Search strategies in accessible tourism, barrier-free tourism, disabled tourism and easy access tourism literature

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Abstract

Purpose – Research concerning the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in tourism activities began long before this field of study was formally named. This has led scholars to use a variety of expressions to refer to what is now known as accessible tourism (AT). Given that this diversity of terms can complicate locating relevant publications, this paper aims to examine the terminology used in the context of AT. Design/methodology/approach – This study conducts an exhaustive literature review and a statistical analysis of 613 documents collected from Scopus, published between 1984 and 2022. Findings – The results suggest that, despite the widespread use of “Accessible Tourism” in recent literature, most papers published before 2010 cannot be retrieved using this term. Additionally, the longitudinal analysis of scientific production revealed four distinct stages based on the number of annual publications. Research limitations/implications – This paper has limitations that could inspire future studies, such as relying solely on Scopus for data collection, including only academic papers, limiting the number of references and narrowing the search to specific terms. Future investigations could compare these findings using a greater amount of data collected from other databases (e.g. Google Scholar), including non-academic writings (e.g. newspapers and Webpages), exploring the efficiency of different search strategies (e.g. silver market) and delving deeper into the evolution of the AT discourse in society. Practical implications – Policymakers and tourism stakeholders can leverage the insights of this paper to standardise their vocabulary in communication and operational strategies. Scholars can enhance the efficiency of literature searches and develop new lines of knowledge inspired by terms traditionally used to refer to AT. Social implications – This paper encourages continued investigation into AT and underscores the importance of language in developing a more inclusive society. Originality/value – This research pioneers the analysis of the evolution of AT synonymy by years, nations and authors. It provides evidence of how linguistic choices reflect changes in the social understanding of disability. This study proposes a framework to distinguish AT from other tourism models, facilitating unified communication among stakeholders. It presents strategies to improve efficiency in locating studies in the AT area and advocates for an inclusive society that uses language respectful to all individuals.

Keywords Inclusive tourism, Tourism for all, Universal tourism, Semantics, Bibliometric analysis

Paper type Research paper

可达性旅游、无障碍旅游、残疾人旅游及易进入旅游文献的检索策略　

摘要

研究目的：本文研究了1984年至2022年间发表的613篇文献进行了详尽的文献回顾和统计分析。

目的：关于将残疾人纳入旅游活动的研究早在这一研究领域正式命名之前就开始了。这导致学者们使用各类表达来指代现在被称为无障碍旅游(AT)的概念。鉴于这种术语的多样性会使相关出版物的定位复杂化。本文旨在研究AT术语中使用的术语。

研究结果：结果表明，尽管“无障碍旅游”在最近的文献中被广泛使用，但2010年之前发表的大多数文章都没有使用该术语进行检索。此外，科学产出的纵向分析显示，基于年度出版物的数量，有四个不同的阶段。
Estrategias de búsqueda de literatura de turismo accesible, turismo sin barreras, turismo Para discapacitados y turismo de fácil acceso

Resumen

Objetivo: La investigación relativa a la inclusión de las personas con discapacidad en las actividades turísticas comenzó mucho antes de que se diera un nombre formal a este campo de estudio. Esto ha llevado a los estudiosos a utilizar una gran variedad de expresiones para referirse a lo que ahora se conoce como Turismo Accesible (TA). Dado que esta diversidad de términos puede complicar la localización de publicaciones relevantes, este artículo pretende examinar la terminología utilizada en el contexto del TA.

Diseño/metodología/enfoque: Este estudio realiza una revisión exhaustiva de la literatura y un análisis estadístico de 613 documentos recopilados de Scopus, publicados entre 1984 y 2022.

Resultados: Los resultados sugieren que, a pesar del uso generalizado de “Turismo Accesible” en la literatura reciente, la mayoría de los artículos publicados antes de 2010 no pueden recuperarse utilizando este término. Además, el análisis longitudinal de la producción científica reveló cuatro etapas distintas en función del número de publicaciones anuales.

Limitaciones/implicaciones de la investigación: Este trabajo tiene limitaciones que podrían inspirar futuros estudios, como basarse únicamente en Scopus para la recopilación de datos, incluir sólo artículos académicos, limitar el número de referencias y restringir la búsqueda a términos específicos. Futuras investigaciones podrían comparar estos Resultados utilizando una mayor cantidad de datos recogidos en otras bases de datos (por ejemplo, Google Scholar), incluyendo escritos no académicos (por ejemplo, periódicos, páginas web), explorando la eficacia de diferentes estrategias de búsqueda (por ejemplo, el mercado plateado) y profundizando en la evolución del discurso del TA en la sociedad.

Implicaciones prácticas: Los responsables políticos y las partes interesadas en el turismo pueden aprovechar las ideas de este documento para normalizar su vocabulario en las estrategias de comunicación y operativas. Los estudiosos pueden mejorar la eficacia de las búsquedas bibliográficas y desarrollar nuevas líneas de conocimiento inspiradas en los términos utilizados tradicionalmente para referirse al TA.

Implicaciones sociales: Este artículo anima a seguir investigando sobre el turismo accesible y subraya la importancia del lenguaje en el desarrollo de una sociedad más inclusiva.

Originalidad/valor: Esta investigación es pionera en el análisis de la evolución de la sinonimia del TA por años, naciones y autores. Aporta pruebas de cómo las elecciones lingüísticas reflejan los cambios en la comprensión social de la discapacidad. Este estudio propone un marco para distinguir la TA de otros modelos turísticos, facilitando la comunicación unificada entre las partes interesadas. Presenta estrategias para mejorar la eficacia en la localización de estudios en el ámbito de las TA y aboga por una sociedad inclusiva que utilice un lenguaje respetuoso con todas las personas.

Palabras clave: Turismo accesible, turismo inclusivo, turismo Para todos, turismo universal

Tipo de papel: Trabajo de investigación

1. Introduction

The importance of scientific research in accessible tourism (AT) stems from the human and legal rights of people with disabilities (PwD), who have distinct access requirements, to enjoy leisure activities safely, independently and with dignity (Darcy, 2010; Daruwalla and Darcy, 2005; Domínguez Vila and Fraiz Brea, 2009; Packer et al., 2007; Pimentel Alves...
et al., 2021; Silveiro et al., 2019; Smith, 1987). Beyond its social advantages, AT also offers substantial economic benefits for the tourism industry, given its capacity to inclusively engage a broad demographic, including senior travellers, families and individuals with temporary or permanent disabilities (Burnett and Baker, 2001; Chrysikou et al., 2018; Domínguez Vila et al., 2015; Israeli, 2002; Lee et al., 2012; Michopoulou and Buhalis, 2013; Porto et al., 2019; Qiao et al., 2022; Ray and Ryder, 2003; Small et al., 2012). Furthermore, AT stimulates the creation of sustainable infrastructure, products and services aligned with the principles of universal design (Darcy et al., 2010; Piramanayagam et al., 2019; Sen and Mayfield, 2004) and the United Nations sustainable development goals (Gillovic and McIntosh, 2020; Liasidou et al., 2022; Pasca et al., 2022).

However, the fact that academic research in this domain preceded its conceptual development (Darcy et al., 2020) may have led to the overlapping use of concepts referring to the same reality. This effect is observable in the way scholars have adopted terms like “Accessible Tourism”, “Inclusive Tourism”, “Tourism for All”, “Universal Tourism” or “Barrier-free Tourism” as synonyms (Brown, 1991; Darcy and Buhalis, 2011; Migliaccio, 2018; Serra et al., 2019; Silva et al., 2022; Suárez Henríquez et al., 2022; Wilken, 1997; Yates, 2007), often overlooking their semantic differences (Thomas, 2018).

Although Gilovic et al. (2018) underscored the role of language in shaping the AT discourse, a comprehensive analysis that traces and quantifies the usage of these synonymous terms remains unexplored. This study addresses this gap by examining AT terminology through a dual literature review and statistical analysis approach. The specific objectives are:

1) to trace the historical evolution of the designations used to refer to AT;
2) to ascertain the lexicon adopted by different countries and authors when describing AT; and
3) to uncover the optimal search strategy for AT literature.

This paper provides quantitative backing to AT terminology’s progression, as Darcy and Buhalis (2011) and Gilovic et al. (2018) noted. It offers a practical contribution by carving out a distinct identity for AT within the broader tourism landscape. Theoretically, it pioneers new strategies to streamline the discovery of AT studies. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of language in promoting a more inclusive society. Section 2 presents the literature review, Section 3 outlines the methodology, Section 4 shows the results, Section 5 discusses these results, and Section 6 draws the conclusions.

2. Literature review

2.1 Terms related to accessible tourism

According to the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2013), there is no single term that refers explicitly to AT and considers “Accessible Tourism”, “Inclusive Tourism”, “Adapted Tourism”, “Tourism for All”, “Barrier-free Tourism”, “Easy Access Tourism” or “Universal Tourism” as synonyms. Table 1 below presents various designations for AT used by different scholars, followed by their respective definitions.

2.1.1 Accessible tourism. There are as many interpretations of the concept of AT as there are authors who have contributed to the subject (Darcy and Dickson, 2009; Devile and Kastenholz, 2018; Liasidou et al., 2022; Pasca et al., 2022; Qiao et al., 2023; Rahmatfria et al., 2023; Scheyvens and Biddulph, 2018; Thomas, 2018). Among them, the proposal by Darcy and Buhalis (2011) enjoys widespread acceptance:

Accessible tourism is a form of tourism that involves collaborative processes between stakeholders that enables people with access requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing, and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments. This
Darcy and Buhalis (2011) stated that AT pertains to the specific access requirements of customers who face mobility, sensory or intellectual barriers. This approach excludes other types of limitations, such as socioeconomic or demographic factors, which might cause confusion between AT and other related tourism models, such as “Inclusive Tourism” or “Social Tourism” (Gillovic and McIntosh, 2020; Scheyvens and Biddulph, 2018; Thomas, 2018). Their approach extends the concept of accessibility beyond mere physical barriers to incorporate communication and information dimensions (Buhalis and Michopoulou, 2011; Fernández-Díaz et al., 2023). It recognises all individuals, not solely those with disabilities, as beneficiaries (Darcy and Dickson, 2009; Rubio-Escuderos et al., 2021). Furthermore, it underscores the application of universal design principles and the necessity for collaboration among tourism stakeholders as critical elements (Liasidou et al., 2022; Michopoulou et al., 2015; Porto et al., 2019; Shahzalal and Elgammal, 2023). Thus, this definition reflects the paradigm shift in disability understanding, transitioning from a medical model – that views disability as an inherent problem within individuals – towards a social model – that underlines the adaptation of the environment to facilitate the ability of all individuals to function with dignity and independence – (Buhalis and Michopoulou, 2011; Gillovic et al., 2018; Zajadacz, 2015).

2.1.2 Barrier-Free tourism, disabled tourism and easy access tourism. Terms such as “Barrier-free Tourism”, “Disabled Tourism” and “Easy Access Tourism” are often used interchangeably with AT, yet they do not possess distinct definitions within the corpus (Bizjak et al., 2011; Domínguez Vila et al., 2015; Eichhorn et al., 2008; Frasch, 2006; Gillovic et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2012; Shaw and Coles, 2004). However, Qun (2011) specifically used the concept of “Barrier-free Tourism” concerning the construction of tourism infrastructure, while Gezon (2014) used the term “Easy-access Tourism” to denote the convenient location of a destination. On the other hand, contrary to Darcy and Buhalis (2011) definition of AT, the term “Disabled Tourism” narrows the scope to PwD, focusing on their disability (Gillovic et al., 2018).

2.1.3 Inclusive tourism. Traditionally, the tourism industry has used the term “inclusive” solely in the context of “all-inclusive tourism”, which may actually be the antithesis of inclusive development (Scheyvens and Biddulph, 2018). Over time, some authors have begun using “Inclusive Tourism” as a synonym for AT (Serra et al., 2019; Silveiro et al., 2019; Yates, 2007). The following definition provides an example of this usage:

Inclusive tourism is a term used to refer to leisure activities practiced by people with some form of disability or limitation. This group includes individuals with physical and/or cognitive disabilities, as well as elderly and children (Serra et al., 2019, p. 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessible tourism</td>
<td>Buhalis and Michopoulou (2011), Darcy (2010); Darcy and Dickson (2009), Devile and Kastenholz (2018); Liasidou et al. (2022), Michopoulou et al. (2015); Michopoulou and Buhalis (2013), Packer et al. (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrier-free tourism</td>
<td>Eichhorn et al. (2008), Frasch (2006); Piramanayagam et al. (2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled/disability tourism</td>
<td>Bizjak et al. (2011), Burnett and Baker (2001); Domínguez Vila et al. (2015); Lee et al. (2012), Qiao et al. (2022); Shaw and Coles (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy access tourism</td>
<td>Gillovic et al. (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive tourism</td>
<td>Serra et al. (2019), Silveiro et al. (2019); Yates (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism for all</td>
<td>Baker (1989), Rubio-Escuderos et al. (2021); Wilken (1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal tourism</td>
<td>Migliaccio (2018), Silva et al. (2022)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ own creation
Nevertheless, Scheyvens and Biddulph (2018) differentiate between these tourism modalities. They define inclusive tourism as “transformative tourism in which marginalized groups are engaged in ethical production or consumption of tourism and the sharing of its benefits” (p. 592), while AT “aims to ensure that tourism is produced with people of all abilities in mind and can be consumed by people of all abilities” (pp. 595–596). From this perspective, AT is considered to be “just one aspect of an inclusive tourism model” (pp. 595–596).

2.1.4 Tourism for all. The name “Tourism for All” first appeared in the UK in 1989 as a result of the tourism for all campaign carried out following the report by Baker (1989). She defined it as a type of tourism designed and arranged to be accessible and enjoyable for people of all physical, social, economic and cultural backgrounds. Thus, this approach combines the contemporary concept of social, inclusive and AT. Notably, nowadays, it continues to be used by scholars as a synonym for AT (Devile and Kastenholz, 2018; Migliaccio, 2018; Rubio-Escuderos et al., 2021).

2.1.5 Universal tourism. The term “Universal Tourism” was used in the sector prior to the emergence of AT, initially referring to the internationalisation of the industry (Go, 1993). Over time, its original meaning became less distinct and began to be used interchangeably with AT. This shift stems from the close association between AT and universal design (Darcy et al., 2010; Gilovic and McIntosh, 2020; Piramanayagam et al., 2019; Sen and Mayfield, 2004).

2.2 Conceptual cloud of the literature review

Figure 1 below summarises all the articles cited in the literature review. Although they have been organised based on their central theme, it must be noted that each of them incorporates multiple theories related to AT.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data collection

Data were collected from the Scopus database between September and December 2022. Scopus was selected due to its comprehensive geographical coverage and extensive collection of multidisciplinary documents related to AT. Unlike open-source databases such as Google Scholar, Dimension and Microsoft Academic, Scopus ensures the quality and reliability of its content via rigorous evaluation standards and facilitates the collection of bibliometric data, which can be transferred in various formats (e.g. RIS, CSV and BibTex). It also offers broader content coverage compared to Web of Science. Moreover, given the research methodology, using a single database minimised potential content overlap (Pranckutė, 2021).

Differing from previous papers (Qiao et al., 2022; Suárez Henríquez et al., 2022), this study conducted nine separate crawls using various sequences of words, including: “Accessible tourism”, “Inclusive tourism”, “Tourism for all”, “Barrier-free tourism”, “Disabled tourism”, “Disability tourism”, “Universal tourism”, “Adapted tourism” and “Easy access tourism”, considered synonymous by the UNWTO (2013). However, due to the absence of some essential publications among the initial results, a new search using the Boolean sequence “Tourism” AND “Disabled” was required. Finally, a total of 748 documents published between 1983 and December 2022 were collected. Data were exported from Scopus independently in CSV and RIS format and imported into Mendeley Desktop Version 1.19.8 for analysis. Mendeley was selected to manage the bibliographic material as it facilitates data transfer from Scopus.

After three reading and peer review cycles, 135 duplicates were identified through multiple search sequences. Furthermore, 123 texts unrelated to AT were discarded. As Wallin (2005)
and Zupic and Cater (2015) suggested, conference papers, series, chapters and books were excluded to ensure standardised bibliometric data. Subsequently, the sample was narrowed to 318 articles published in scientific journals and magazines, as shown in Table 2 below.

### 3.2 Data analysis

The selected articles were downloaded in PDF format to review their content. A log of the accepted and discarded material was kept in Microsoft Excel Professional Plus 2019. This log included the search strategies associated with each document. Microsoft Excel was chosen because it efficiently classifies large amounts of information, performs complex calculations, generates graphs and pivot tables and integrates data from different software.

Based on the objectives of this study, a quantitative longitudinal analysis of scientific production by countries and authors (Wallin, 2005; Zupic and Cater, 2015), classified by
search criteria, was conducted. The d-index – an h-index adjusted to the sample publications – was calculated to identify the top ten scholars in the field. Additionally, possible vocabulary influences among them were detected through a co-authorship analysis.

BibExcel version 1.0.0.0 and VOSviewer version 1.6.18 were used to examine the data and create network visualisations. BibExcel is a freely available tool that enables the importation of results from Scopus and the export of data to Excel (Zupic and Cater, 2015). VOSviewer is a free software designed to visualise network maps from files exported in CSV and RIS format (Suárez Henríquez et al., 2022). Figure 2 below summarises the phases of the methodological process.

### Table 2  Sample and universe classified by type of document

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document type</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>pct. %</th>
<th>cum. %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articles (sample)</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>64.9</td>
<td>64.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference papers</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>78.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>88.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapters</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>98.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (universe)</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** pct. = percentage; cum. = cumulative

**Source:** Authors’ own creation

![Methodological process](image-url)
4. Results

4.1 Productivity by search criteria

Table 3 below displays the number of records obtained, removed and included by each search strategy. Given that these results determine the reliability of each synonym as a tracking strategy, the material underwent a two-phase screening process:

Firstly, documents that did not align with Darcy and Dickson’s (2009) definition of AT were discarded. “Accessible tourism” provided the highest percentage of valid results, unlike “Adapted tourism” and “Easy Access tourism”. Similarly, many files indexed under the terms “Inclusive tourism”, “Tourism for all” and “Universal tourism” discussed topics unrelated to tourists with special access needs.

Secondly, only papers published in scientific journals were selected. These articles exceeded the number of other types of documents. As shown in Table 3 below, most of the final sample comprised files found under the sequence “Accessible tourism” (58.2% of the sample) and “Tourism” AND “Disabled” (44.7%). The “Duplicates” (94 documents, 29.6% of the sample) refer to those found via multiple search strategies. This overlap may result in percentages in subsequent sections totaling over 100%, as some documents contribute to multiple categories.

4.2 Stages of scientific production by search criteria

From January 1984 to December 2022, an average of 9.1 articles were published annually. During these years, four distinct periods were discerned. They were labelled “discovery”, “prospecting”, “recognition” and “outreach”, as shown in Figure 3 below. These labels were inspired by both the productivity rates and the evolution of social recognition of PwD’s legal and human rights, as mirrored in the literature (Buhalis and Michopoulou, 2011; Burnett and Baker, 2001; Darcy and Dickson, 2009; Daruwalla and Darcy, 2005; Dominguez Vila et al., 2015; Liasidou et al., 2022; Small et al., 2012).

4.2.1 Discovery stage: from 1984 to 2003. During the discovery stage, 13 AT-related documents were identified (4.1% of the sample; an average of 0.8 publications per year). These documents were all retrieved using “Tourism” and “Disabled”. Only two articles (Brown, 1991; Wilken, 1997) contained the expression “Tourism for All”. Production was limited and sporadic, and no established term for referring to AT existed yet. Nevertheless, some of the most cited articles of all time were published during this period (see Appendix).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search sequence</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
<th>Included (%) (n = 318)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Accessible Tourism”</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Tourism” AND “Disabled”</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Inclusive tourism”</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Tourism for All”</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Barrier-free tourism”</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Disabled tourism”</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Disability tourism”</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Universal tourism”</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Adapted tourism”</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Easy access tourism”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>623</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplicates</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ own creation
4.2.2 Prospecting stage: from 2004 to 2010. During the prospecting stage, there was a moderate increase in publications, with 36 results (11.3% of the sample, averaging 5.1 publications per year). The most effective research strategy was again “Tourism” AND “Disabled”, which produced 28 results (77.8% of the results of this period). However, some scholars began to adopt new terms such as “Accessible tourism” (Sen and Mayfield, 2004), which appeared in eight articles (22.2% of the results); “Barrier-free tourism” (Frasch, 2006), which appeared in two (5.6% of the results); and “Disability tourism” (Shaw and Coles, 2004) and “Inclusive tourism” (Yates, 2007), each in one article. During this period, Darcy and Dickson (2009) put forth one of the first definitions of “Accessible Tourism”. This contribution has since become the most cited article within the corpus (see Appendix).

4.2.3 Recognition stage: from 2011 to 2017. During the recognition stage, 77 documents were found (24.2% of the sample, averaging 11 yearly publications). Three papers (3.9% of the results of this period) introduced the term “Disabled tourism” for the first time (Bizjak et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2012). In addition, the number of articles labelled “Accessible tourism” was equal to those obtained with the sequence “Tourism” AND “Disabled”, with each providing 41 results (53.2% of the results). However, the term “Tourism for all” continued to be used by seven authors (9.1% of the results), “Inclusive Tourism” was used by five (6.5% of the results) and “Barrier-free tourism” was used by three (3.9% of the results).

4.2.4 Outreach stage: from 2018 to 2022. During the outreach stage, there was a significant increase in the number of studies (Qiao et al., 2022; Suárez Henríquez et al., 2022), with 192 documents identified (60.4% of the sample), averaging 38.4 publications per year. The search strategy that yielded the most results was “Accessible Tourism”, with 136 papers (70.8% of the results for this period), followed by “Tourism” AND “Disabled”, which retrieved 60 papers (31.3% of the results). Other search terms, such as “Inclusive Tourism”, accounted for 35 papers (18.2% of the results), and “Tourism for All” included 12 papers (6.3% of the results). “Disabled Tourism”, “Disability Tourism” and “Universal Tourism” obtained three results each (1.6% of the results), while “Barrier-free Tourism” had only two (1.0% of the results). Figure 4 below provides an overview of the annual productivity by search criteria. The dashed-dotted line represents the total number of publications per year. The number of articles found with each search strategy is grouped by bars of distinct colours.

4.3 Productivity by country and search criteria

Between 1984 and 2022, 60 nations published documents related to AT. Portugal emerged as the most productive country, with 45 documents (14.2% of the sample), followed by
Australia with 37 documents (11.6%), Spain with 34 documents (10.7%), the UK with 29 documents (9.1%), the USA with 23 documents (7.2%), Italy with 22 documents (6.9%), Poland with 20 documents (6.3%), New Zealand with 12 documents (3.8%) and the Russian Federation and Germany, each with ten documents (3.1% of the sample).

The search strategy “Accessible tourism” was most effective in gathering articles from Portugal, with 39 documents; Australia, with 25 documents; Spain, with 24 documents; Italy, with 17 documents; and New Zealand, with seven documents. In contrast, “Tourism” AND “Disabled” was found to be the most effective in compiling the highest percentage of documents from the UK, with 19 documents; the USA, with 17 documents; Poland, with 13 documents; Russia, with seven documents; and Germany, with five documents, as shown in Figure 5 below.

To examine whether these results could be attributed to the terminological changes over time, Figure 6 below presents the annual publication count by country. The graph confirms that nations with the highest publication rates since 2018 and lower rates in previous decades have preferred the term “Accessible tourism” over all other expressions.

4.4 Productivity by author and search criteria

The authorship analysis identified 646 scholars, with eight women and two men authoring 86 articles (27.0% of the sample). Table 4 below presents the top ten scholars listed by number of publications, citations and d-index, with Darcy leading the list (Qiao et al., 2022; Suárez Henríquez et al., 2022).

Figure 7 below illustrates the number of papers published by these authors grouped by search criteria. Once again, it demonstrates that “Accessible tourism” yielded significantly more results than the other strategies. Specifically, while 61 documents were obtained with this term, “Tourism” AND “Disabled”, “Inclusive tourism”, “Tourism for All”, “Barrier-free tourism”, “Disabled tourism”, “Disability tourism” and “Universal tourism” yielded only nine, eight, four, five, seven and five results, respectively. Furthermore, 18 documents were identified through more than one sequence.
As shown in Figure 8 below, the results were re-examined to link these findings to the publication dates. The first document of this group was found to be a paper authored by Daruwalla and Darcy (2005). Interestingly, they did not use “Accessible Tourism” or other specific names to refer to AT. However, from 2010 onward, most scholars in this sample began to use this term.

Figure 9 below illustrates the network of connections between authors. This network was generated to explore possible influences among them regarding AT vocabulary. Ten main
clusters were identified, with Darcy having the most collaborations (Suárez Henríquez et al., 2022). According to the data from the Excel file, Darcy co-authored nineteen papers with 21 scholars. Domínguez and Alén (Domínguez Vila et al., 2015) and Gillovic and McIntosh (Gillovic and McIntosh, 2020; Gillovic et al., 2018) are his primary social links. McIntosh and Gillovic emerged as the second most collaborative authors, with six and five co-authorships, respectively, followed by Domínguez and Alén with six and five international collaborations each. Other nodes in Figure 9 represent highly relevant specialists in AT research, such as Michopoulou and Buhalis, Freud, Iniesta, Castelló, Porto and Rucci and Packer.

5. Discussion

As Gillovic et al. (2018) posited, language reflects cultural and societal values. It can either serve as a mechanism of oppression or an instrument fostering respect and equality. By
reshaping our vocabulary, we can redefine established social norms and behaviours. Given the importance of language in these processes, we conducted this study to delve into its usage and evolution within the context of AT literature.

In line with observations made by Darcy and Buhalis (2011) and Gilovic et al. (2018), the findings of this paper confirm the evolution of the AT terminology over time. At the close of the 20th century, early intellectuals who recognised the social and economic importance of including PwD in tourism activities found themselves without specific terminology for this
market segment (Brown, 1991; Smith, 1987). These pioneers perceived the investigation into this field as an urgent necessity rather than a theoretical discourse demanding immediate definition.

Nevertheless, the progression of any knowledge field necessitates defining its lexicon. Such a definition confirms its existence and underscores a new phenomenon that warrants investigation and promotion. This necessity led to the emergence of terms such as “Disability Tourism” (Shaw and Coles, 2004) and “Barrier-free tourism” (Frasch, 2006). In time, these designations gradually faded, making way for “Accessible Tourism”, today’s most universally accepted term (Gillovic et al., 2018). Nevertheless, what prompted this shift?

“Accessible Tourism” symbolises the societal paradigm shift in the perception of disability, transitioning from a medical model to a social one (Darcy and Dickson, 2009; Michopoulou et al., 2015; Rubio-Escuderos et al., 2021). This term effectively highlights the cultural and environmental barriers to participation that PwD encounter (Gillovic et al., 2018). In contrast, concepts such as “Tourism for All” or “Inclusive Tourism” encompass a broader spectrum of discrimination, including racial, cultural and economic aspects (Baker, 1989; Scheyvens and Biddulph, 2018). The word “access” also conveys a more positive connotation than “barrier”. Importantly, it changes the focus from “disability” to the unique access needs we all experience due to our human condition (Darcy and Dickson, 2009).

Additionally, the results revealed that the propagation of this expression was not a consequence of a specific geographical or temporal cultural movement. Instead, it pointed towards a clear trailblazer, Simon Darcy. Darcy and Dickson (2009) and Darcy and Buhalis (2011) were the first to define AT’s universally accepted terminology and conceptualisation. Their work forms the cornerstone of academic exploration in the field.

Therefore, while “Accessible Tourism” is the most effective search strategy for recent literature, those aiming for a broader or historical scope should consider other Boolean sequences, such as [“Tourism” AND (“Disability” OR “Inclusion” OR “Barrier-free” OR “Universal” OR “Adapt” OR “Old” OR “Elderly” OR “Aging”)], and then refine their results. Furthermore, considering the “interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary” nature of AT (Michopoulou et al., 2015, p. 180), it would be “myopic” to disregard its potential linkages with other fields of knowledge such as marketing, customer service (Buhalis and Michopoulou, 2011; Eichhorn et al., 2008; Michopoulou and Buhalis, 2013), health, sustainability, architecture (Darcy et al., 2010; Chrysikou et al., 2018), information and communication technology (Buhalis and Michopoulou, 2011; Serra et al., 2019), smart cities, virtual reality (Suárez Henríquez et al., 2022) and artificial intelligence, among others.

Finally, this paper underscored the dominance of AT research over papers on topics such as “Inclusive Tourism”, as defined by Scheyvens and Biddulph (2018) or “Universal Tourism”, interpreted as the unrestricted movement of travellers across borders. As AT has established its unique identity, its synonyms could be reallocated to enrich understanding within existing and emerging fields.

6. Conclusions

This study examined the terminology associated with AT over time, across countries and among authors. It revealed four temporal periods based on the volume of literary production and the evolution of recognition towards the rights of PwD, as manifested in academic literature. Furthermore, it highlighted the global spread of the concept of “Accessible Tourism” attributed to Darcy and Dickson (2009) and Darcy and Buhalis (2011). Notably, the analysis of authorship relations unveiled direct and indirect associations between Darcy and leading investigators in the area.
The findings of this paper hold significant practical, theoretical and social implications. Policymakers and tourism stakeholders can leverage these insights to standardise their vocabulary in communication strategies. Scholars can enhance the efficiency of literature searches in AT and develop new lines of knowledge inspired by terms traditionally used to refer to AT. Furthermore, this study underscores the importance of language in developing a more inclusive society.

This research also has limitations that could inspire future studies, such as relying solely on Scopus for data collection, including only academic papers, limiting the number of references and narrowing the search to specific terms. Future investigations could compare these findings using a greater amount of data collected from other databases (e.g. Google Scholar), including non-academic writings (e.g. newspapers and Webpages), exploring the efficiency of other search strategies (e.g. silver market) and delving deeper into the societal evolution of the AT discourse.

References


### Table A1 Top cited articles related to accessible tourism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cites</th>
<th>Search strategy</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>“Tourism” AND “Disabled”</td>
<td>Leisure of disabled tourists. Barriers to participation</td>
<td>Smith, R.W.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>“Tourism” AND “Disabled”</td>
<td>Assessing the travel-related behaviors of the mobility-disabled consumer</td>
<td>Burnett, J. J.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>“Tourism” AND “Disabled”</td>
<td>A preliminary investigation of the importance of site accessibility factors for disabled tourists</td>
<td>Baker, H.B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>“Tourism” AND “Disabled”</td>
<td>Disability, holiday making and the tourism industry in the UK: a preliminary survey</td>
<td>Ray, N.M.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>“Tourism” AND “Disabled”</td>
<td>Personal and societal attitudes to disability</td>
<td>Ryder, M.E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>“Accessible Tourism”</td>
<td>A whole-of-life approach to tourism: the case for accessible tourism experiences</td>
<td>Shaw, G.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>“Accessible Tourism”</td>
<td>Inherent complexity: disability, accessible tourism and accommodation information preferences</td>
<td>Coles, T.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>“Accessible Tourism”</td>
<td>Accessible tourism and sustainability: a discussion and case study</td>
<td>Daruwalla, P.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>“Accessible Tourism”</td>
<td>Information-enabled tourism destination marketing: addressing the accessibility market</td>
<td>Darcy, S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>“Tourism” AND “Disabled”/ “Disabled Tourism”</td>
<td>Influences of travel constraints on the people with disabilities’ intention to travel: an application of Seligman’s helplessness theory</td>
<td>Darcy, S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>“Accessible Tourism”</td>
<td>The embodied tourist experiences of people with vision impairment: management implications beyond the visual gaze</td>
<td>Darcy, S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>“Inclusive Tourism”</td>
<td>Inclusive tourism development</td>
<td>Small, J.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ own creation

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