Design, a design process that addresses the needs of people with disabilities. Universal Design goes further by recognizing that there is a wide spectrum of human abilities. Everyone, even the most able-bodied person,

passes through childhood, periods of temporary illness, injury and old age. By designing for this human diversity, we can create things that will be easier for all people to use.” (www.universaldesign.com)

In Northern Ireland the seven principles of universal design could easily be incorporated into the tourism sector by

- Including people with disabilities as planning team members
- Incorporating accessibility into outdoor environments
- Acquiring knowledge of the appropriate laws and internationally recognised accessibility standards
- Exceeding standards wherever possible
- Using an accessibility specialist on the planning team
(Moon, Hart, Komissar & Freidlander, 1995)

Life examples of these could include: -

Audio description at events, museums, or parks.

Literature available in large print or Braille.

Having commentary or productions signed, movies subtitled, audio visual signs.

Hand rails on inclines and seating available where queues are likely to form.

Fewer steps for access and more level access options. Automatic doors.

Assistance dog watering stations.

Quiet places etc.

These ideas however cannot be something that is developed without help for those smaller business within the tourism market place. Many scholarly contributions to this design management all point to the planning process of a tourism region and having goals and strategies led from the regional tourism authority as being the key starting point.

(An example of a universal design construct may be seen as figure 3., P.27 in the appendices)

Accessible Tourism Market

Research into this market is a new area and has largely been conducted in the EU and USA, where interest in accessible tourism is flourishing. In the USA, a nationwide survey shows the spending trends of US adult travellers with disabilities. Disability travel generates over \$17.3 billion in the USA alone in annual spend, by disabled people singly; add in family members and this rises to \$34.6 billion. This data alone, shows that the disability travel market has more of an impact on the travel industry and the wider economy as a whole.

The market research, which was carried on behalf of The Open Doors Organisation (ODO) and also indicates that, although four out of ten interviewed travellers classify their disability as severe (40%), seven out of ten have travelled in the last two years (71%), indicating that demand is still very much there for travel. The percentage traveling by air (31%) is also unchanged.

“Roughly two out of ten Americans with disabilities have taken six or more trips in the past two years, the same as in earlier studies, with an average trip length of 5 days.” **Open Doors Organization (ODO) Market Study 2015.**

Within the context of the European Union, the European Network on Accessible Tourism statistics show a population of 73 million Europeans sending €80 billion annually.

In the context of domestic tourism, Northern Ireland doesn't currently engage in this market place although there are 170,000 people recorded by the government as having a disability.

“In Scotland, research on domestic tourism highlights the contribution accessible tourism has made to the tourism economy. £391 million on overnight trips and £1.1 billion on day visits.” (Chris McCoy, Head of Accessible Tourism Programme, Visit Scotland)

This is where the impact of agencies such as Visit Scotland and Visit England has come in to its own. Both of these tourist authorities have been very progressive in producing serious help guides for their industry members. Developing strategic planning policies and tools to be used, all based around research of the market and why the needs of a community that requires this universal design; is helping their region attract new money.

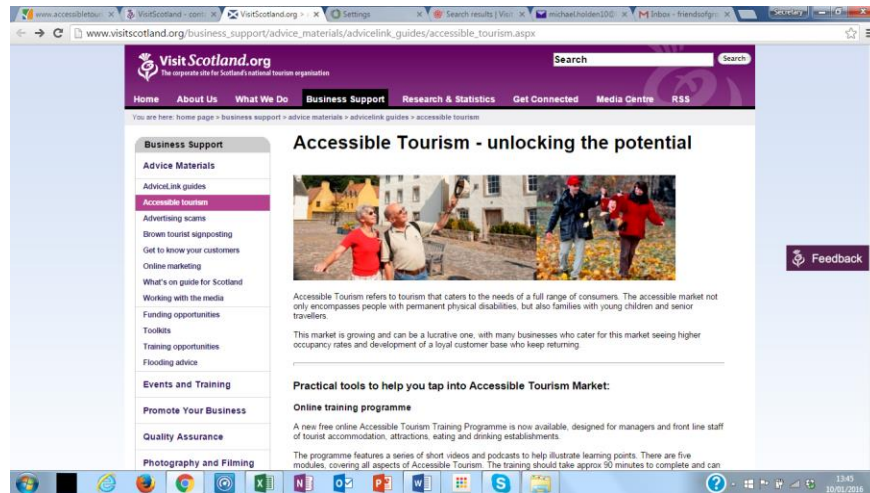


Fig. 4., Business Support Page on visitscotland.com

Many scholarly contributions to this design management all point to the planning process of a tourism region and having goals and strategies led from the regional tourism authority as being the key starting point.

Visit England also conducted a survey into the nature of what was the biggest barrier preventing people with disabilities from visiting the country.

94% of people planning a trip, either for themselves or on behalf of someone with access needs, say access information is important to them.

In a communication with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, an enquiry regarding accessibility of destinations in Northern Ireland, elicited a very ambiguous reply. *(see Notation 1 on P.29 in appendices for full email reply)*

Apart from being uninspiring or even a suggestion of worthy places to visit, it also assumes that the visitor is aware of building codes in Northern Ireland and also assumes that the law is sufficient provision for the visitor needs.

This approach is very different from England or Scotland, who not only provide help with training and access statements, but also have a comprehensive list of accessible attractions and accommodations in their own region.

On-line survey results

10 questions were posed to 220 people from across Europe who agreed to be questioned about accessible tourism. (see P.30-34 in appendices for full results)

Question	Response
Do you consider yourself to: Have a disability?	76% considered themselves to have a disability.
Have you ever considered visiting Northern Ireland as an accessible tourism destination?	55% said they had considered visiting Northern Ireland as an accessible destination.
When considering a destination, what is your preference? Organised trip Make own arrangements Mixture of both	59% would prefer to make their own arrangements.
Would you know where to find detailed accessible tourist information about Northern Ireland?	9% said yes
Would a service offering comprehensive information about accessible tourism in Northern Ireland be of use?	81% said yes
Would having detailed information about Northern Ireland encourage you to visit?	72% said yes
Ranking in order of importance what would you consider to be most important when choosing a destination.	63% said accommodation information was most important.

Northern Ireland Tourism Sector

HOTELS

Whilst there is data about hotel bedrooms and occupancy rates in the Northern Irish Hotel industry, there is no data covering accessible bedrooms. A list of hotels was used for the Northern Ireland area taken from information supplied by NITB and each one was contacted to ascertain the facilities available. *(see notation 2 on P.33 of the appendices for room details)*

If we use the occupancy rates for hotels, this would mean that at any one night there is a financial availability of accessible bedrooms, in Northern Ireland of £23,655 – annually this would be £8,634,075.

Whilst all of these hotels have access statements none of them give detailed information about their bedrooms and very few have photographs available of their accessible accommodation.

Airports

With no formal information about visitor numbers arriving into the province of Northern Ireland, an approach was made to the 3 regional airports in Northern Ireland with a request for passenger numbers, who requested disability assistance upon arrival at the airport, during 2014. Overall the number of passengers requesting assistance was just a meagre 0.8% of passenger numbers. (Figures given by individual operations managers as recorded at Belfast Int. Belfast City and City of Derry airports)

The airports also score well on disability review sites for customer service to disabled passengers, with the only regressive comments referring to drop off and collection zones which have erroneous practices when thinking about people with disabilities. *(see notation 3 on P.33 of the appendices for individual airport numbers)*

Neither Translink (Northern Ireland public transport authority), Stenaline or P&O Ferries were able to supply statistical information about the use of their service by disabled passenger. Translink did however say that on their bus fleet, they were increasing capacity for spaces to accommodate both wheelchairs and child buggies to be on the same vehicles at the same time, due to customer demand.

Tourist Attractions

The national trust has a considerable number of attractions in Northern Ireland, as well as coastal areas, they are accompanied by the Environment agency who have a number of properties too. Northern Ireland Museums as well as independents such as the Titanic are all worthy of a mention.

What is not known widely are the smaller enterprises in the tourism industry, all offering good services for disabled visitors, these include sailing, horse riding, swimming pools, fishing, outside adventure, walking trails but to name a few. All of them currently unsupported in national marketing strategy operated by the tourist board.

Northern Ireland has a considerable number of tourist attractions, but few of them have a comprehensive access statement on their website. None of those with good access policies are gathered together in any one space on the national NITB website. There are however 2 websites in Northern Ireland which offer a service regarding access information. These are

www.trip-ability.com – a private venture which is not supported by the tourist board. Information is gathered by crowd sourcing and guest blog contributions. Recently named by Lonely Planet as an influencer in the world of accessible tourism.

www.access400.org – a site operated by an arts charity, which depends on public funding to be maintained. This site is not supported by the tourist board.

Events

Northern Ireland has many outdoor festivals, but few of them are designed to cater for inclusion for those with accessible needs. Whilst they are not intentionally excluding disabled visitors, the fact that many receive public funding, yet have no compulsory planning for disability inclusion is a mark of the lack of universal planning when organizing such events. Small details such as accessible toilet facilities – (able people assume the large porta loos are accessible, disabled people could easily demonstrate why they are not). A quiet area for those with social disabilities, guides available in large print or braille. Or a downloadable descriptive from a website etc. Engaging people who can sign or providing doggy stations for assistance dogs.

As well as local events, Northern Ireland has attracted specific disability events to the province and they largely go un-noticed by the rest of the community. There

is little support for those trying to attract events such as tennis, basketball and golfing tournaments, yet the Paralympics was supposed to have changed the outlook of a nation.

Killymoon Golf Club in Cookstown, Co. Tyrone, hosted The British Open for Blind Golf in 1996 & 1999. During an interview with the then Captains, they shared the obstacles they had to be overcome to be able to host such a prestigious event. The Captain from 1996, said that they had made some alterations, specifically Braille on menus in the restaurant which were previously not there. However, although feedback was mainly positive, there were a number of issues that the organisers felt could be improved upon. Blind people criticised the accessibility in the Golf Club's lobby. If they were unaccompanied – and there was no receptionist – then they were unable to find their way to the lift. That in itself caused a problem as it was not braille equipped. Other information such as the layout of the room/bar area was not set up for blind people or wheelchair users also. They felt that using walking aids was unsafe and physically demanding in certain areas of the Clubhouse. Access out to the balcony had a slight decline which also caused concerns. This was all replicated in finding suitable accommodation in the local area. Overall, however, it was a success hence why it was chosen to host the event 3 years later. The 'teething' problems as it was put to me, were more than dealt with next time around. The lift was equipped with Braille and they had some of the organisers over before the event to help assist the club with any layout issues in the Clubhouse and toilets. The event has now grown from these early years and continues to prosper and Killymoon are actively lobbying to host the event in 2018.

However, support for this one event is not on the horizon for NITB, unlike the actual British Open, which began its publicity machine working in North Antrim and beyond, years ahead of that event.

Conclusion

Our research tells us that each traveller with disabilities can be expected to spend £232(Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency) per trip on average and this doesn't include any expenditure from their travelling companions, whether that be family or friends or whoever. Travellers with disabilities rarely travel alone, so you could argue that the economic impact of this is actually double, if not more. The most common way individuals with disabilities book their trips, 62% of travellers with disabilities have booked online in the past two years. However, only half as many placed calls to airlines and hotels (31%). Only 10% used travel agencies to help book their travel needs. The Internet was also the primary source of information about accessible travel (58%), followed by previous experience (48%) and friends and family (38%). This just shows that word of mouth and some form of brand loyalty is of utmost importance to the disabled community. Companies with inaccessible websites or who fail to post access information online are clearly missing opportunities in this market.

Both England and Scotland have been able to show a substantial increase in domestic tourism, due to the improvement of venues and the promotion of those regions offering good service to this market sector.

For Northern Ireland, whilst it has a much smaller domestic market, it would be able to have a draw from the Republic of Ireland, with whom it shares a land border and would have the possibility of increasing the inbound visitor numbers.

A number of people who responded to our survey, indicated that Northern Ireland was difficult to get to. With increasing flights destinations being introduced to the Northern Irish market, Belfast and Derry are becoming increasingly easier to get to. Having relatively small airports is also a bonus for the accessible community as it means that there is usually much less airside travel for passengers and smaller airports are renowned for offering a more personal and efficient service.

In Northern Ireland the tourist board spend £4,279,000 annually, promoting Northern Ireland; "this covers campaigns, media visits, golf marketing, business tourism, web and social/digital" (Joanne Taylor, TourismNI). None of those funds are spent on the promotion of accessible tourism.

In comparison, England and Scotland, have since investing in this area, seen considerable increases in tourism numbers within this market area and now have dedicated teams developing and introducing accessible tourism strategies.

However, the promotion of Northern Ireland can only take place once comprehensive information is gathered, studied and used to form a strategy. Being able to provide exciting itineraries would be key to competing with those destinations who have already begun work in this field.

Buy in from the tourism sector in Northern Ireland would also be a key component to a successful marketing campaign and this would only be achieved by convincing them of the benefit to their bottom line.

It might also be a consideration for Northern Ireland to partner with the Republic of Ireland in this area, as the island of Ireland competes directly with the island of Great Britain.

All of this would mean investment from the tourism industry, led by the government agency overseeing this sector of the Northern Irish Economy. Utilising the expertise of others already recognised in this process as well as drawing on past experiences of other agencies within the UK, Europe and the USA.

Whilst the indicators would suggest Northern Ireland could benefit from having a presence within the accessible tourism market, only with further study could this theory have a firm foundation.

Team evaluation

Our project didn't come naturally to us as a team, it was originally the idea of Pauline, who has since left the course. We mashed out the project very early and continued to meet throughout the summer, when Pauline dropped out, it was a surprise and also a reduced our team to just two members. One of us, who had considerable experience and knowledge of the subject matter and another that knew very little. We decided to continue with the project as it was and used the opportunity to bounce ideas off one another. Once introduced to the exciting concept of the project, Gavin was able to go off and be reflective of the project, whilst Michael was busy scurrying around for data to use. Both of us were able to bring ideas and new information to the project and usually in very different ways. Whilst Gavin would interview people and be methodical about data collection, having detailed information about the subject from a diverse demographic of people, Michael would have brought links and ideas in from areas, business and travellers from all over the world. One constructed and one a mass.

It has worked well, but only ever made any sense to us in from an education perspective after Janice had introduced us to personal learning styles. We actually met for coffee one morning, outside of the university to discuss this new found information and look back at how our differences had contributed to the making of the project we present today.

Knowing that something is working and knowing why that something is working, are two very different things; the knowing why, is both exhilarating in an educational context, as well as very satisfying when considering the work, we have produced together.

Personalities and the fact that we're both easy going as well as being Liverpool supporters helped too, yet we can honestly say that the project wouldn't have been the same if we both had the same set of learning skills.

Hopefully those that read our project, will find it interesting, informative and more so a vehicle for change, in an area that we have both become more knowledgeable about – Gavin because he thinks it's morally right and Michael, because it affects his daily life.

“You have a good paper here, but I hope the comments have been helpful? (you might have guess I used to be a teacher!!!)” Chris McCoy, Head of Accessible Tourism, Visit Scotland

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www.visitengland.com

<http://www.visitscotland.com/>

<http://www.openingdoorsnfp.org/>

Appendix

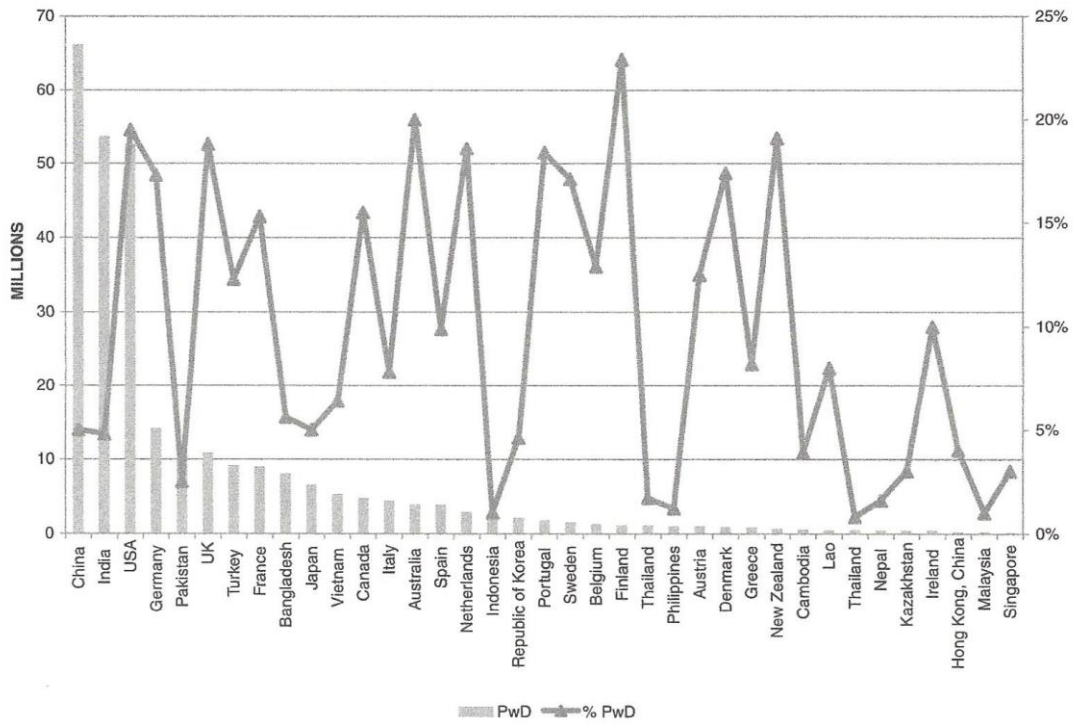


Figure 1. International population estimates of people with disabilities (Darcy & Dickson, 2009, p.36)



Figure 2. (Visit England, 2013 p.2)

Universal design has often brought out the imaginative in people as seen in figure 3 below. Steps were unavoidable, but a ramp was also incorporated.



Fig. 3., Robson Square, Vancouver.
(Dean Douchard, Flickr)

Notation 1 email reply from NITB.

Dear Gavin,

Thank you for your recent email. Belfast Welcome Centre will be handling your request on behalf of Tourism NI.

The very most of buildings/ tourist attractions in Northern Ireland are accessible as this is law. However, some buildings are due to their nature exempt from that requirement. Unfortunately we do not have a list of sites that are not accessible. If you are planning on visiting a historical site we recommend to either directly enquire on the relevant website or to contact us.

Thank you again for your email and if you feel we can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

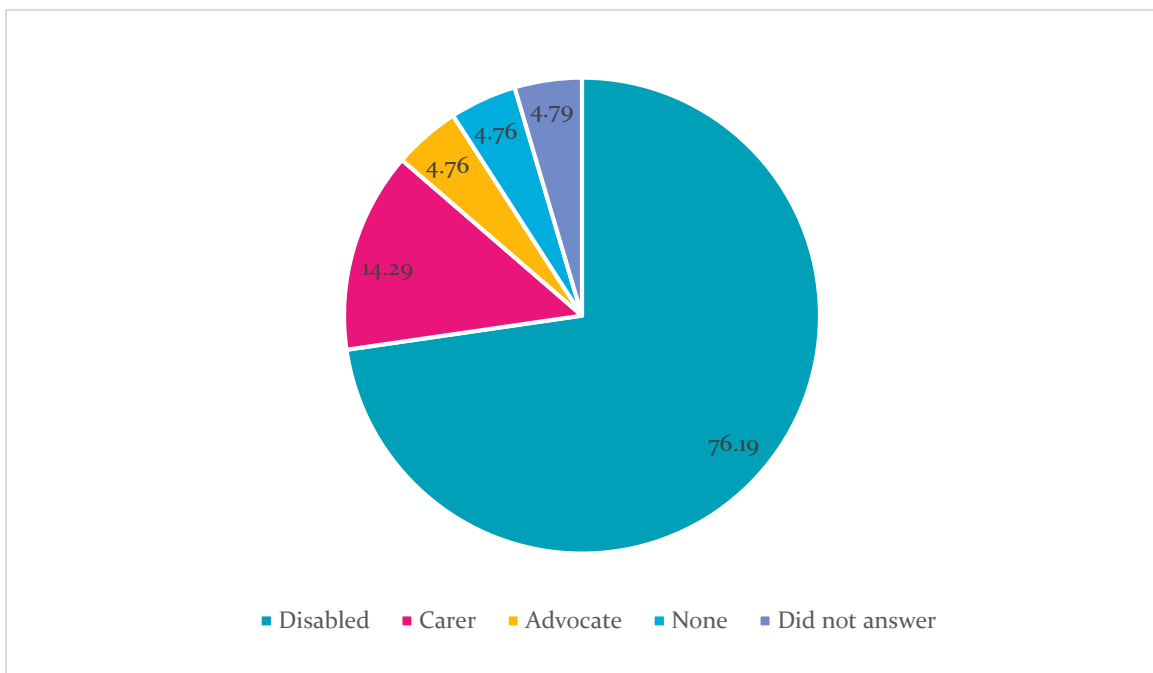
Online survey data

With basic information for Northern Ireland, being non-existent, a framework for developing opportunity was devised to try and build up statistics for Northern Ireland.

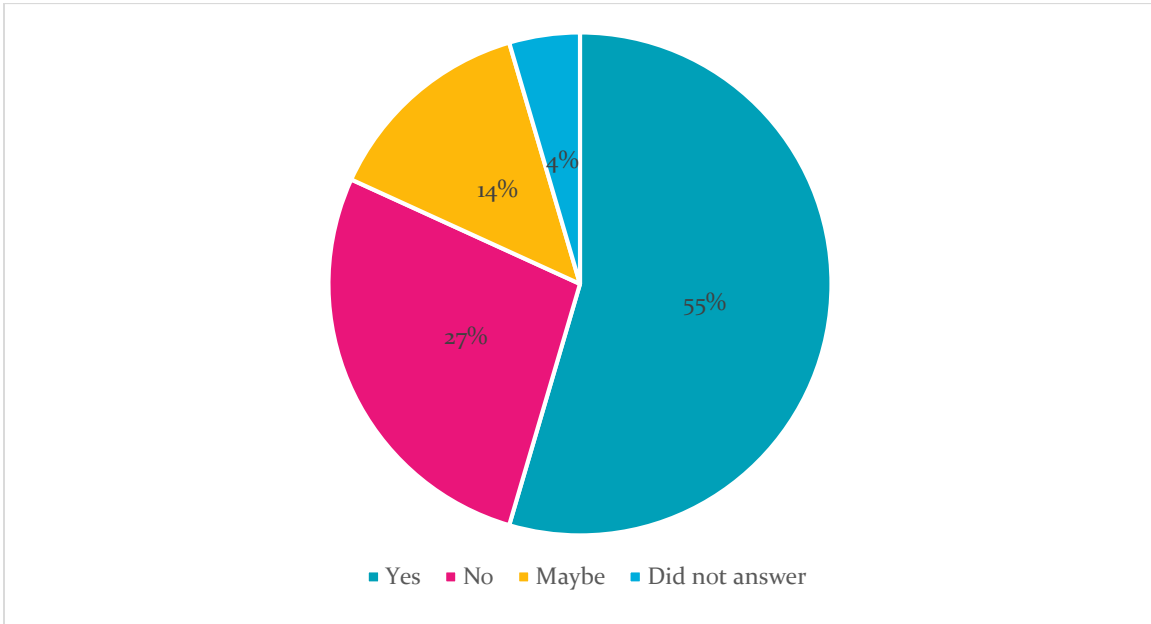
This involved talking to hoteliers, tourist attractions, transportation providers and of course disabled people themselves.

We conducted a survey of 220 random people who had expressed an interest in accessible travel from the European Network on Accessible Tourism

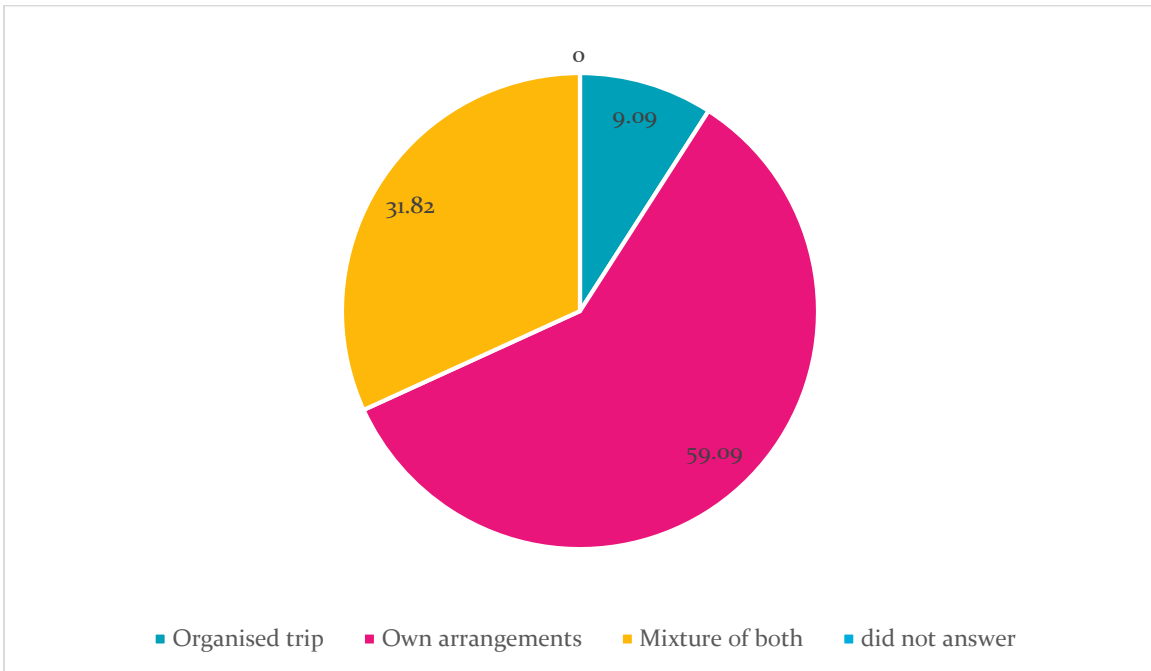
1. About myself



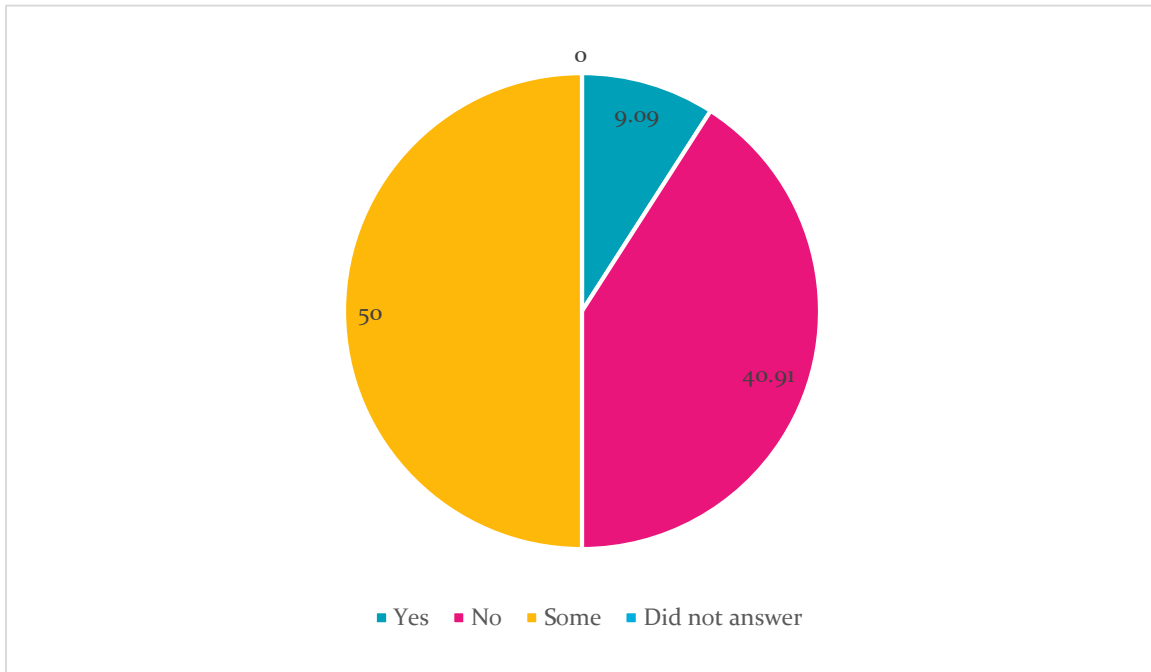
2. Thinking about holidays were a member of the group has a disability. Have you ever considered visiting Northern Ireland as an accessible tourism destination?



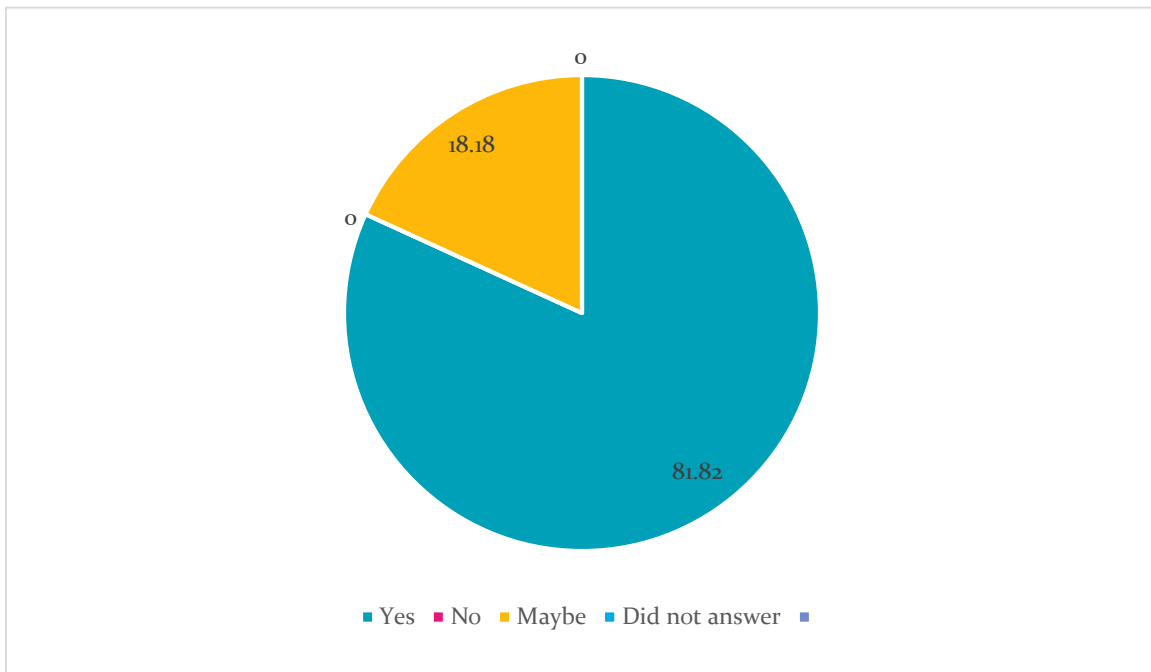
3. When considering a destination, what is your preference



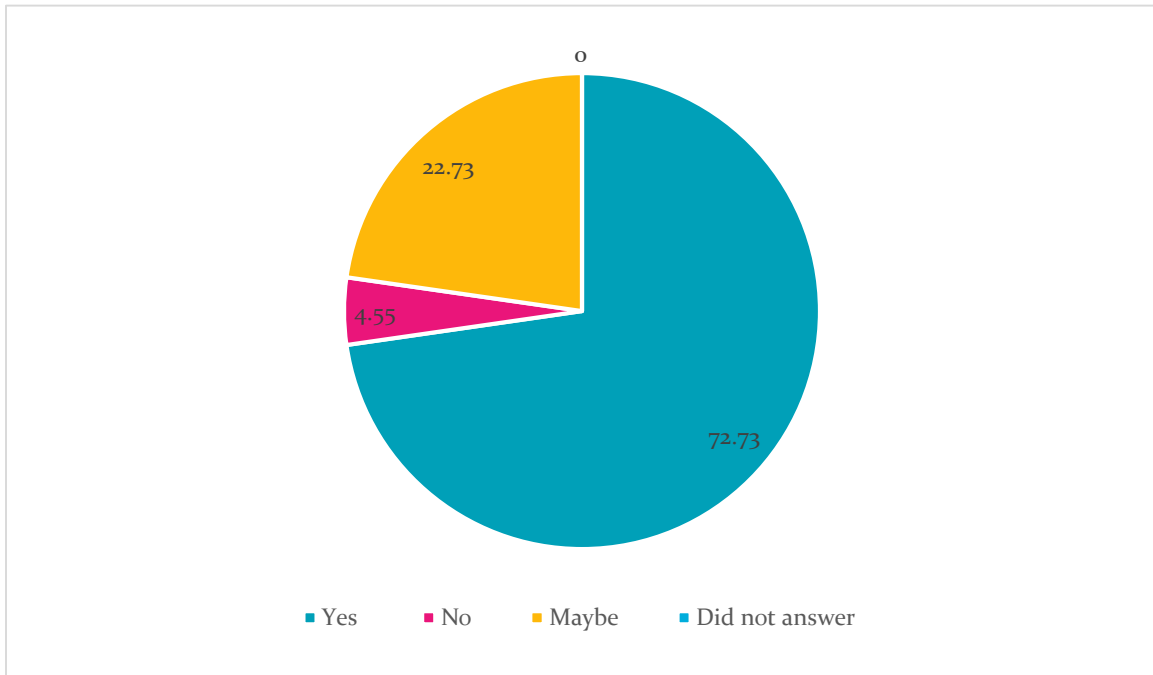
4. Would you know where to find detailed accessible tourist information about Northern Ireland?



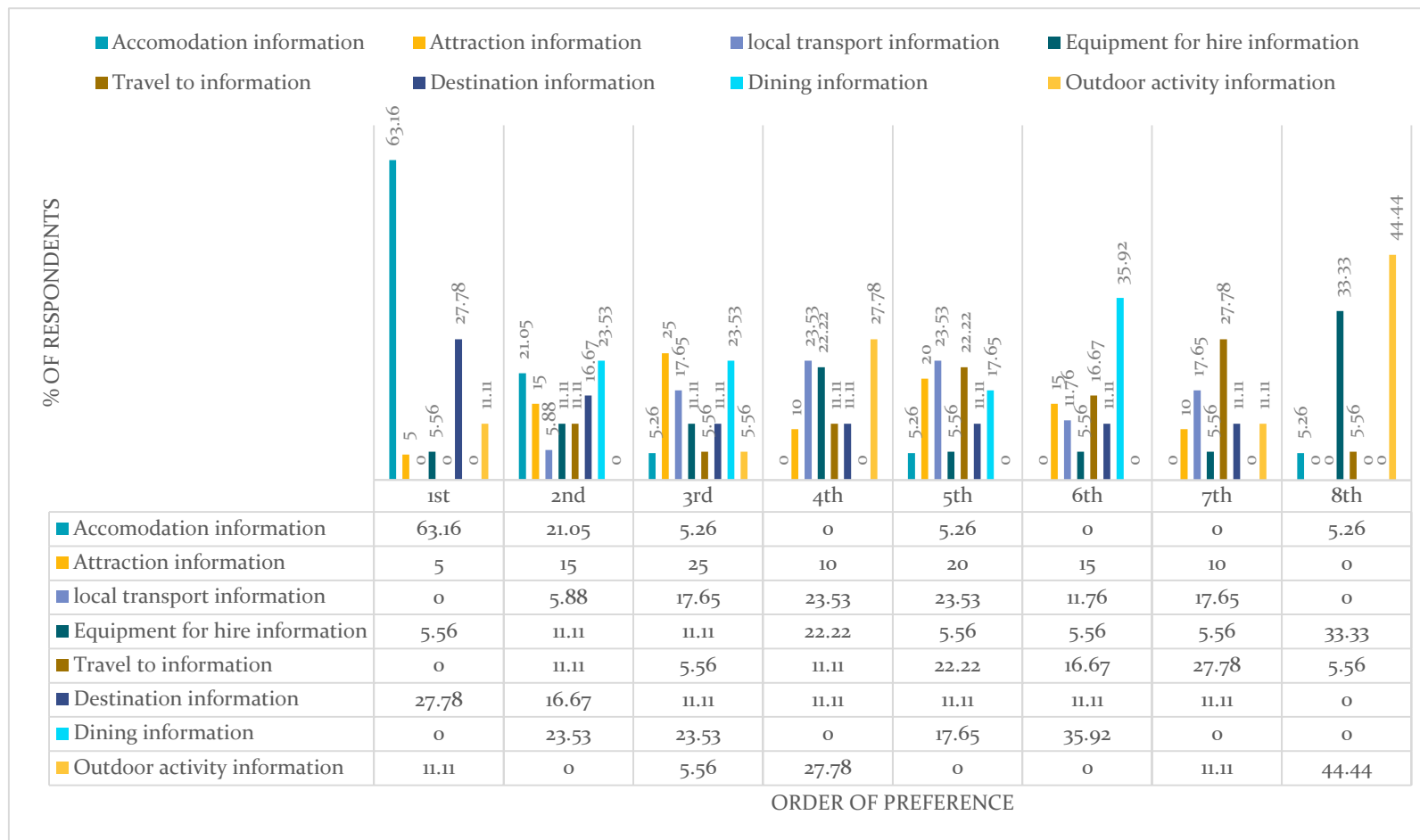
5. Would a service offering comprehensive information about accessible tourism in Northern Ireland be of use?



6. Would having detailed information about Northern Ireland encourage you to visit?



7. Ranking in order of importance what would you consider to be most important when choosing a destination. 1 being the most important.



Notation 2 Hotel Bedroom stats

No. of Hotels with access facilities	65
No. of Accessible Bedrooms	249
Average cost per night	£95
Occupancy in summer	68% ^a
Occupancy in winter	35% ^a

^a figures supplied by NITB for standard hotel occupancy rates

Notation 3 Airport passenger figures

Belfast International Airport	36,874
Belfast City Airport	20,431
City of Derry Airport	2,694

Interview Comments

When asked about visiting Northern Ireland as an accessible destination, these are a selection of the comments made.

We live in N Ireland and would like to take short breaks in N Ireland.

7/29/2015 1:25 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Its close to home and we could take the car, which may make transportation easier.

7/27/2015 1:24 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

I live there and like to travel here also as it is slightly easier than travelling abroad.

7/26/2015 9:25 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

It's never been a thought of mine but would consider it.

7/26/2015 3:42 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Family live in NI

7/26/2015 2:11 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Friendly people and great opportunities

7/26/2015 12:06 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

not sure

7/26/2015 11:04 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

I live here

7/25/2015 8:17 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

It has never come across as accessible.

7/25/2015 5:05 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Good transport links

7/25/2015 4:27 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Started doing some research into this destination

7/25/2015 3:16 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Because I live there and check locations for accessibility every day of my life now

7/25/2015 1:23 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

i once went as a child and remember it to be beautiful

7/25/2015 12:44 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Visiting friends

7/25/2015 12:03 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

I think Northern Ireland has better access than people realise.

7/25/2015 11:22 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

I always wanted to travel abroad but afraid of barriers and lack of access.

7/25/2015 11:02 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

Why not, it should be no different to anywhere else in the world. My son has autism so don't have same restrictions as someone who is physically disabled though more awareness of Autism would be good.

7/25/2015 9:50 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

The ferry prices make it a dearer option to England

7/25/2015 8:46 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

Need to fly or travel long distance to ferry port. Flying is a nightmare with w/c user. Then need expensive, accessible hire car.

7/25/2015 8:27 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

When asked 'Why a service offering comprehensive information about accessible tourism in Northern Ireland would be of use?' Here is a selection of replies.

Disabled persons will know in advance facilities available.

7/29/2015 1:25 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

It would give one source for all info to be accessed, which would make organising trips easier.

7/27/2015 1:24 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Then there would be individual information and not just general info.

7/26/2015 9:25 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

All my holidays have been a nightmare due to poor access despite being told everything was ok.

7/26/2015 3:42 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Planning is key & there is nothing worse than turning up somewhere only to find that it does not have the appropriate access of facilities you need

7/26/2015 2:11 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Where I can go with my medical alert dog would be tremendously useful

7/26/2015 12:06 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

It would save time effort and embarrassing questions

7/25/2015 8:17 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Well it would lemme decide if it was worth visiting

7/25/2015 5:05 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

I think a resource would be a good idea but more if a sign posting so not to take over the full planning for the person

7/25/2015 3:16 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Because then I wouldn't have to carry out my own research. I could go to one point of contact to find accessible locations.

7/25/2015 1:23 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

useful to know about steps in various types of accommodation

7/25/2015 12:44 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

I found it quite hard to find proper information

7/25/2015 12:03 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

As above. It would link in with the Arts & Disability Forum's work.

7/25/2015 11:22 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

So that holiday can be planned to go where needs are met

7/25/2015 9:50 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

Otherwise it is hard to find out how accessible destinations actually are

7/25/2015 9:11 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

I was be more likely to consider a holiday in Ireland if I had a one stop website that provides all the disability information consolidated

7/25/2015 8:46 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

It makes planning a holiday less daunting.

7/25/2015 8:27 AM [View respondent's answers](#)

Project Initiation Document

Terms of reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project as part of the course • 6000 words • Team effort • 30-minute presentation • Deliverable alongside other assignments
Scope and goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the subject • Network into the industry • Design research methods • Set targets • Commit to project • Be part of the presentation • Attend meetings
Organisational team structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal standing • Michael to develop strategy • Be respectful • Ready to offer assistance • Willing to read • Willing to research
Reporting procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow agreed timetable • Submit work to cloud • Update flow chart • Communicate any difficulties • Facts not own opinions
Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £30 for survey monkey
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time scale 34 weeks • Commitment 1 hour per week • Attend other classes to assist continued learning • Agree to meeting commitment
Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough reading material • No response to questionnaire • Failure to complete • Limited reading material • Writing style