

International Research Journal of Management Science & Technology



**ISSN 2250 – 1959(Online)
2348 – 9367 (Print)**

An Internationally Indexed Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal

www.IRJ MST.com
www.isarasolutions.com

Published by iSaRa Solutions

Accessible Tourism in India: Barriers, Opportunities and Inclusive Destination Development

Dr. Anitha K P

Associate Professor, Department of Tourism Studies, Government R C College of Commerce and Management, Bangalore. Karnataka

Abstract

Tourism is increasingly recognised as a domain through which societies enact their commitments to equity, dignity and participation. Yet for persons with disabilities, older adults, and others with temporary or situational impairments, the tourism experience in India remains structured by physical, attitudinal, informational, economic and institutional barriers that curtail the constitutional promise of equal citizenship. This paper offers a conceptual examination of accessible tourism in the Indian context. Drawing upon the social model of disability, the principles of universal design, and Amartya Sen's capability approach, the paper develops an integrated theoretical lens through which to understand accessibility not as a specialised add-on but as a precondition for genuine inclusion. It maps the principal barriers confronting accessible tourism development in India across five domains – infrastructural, attitudinal, informational, policy-institutional and economic – and situates these within the country's demographic and legal landscape, including the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and the Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan). It then identifies emerging opportunities, including the economic potential of the “purple economy” and the ageing “silver economy,” assistive technology, and India's vast heritage, pilgrimage and nature tourism base. The paper culminates in an original conceptual framework – the 4A Framework of Inclusive Destination Development, comprising Access, Amenities, Attitudes and Advocacy – intended to guide destination managers, policymakers and researchers toward a more systematic and sustainable approach to inclusive tourism planning. The paper concludes with stakeholder-specific recommendations and directions for future empirical research.

Keywords: accessible tourism; disability; inclusive destination development; universal design; social model of disability; India; Accessible India Campaign

1. Introduction

Tourism occupies a distinctive place among the world's economic sectors: it is simultaneously an industry, a form of mobility, and an assertion of the right to leisure, rest and cultural participation enshrined in Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For much of its history, however, the tourism system – its infrastructure, its marketing imagination, and its regulatory apparatus – has been designed around an implicit norm: the able-bodied traveller, unencumbered by sensory, physical, cognitive or age-related impairment. Persons with disabilities, older travellers with mobility limitations, pregnant women, individuals with temporary injuries and parents travelling with infants all encounter, in varying degrees, a built and social environment that was not designed with their requirements in mind. The consequence is not merely individual inconvenience but a systemic exclusion from participation in tourism as a social, economic and cultural practice.

India presents an especially consequential setting in which to examine this exclusion. It is a country of continental scale and extraordinary touristic endowment – encompassing UNESCO World Heritage sites, pilgrimage centres that draw hundreds of millions of domestic visitors annually, diverse ecological zones, and a rapidly expanding hospitality economy. It is also a country in which,

by the Census of India 2011, approximately 26.8 million persons – 2.21 per cent of the population – were enumerated as having a disability, a figure that most disability scholars and the National Sample Survey Office's subsequent rounds regard as a conservative estimate given the narrow diagnostic categories historically used in the Census (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, 2011). When this population is considered alongside India's rapidly ageing demographic profile, its large cohort of persons with temporary or situational impairments, and the friends and family members who accompany them, the addressable population for accessible tourism runs into several hundred million potential domestic travellers alone, before international demand is considered.

Against this backdrop, the Government of India has, over the past decade, constructed a reasonably robust legal and policy architecture for accessibility, most notably through the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD Act) and the Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan), launched in December 2015. Yet the translation of legal entitlement and policy intent into the lived experience of a tourist with a disability navigating a heritage monument, a hill station, a pilgrimage town or a budget hotel remains uneven and, in many respects, still nascent. Accessible tourism in India has tended to be treated as a compliance matter – the presence or absence of a ramp – rather than as a holistic destination-development philosophy that spans the built environment, service culture, information systems, transport chains and marketing.

This paper is conceptual in nature. It does not report new empirical data but instead synthesises theoretical perspectives from disability studies and tourism management, situates these against the documented policy and infrastructural landscape in India, and develops an original organising framework intended to be of practical use to destination managers, policymakers, tourism educators and researchers. The paper proceeds in six further parts. Section 2 conceptualises accessible tourism as a field. Section 3 sets out the theoretical framework underpinning the paper. Section 4 briefly establishes the scale and significance of the Indian context. Section 5 examines the principal barriers to accessible tourism in India. Section 6 discusses emerging opportunities. Section 7 proposes the 4A Framework of Inclusive Destination Development, and Section 8 offers stakeholder-specific recommendations before the paper concludes.

2. Conceptualising Accessible Tourism

2.1 From Disability to Accessibility: A Paradigm Shift

Early approaches to disability in tourism scholarship, as in public policy more broadly, were shaped by what disability studies scholars term the medical model – an understanding of disability as an individual pathology located within the body, to be managed through rehabilitation, special provision or charitable accommodation (Oliver, 1990). Under this framing, the traveller with impairment is the locus of the “problem,” and the response is typically segregated or remedial: a separate entrance, a designated tour, a charitable concession. Accessible tourism scholarship since the 1990s has been substantially shaped by a rejection of this framing in favour of the social model of disability, which locates disability not in individual impairment but in the interaction between impairment and a disabling environment – physical, attitudinal, institutional and informational (Oliver, 1990; Darcy & Dickson, 2009). Under this model, a wheelchair user is not “disabled” by paraplegia so much as by the absence of a ramp, just as a person with low vision is not “disabled” by acuity loss so much as by signage printed in a six-point font with no tactile or audio alternative.

This reframing has significant implications for how accessible tourism is conceived. It shifts the unit of analysis from the individual traveller's deficit to the destination system's design, and it shifts the

appropriate response from charitable accommodation to universal, rights-based design. It also widens the constituency of accessible tourism considerably: Darcy and Dickson (2009) propose a “whole-of-life” approach that recognises accessible tourism as relevant not only to permanent disability but to the temporary and situational impairments that affect virtually every traveller at some point – an injured knee, a heavy suitcase and a toddler in a pram, a bout of jet lag, or the sensory and mobility changes that accompany ageing.

2.2 Defining the Field

Accessible tourism may be defined, following Buhalis and Darcy (2011), as a form of tourism that enables people with access requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing, and cognitive dimensions, to function independently through the delivery of universally designed products, services and environments. Three features of this definition merit emphasis for the Indian context. First, accessibility is conceived as spanning the entire tourism value chain – pre-trip information and booking, transport to and within the destination, accommodation, attractions, food and beverage, and post-trip grievance redress – rather than being confined to a single touchpoint such as monument entry ramps. Second, the emphasis on independent functioning distinguishes accessible tourism from mere “assisted” tourism in which a person with disability is enabled to visit a site only through reliance on carrying, lifting or improvised assistance by staff or fellow travellers, an arrangement that may technically permit access while compromising dignity. Third, the definition's reference to universal design signals that accessible provision, properly conceived, benefits a far broader population than persons with clinically diagnosed disability – a principle of considerable strategic relevance to destination managers weighing the business case for investment, discussed further in Section 6.

3. Theoretical Framework

This paper draws on three complementary theoretical traditions to construct an integrated lens appropriate to the Indian tourism context: the social model of disability, the principle of universal design, and Amartya Sen's capability approach.

3.1 The Social Model of Disability

As introduced above, the social model, most closely associated with Oliver (1990) and subsequently elaborated within tourism studies by scholars such as Darcy and Buhalis, insists that disability is produced through the interaction of impairment with disabling social and physical arrangements. For the purposes of tourism analysis, the social model directs attention away from questions such as “what is wrong with this traveller” and toward questions such as “what in this destination's design excludes this traveller.” This reorientation is analytically productive because it converts an apparently intractable individual problem into a tractable design and policy problem amenable to systemic intervention.

3.2 Universal Design

Universal design, articulated originally in architecture and product design and subsequently extended to service environments, holds that environments and products should be designed, from the outset, to be usable by the widest possible range of people without the need for adaptation or specialised design (Buhalis & Darcy, 2011). Applied to tourism, universal design implies that accessibility should not be treated as a retrofit undertaken to satisfy a legal minimum for a small population, but as a default design orientation that improves usability for elderly travellers, families with young children, travellers with temporary injury, and international visitors unfamiliar with local signage conventions, alongside persons with disability. This principle is particularly salient for a country

such as India, where much heritage and pilgrimage infrastructure long predates any accessibility regulation, and where new tourism infrastructure investment offers an opportunity to embed universal design at the point of construction rather than through costly subsequent retrofit.

3.3 The Capability Approach

Amartya Sen's capability approach (Sen, 1999) offers a normative vocabulary that complements the social model's diagnostic one. Where the social model explains how disability is produced, Sen's framework asks what a person is substantively able to do and to be – their real freedoms or “capabilities” – rather than merely the resources nominally available to them. Applied to tourism, the capability approach reframes accessible tourism provision not as a matter of formal, non-discriminatory access to a monument or hotel, but as a question of whether a person's actual capability to travel, to experience a destination with dignity, and to exercise the freedom of movement and leisure enjoyed by other citizens has been genuinely secured. This is a demanding standard: a monument that is nominally open to wheelchair users but reachable only via a steep, unpaved approach path offers formal but not substantive access, and therefore does not, in Sen's terms, expand the traveller's real capability to visit.

3.4 An Integrated Lens for the Indian Context

Taken together, these three traditions yield an integrated analytical lens for this paper: disability in tourism is socially produced (social model); the appropriate design response is universal rather than segregated (universal design); and the ultimate criterion of success is the substantive expansion of travellers' real freedom to participate with dignity and independence (capability approach). This lens is used throughout the remainder of the paper to examine barriers, evaluate opportunities, and construct the proposed framework in Section 7.

4. The Indian Context: Scale and Significance

India's case for prioritising accessible tourism rests on a convergence of demographic scale, constitutional commitment and economic opportunity. Demographically, the Census of India 2011 enumerated 26.8 million persons with disabilities, of whom approximately 69 per cent reside in rural areas, with movement, visual and hearing impairments each accounting for roughly one-fifth of the total (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, 2011). The National Sample Survey Office's 76th round in 2018 recorded a marginally higher prevalence, and disability rights organisations generally regard both figures as undercounts relative to the World Health Organization and World Bank's (2011) global estimate of a disability prevalence closer to 15 per cent when broader functional definitions are applied. India's population is also ageing: the share of persons aged 60 and above is projected to rise substantially over the coming decades, a cohort that, irrespective of formal disability status, disproportionately experiences the mobility, vision and hearing limitations that accessible design addresses.

Constitutionally and legally, India ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2007, and gave this commitment domestic legislative effect through the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, which replaced the earlier Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995, expanded the recognised categories of disability from seven to twenty-one, and imposed statutory obligations on establishments, including those in tourism and hospitality, to provide accessible infrastructure and services within prescribed timelines (Government of India, 2016). The Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan), launched by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in December 2015, operationalised these commitments across three pillars – the built environment, transportation, and the information and communication

ecosystem. As of recent government reporting, the campaign has supported accessibility retrofits in over 1,600 government buildings, provided accessibility features at 90 airports, introduced short- and long-term accessibility measures at over 700 major railway stations, and made a meaningful minority of the national bus fleet partially or fully accessible, alongside making over 600 government websites accessible (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, DEPwD). These figures indicate genuine institutional momentum, even as they also reveal, by their partial coverage, the considerable distance that remains to be travelled – a theme developed further in Section 5.

Economically, tourism is a labour-intensive sector of acknowledged priority in India's development strategy, and the Ministry of Tourism has, through schemes such as Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive), committed substantial public investment to destination infrastructure in precisely the categories of site – pilgrimage centres, heritage circuits, hill stations and coastal destinations – where accessibility retrofit is both most needed and, if undertaken at the point of investment, least costly. The convergence of demographic scale, legal obligation and active infrastructure investment constitutes the structural opportunity that this paper argues has not yet been fully seized.

5. Barriers to Accessible Tourism in India

This section examines the principal barriers to accessible tourism development in India across five interlocking domains. Consistent with the social model articulated in Section 3, these barriers are treated not as attributes of disabled travellers but as features of the tourism system that require systemic redress.

5.1 Physical and Infrastructural Barriers

The most visible barriers remain physical. A substantial proportion of India's heritage assets – forts, temples, stepwells, colonial-era buildings – were constructed centuries before any accessibility consideration, and their protected heritage status under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act often constrains the extent of physical modification permissible, creating a genuine and unresolved tension between conservation and access that this paper suggests can be navigated but not ignored. Beyond heritage sites, more remediable infrastructural gaps persist across the tourism value chain: hotel rooms rarely feature roll-in showers, height-adjusted fixtures or visual fire-alarm systems even in categories marketed as accessible; footpaths and last-mile connectivity to attractions are frequently unpaved, uneven or obstructed by informal vending; accessible toilets, where present, are often locked, used for storage, or located at a considerable distance from the point of need; and public transport – despite the gains reported under the Accessible India Campaign – remains only partially accessible, with the reported proportion of fully accessible buses in the national fleet still in single digits (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, DEPwD). Hill stations, wildlife sanctuaries and beach destinations present particular difficulty given challenging natural terrain, which, while not always remediable to full compliance, is frequently compounded by the absence of even partial accommodations such as terrain wheelchairs, accessible viewing platforms or tactile trail markers that are now standard practice in comparable destinations internationally.

5.2 Attitudinal and Socio-Cultural Barriers

Physical barriers are compounded, and at times overshadowed, by attitudinal ones. Frontline tourism and hospitality staff in India typically receive little or no training in disability etiquette, communication with persons who have sensory or cognitive impairments, or the operation of accessibility equipment, producing service encounters marked by awkwardness, over-solicitousness,

or outright refusal of service dressed as concern for the traveller's welfare. Deep-rooted cultural associations between disability and karmic misfortune, charity or shame, documented across the Indian disability studies literature, can manifest in tourism settings as pity-driven interactions that undermine the dignity dimension of the capability approach discussed in Section 3, even where physical access is nominally present. Families of persons with disability frequently internalise these attitudes, resulting in what disability scholars term anticipated discrimination – a preemptive withdrawal from travel altogether in anticipation of an inhospitable environment, which is itself a significant and under-measured barrier operating upstream of any specific destination encounter.

5.3 Informational and Communication Barriers

A traveller cannot exercise choice over an accommodation or attraction whose accessibility status is unknown, and India's tourism information ecosystem provides strikingly little reliable, verified accessibility information at the point of trip planning. Destination websites, online travel agency platforms and government tourism portals rarely specify accessibility features with the granularity – doorway widths, step-free routes, availability of Braille or audio guides, presence of trained staff – that would allow a traveller with specific access requirements to plan with confidence, forcing reliance on informal word-of-mouth networks or, in many cases, arrival at a destination without any advance knowledge of whether it can be navigated. Within destinations, signage is rarely available in tactile, high-contrast or multi-sensory formats; audio description and sign-language interpretation at museums and heritage interpretation centres remain rare; and emergency evacuation information is almost never provided in accessible formats, a safety gap of particular concern given India's exposure to natural hazards in many tourism regions.

5.4 Policy, Legal and Institutional Barriers

Although the RPwD Act, 2016 and the Accessible India Campaign constitute meaningful legal and policy commitments, several institutional gaps blunt their effect in the tourism sector specifically. Enforcement mechanisms for accessibility non-compliance in privately operated hospitality establishments remain weak relative to the scale of the sector, with accessibility audits, where conducted, concentrated overwhelmingly on government buildings rather than the private hotels, restaurants and tour operators through which most tourists' experience is mediated. Tourism sector regulation and accreditation – including hotel star classification by the Ministry of Tourism – has historically accorded accessibility criteria a marginal weighting relative to other service parameters, providing limited market incentive for voluntary investment. State-level tourism departments, which administer the majority of ground-level destination infrastructure, vary considerably in institutional capacity and priority accorded to accessibility, producing an uneven national landscape in which a traveller's experience is heavily contingent on which state they visit. Finally, accessible tourism as a specific professional and academic competency remains largely absent from India's hospitality and tourism management curricula, constraining the pipeline of trained personnel available to the sector – a gap with direct relevance to the recommendations advanced in Section 8.

5.5 Economic and Market Barriers

Economic barriers operate at both the supply and demand sides of the market. On the supply side, small and medium tourism enterprises, which constitute the overwhelming majority of India's accommodation and attraction base, frequently cite the perceived cost of accessibility retrofit as prohibitive, particularly absent dedicated subsidy or low-interest finance instruments comparable to those available for other categories of tourism infrastructure investment; this perception persists despite substantial international evidence, discussed in Section 6, that universal design measures

incorporated at the point of new construction carry only marginal incremental cost relative to retrofit. On the demand side, persons with disabilities in India experience markedly higher rates of poverty and unemployment than the general population, a consequence of the same disabling social arrangements examined in Section 3 operating in labour and education markets, which constrains the discretionary income available for leisure travel even where destinations are physically accessible – a reminder that accessible tourism development cannot be considered in isolation from the broader socio-economic inclusion agenda.

5.6 Intersectional Dimensions

Finally, these barriers do not fall uniformly across the disabled population. Women with disabilities in India face compounding barriers of gender-based restriction on independent mobility layered atop disability-related access barriers; rural-origin travellers with disability, who constitute the majority of India's disabled population, face additional barriers of distance, information access and last-mile connectivity that are typically more severe than those confronting urban travellers; and disabled travellers from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe backgrounds, who are statistically over-represented within the disabled population relative to the general population (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, 2011), may encounter accessible tourism's current, largely urban and premium-segment provision as still further removed from their economic and geographic reach. A conceptual account of accessible tourism in India that does not register this intersectionality risks producing recommendations calibrated only to the most visible and market-accessible segment of disabled travellers.

6. Opportunities for Accessible Tourism Development

Against the barriers documented above, this section identifies five converging opportunities that position India favourably, if the requisite investment and institutional will are mobilised, to develop as a genuinely inclusive tourism destination.

6.1 Policy Momentum and Legal Architecture

As detailed in Section 4, India already possesses a legal and institutional foundation – the RPwD Act, 2016, the Accessible India Campaign, and sector schemes such as Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD – that many peer developing economies lack. The opportunity, properly understood, is less about building new policy architecture from scratch than about extending the enforcement, funding and sectoral specificity of the architecture that already exists into the tourism and hospitality sector specifically, including through mandatory accessibility criteria within hotel classification, tour operator licensing and destination development grant conditions.

6.2 The Economic Case: Purple and Silver Economies

International tourism economics literature has increasingly documented the scale of what is sometimes termed the “purple economy” – the discretionary travel spending of persons with disabilities and their accompanying travel parties – alongside the well-established growth of the “silver economy” of older travellers, a demographic that shares many of the same access requirements. Because persons with disability frequently travel with one or more companions, and because accessible provision benefits the substantially larger population of older and temporarily impaired travellers described under the universal design principle in Section 3, the addressable market for accessible tourism investment in India is considerably larger than the disabled population alone, and includes a segment – domestic pilgrimage and family travel – in which India already holds a dominant global position by volume. This reframes accessibility investment from a

compliance cost to a market-expansion strategy, a reframing several Indian hospitality chains and destination management organisations have begun, tentatively, to adopt.

6.3 Technology as an Enabler

The proliferation of smartphone-based assistive and navigational technology offers India a genuine opportunity for leapfrogging, in the manner it has in other infrastructure-constrained sectors. GPS-based step-free routing applications, screen-reader-compatible booking platforms, real-time sign-language interpretation via video relay, and crowd-sourced accessibility review platforms all lower the marginal cost of providing the kind of granular, trustworthy pre-trip information identified as absent in Section 5.3. The Sugamya Bharat App, developed under the Accessible India Campaign for accessibility grievance reporting, illustrates the kind of government-enabled digital infrastructure that could, with sector-specific extension, be adapted into a national accessible-tourism information and certification platform.

6.4 Heritage, Pilgrimage and Nature Tourism Potential

India's pilgrimage economy – encompassing sites such as Tirupati, Vaishno Devi, the Char Dham circuit, Sabarimala and countless regional shrines – draws an enormous volume of domestic travellers each year, a substantial proportion of whom are elderly and travelling in multigenerational family groups with attendant mobility support needs already embedded in cultural practice, even where formal accessibility infrastructure is absent. This represents a distinctive Indian opportunity: pilgrimage tourism already operates with a latent, culturally embedded ethic of assisting less mobile travellers that formal accessible tourism development could build upon and systematise, rather than needing to construct market demand for accessible provision from nothing, as is often the challenge in leisure-tourism contexts elsewhere. Similarly, India's network of national parks and hill stations, while presenting genuine terrain constraints as noted in Section 5.1, offers scope for accessible nature-viewing infrastructure – boardwalks, accessible safari vehicles, sensory trails – of the kind increasingly standard in comparable protected areas internationally.

6.5 Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities

Finally, accessible tourism development carries a secondary opportunity in employment generation for persons with disability themselves, within the sector rather than only as its beneficiaries – as accessibility auditors, inclusive-tour guides, sign-language interpreters attached to heritage sites, and operators of disability-led travel agencies with direct experiential knowledge of access requirements. Several such disability-led travel enterprises have emerged in India's metropolitan tourism markets over the past decade, offering a template for the kind of participatory, disability-led destination development advocated within the framework proposed in Section 7.

7. Towards a Framework for Inclusive Destination Development

Building on the barriers and opportunities identified above, this paper proposes an original conceptual framework – the 4A Framework of Inclusive Destination Development – intended to translate the theoretical lens set out in Section 3 into a structure usable by destination managers, tourism boards and policymakers. The framework organises intervention across four interdependent pillars: Access, Amenities, Attitudes and Advocacy. The pillars are conceived as interdependent rather than sequential: investment concentrated in one pillar to the neglect of others – for instance, physical access without attitudinal preparedness among staff – tends to produce the kind of formally-present-but-substantively-hollow access that the capability approach in Section 3.3 identifies as an inadequate standard.

Pillar	Focus	Illustrative Interventions
Access	The physical and digital built environment	Step-free routes and ramps meeting universal design standards; accessible transport linkages; accessible websites and booking systems; tactile and multi-sensory wayfinding
Amenities	Facilities and services experienced on-site	Accessible toilets, rest areas and seating; height-adjusted counters and fixtures; assistive equipment such as terrain wheelchairs and hearing loops; accessible emergency evacuation provision
Attitudes	The human and cultural dimension of service delivery	Disability-etiquette and sign-language training for frontline staff; community sensitisation in destination towns; employment of persons with disability within the tourism workforce
Advocacy	Institutional accountability and continuous improvement	Mandatory accessibility criteria within hotel classification and licensing; independent accessibility audits and certification; grievance-redress mechanisms; co-design with disabled persons' organisations

Table 1. The 4A Framework of Inclusive Destination Development

A defining feature of the framework is its insistence, in the Advocacy pillar, on the co-design principle – the involvement of persons with disability and their representative organisations as active participants in destination planning rather than as passive consultees or eventual beneficiaries. This principle follows directly from the social model's core commitment, often summarised in the disability rights movement's own formulation, that provision designed for disabled people without their participation tends to reproduce the very paternalism the social model seeks to displace. Operationally, this implies that state tourism departments and destination management organisations should institutionalise standing consultative mechanisms with disabled persons' organisations at the destination-planning stage, not merely at post-construction accessibility audit stage.

The framework is also deliberately scalable: a small heritage-town destination management committee can apply the four pillars as a simple planning checklist with modest investment, while a national tourism authority can apply the same structure to construct a formal accreditation or certification standard, of the kind several countries have introduced for accessible tourism destinations. This scalability is intended to make the framework usable across the considerable variation in institutional capacity that Section 5.4 identified across India's state tourism departments.

8. Policy and Practice Recommendations

The following stakeholder-specific recommendations follow from the analysis above and are intended as a practical complement to the 4A Framework.

8.1 For National and State Government

- Extend the sectoral scope of Accessible India Campaign accessibility audits from predominantly government buildings to privately operated hotels, restaurants and attractions, using tourism licensing and hotel classification as the enforcement lever.
- Introduce dedicated, low-interest financing or capital subsidy instruments for accessibility retrofit within existing tourism infrastructure schemes such as Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD, alongside a mandatory universal-design requirement for all newly funded destination infrastructure.
- Develop and publish a standardised, verified national accessible-tourism information database, potentially building on the digital infrastructure already established through the Sugamya Bharat App, to close the informational barrier identified in Section 5.3.

8.2 For Destination Management Organisations and the Tourism Industry

- Adopt the 4A Framework, or an equivalent structured tool, as a standing destination-planning checklist, with particular attention to the Advocacy pillar's requirement for co-design with disabled persons' organisations.
- Institutionalise disability-etiquette and accessible-service training as a mandatory, recurring component of frontline staff induction across hotels, transport operators and heritage-site personnel.
- Explore partnerships with disability-led travel enterprises, both to expand accessible product offerings and to embed lived experiential expertise within mainstream destination planning.

8.3 For Academia and Tourism Education

- Integrate accessible tourism and universal design as a core, rather than elective, component of hospitality and tourism management curricula, addressing the personnel-pipeline gap identified in Section 5.4.
- Prioritise empirical research – currently thin within the Indian tourism studies literature – that documents the lived travel experiences of Indian tourists with disability, disaggregated by gender, rural-urban location and socio-economic background, to test and refine the conceptual propositions advanced in this paper.

8.4 For Disabled Persons' Organisations and Civil Society

- Develop capacity for participation in the standing consultative mechanisms recommended above, and pursue partnerships with destination management organisations to conduct independent, disability-led accessibility audits.
- Continue to build public advocacy that challenges the attitudinal and cultural barriers identified in Section 5.2, alongside infrastructural advocacy.

9. Conclusion

This paper has argued that accessible tourism in India stands at a genuine inflection point: a substantial and growing addressable population, an increasingly robust legal and policy architecture, and active public investment in tourism infrastructure together constitute a structural opportunity that has not yet been matched by systematic, sector-specific implementation. Drawing on the social model of disability, universal design and Sen's capability approach, the paper has distinguished formal from substantive access, and has argued that the latter – the genuine, dignified, independent capability to travel – must be the criterion against which India's accessible tourism development is judged. The barriers mapped in Section 5 are neither trivial nor, this paper has argued, intractable: they are, in the terms of the social model, produced by remediable choices in design, training, regulation and investment rather than by the fact of impairment itself. The 4A Framework proposed in Section 7 – Access, Amenities, Attitudes and Advocacy – offers one route through which these choices might be systematically reordered. As India continues to position itself as a leading global tourism destination, the extent to which this development is genuinely inclusive will be a meaningful

test of the country's broader constitutional and developmental commitments to equal citizenship for persons with disability. Future empirical research, particularly research grounded in the lived accounts of Indian travellers with disability across the intersectional dimensions identified in Section 5.6, will be essential to refining and validating the conceptual propositions advanced here.

References

- Buhalis, D., & Darcy, S. (Eds.). (2011). Accessible tourism: Concepts and issues. Channel View Publications.
- Darcy, S. (1998). Anxiety to access: The tourism patterns and experiences of New South Wales people with a physical disability. *Tourism New South Wales*.
- Darcy, S., & Dickson, T. J. (2009). A whole-of-life approach to tourism: The case for accessible tourism experiences. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 16(1), 32–44.
- Government of India. (2016). The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD). (n.d.). Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan). Government of India.
- Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. (n.d.). Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD schemes.
- Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. (2011). Census of India 2011: Data on disability.
- Oliver, M. (1990). The politics of disablement. Macmillan.
- Sen, A. (1999). Development as freedom. Oxford University Press.
- Shaw, G., & Coles, T. (2004). Disability, holiday making and the tourism industry in the UK: A preliminary survey. *Tourism Management*, 25(3), 397–403.
- United Nations. (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).
- United Nations World Tourism Organization. (2013). Recommendations on accessible tourism. UNWTO.
- World Health Organization & World Bank. (2011). World report on disability. WHO.



EARN YOUR MBA

WWW.IIMPS.IN



Accreditation & Ranking



UGC / NCTE Approved.

INFO@IIMPS.IN

☎ 011-41005174

RESEARCH
GATEWAY

STOP PLAGIARISM



Arogyam Ayurveda
Holistic Healing through herbs



AROGYAM
ONLINE

PARIVARTAN PSYCHOLOGY CENTER

परिवर्तन

COLOR PSYCHOLOGY : HOW COLOR AFFECT YOUR CHILD



BLUE

Calms your Child's
Mind & Body

YELLOW

Promotes Concentration,
Stimulates the Memory

PINK

Evokes Empathy,
makes your Child Calm

RED

Excites and energizes
your Child's body

GREEN

Improves Reading speed
and Comprehension

www.parivartan4u.com



परिवर्तन

Confuse about your children's future?

भारतीय भाषा, शिक्षा, साहित्य एवं शोध

ISSN 2321 – 9726

WWW.BHARTIYASHODH.COM



**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF
MANAGEMENT SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

ISSN – 2250 – 1959 (O) 2348 – 9367 (P)

WWW.IRJMS.T.COM



**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF
COMMERCE, ARTS AND SCIENCE**

ISSN 2319 – 9202

WWW.CASIRJ.COM



**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF
MANAGEMENT SOCIOLOGY & HUMANITIES**

ISSN 2277 – 9809 (O) 2348 - 9359 (P)

WWW.IRJMSH.COM



**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF SCIENCE
ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY**

ISSN 2454-3195 (online)

WWW.RJSET.COM



**INTEGRATED RESEARCH JOURNAL OF
MANAGEMENT, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION**

ISSN 2582-5445

WWW.IRJMSI.COM



**JOURNAL OF LEGAL STUDIES, POLITICS
AND ECONOMICS RESEARCH**

WWW.JLPER.COM

JLPE