

DEFINING ACCESSIBILITY OF TOURISM WEBSITES FOR TOURISTS WITH DISABILITIES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF UZBEK HOTELS

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ABSTRACT

Uzbekistan has become a significant destination for tourists globally, where tourism demand has risen gradually in post-pandemic time. According to the State Statistics Committee, the number of tourists in 2022 increased 2.8 times than it was in the previous year. The growing numbers show the importance of involving tourism suppliers and social entities in developing sufficient accessibility of their websites. Although many studies have examined the accessibility of web sources in the tourism sector worldwide, the research in Uzbekistan is restricted. No studies evaluate the web accessibility of tourism stakeholders for people with disabilities.

Key words: accessibility, tourists with disabilities, tourism, websites, hotels.

METHODS AND RESULTS

This study systematically analyzed the websites of Tashkent hotels, the information about the official hotels was derived from Open Data Portal of Uzbekistan (<https://data.egov.uz/eng/data/610b6fe11a64fdd0373a8eaf?page=32>) which is shown in Table 1. Altogether, 50 web pages were evaluated, and the data was collected during the period between April 2023 and May 2023. TAW, as an automatic tool evaluating web accessibility according to the WCAG 2.1 guidelines. By using a website's URL, TAW generated a summary of the site's accessibility, highlighting any potential problems or warnings. TAW has been extensively used in research on web accessibility, particularly in the context of tourism. (Singh et al. 2020).

The four principles of the WCAG 2.0 standard are intended to guide website designers and developers in creating content that is accessible to people with disabilities. Each principle is supported by a set of guidelines and success criteria, which provide specific recommendations and requirements for making web content more accessible.

The summary obtained from the TAW tool based on WCAG 2.0 is represented in Table 4. There are 1771 problems, 4041 warnings and 816 not reviewed instances detected from 48 websites. Out of all 50 websites, two were excluded from the study

as it shows an error in the TAW tool. It can be seen that problems and warnings were considerable in comparison with cases which are not reviewed. The study showed that none of the hotel websites in Tashkent passed the test successfully. The summary obtained from the AChecker tool based on WCAG 2.0 is represented in Table 5. There are 1745 known problems, 43 likely problems, 11138 potential problems detected from 50 websites. Out of all 50 websites, only one had no problems in AChecker, while TAW showed 23 problems, 74 warnings and 17 not reviewed instances. It can be seen that potential and known problems were considerable in comparison with likely problems.

Combining automated tools with manual testing and involving users with disabilities in the evaluation process can help identify and address a broader range of accessibility issues. Ultimately, website owners and developers should aim for a multi-faceted approach to accessibility, including both automated tools and human evaluation, to ensure the best possible accessibility for all users.

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