

MASTER'S IN TOURISM

Specialisation in "Tourism, Hospitality and Food Studies"

FIRST YEAR DISSERTATION

The influence of tourism on the well-being of people
with reduced mobility

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Introduction

Tourism is often seen as a gateway to personal enrichment, cultural exchange, and economic growth, yet for millions of people with disabilities (PwD), this gateway remains largely inaccessible. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2013), approximately 15 per cent of the global population, or about one billion people, live with some form of disability. Despite this significant number, the tourism industry has yet to fully embrace inclusivity. In Europe in 2015, less than 10 per cent of tourism suppliers offer accessible services, even as demand continues to rise, driven by an ageing population and increasing awareness of accessibility needs (Michopoulou et al., 2015). The gap between demand and supply represents not only a missed social opportunity but also a considerable economic one. The potential of accessible tourism is often underestimated. In Australia, for example, disabled travellers account for 10 per cent of the tourism market, yet they represent 20 per cent of the population. This disparity highlights a large segment of potential tourists who remain overlooked, representing a massive growth opportunity for tourism businesses willing to invest in accessibility (Brown, 2024). Similarly, in the United States, the numbers reveal a striking contrast: in 2022, up to 40 per cent of Americans aged 18 to 64 with self-reported travel-limiting disabilities had never travelled, compared to only 21 per cent of those without such disabilities. For older adults (65+), the gap widens even further, with 57 per cent of disabled individuals never having travelled, compared to 31 per cent of their non-disabled counterparts (Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 2024). These statistics reflect more than just infrastructural and logistical challenges. They point to deeper social and psychological barriers, such as feelings of exclusion, fear of inadequate support, and a lack of confidence in the tourism industry's ability to accommodate their needs. As the global population continues to age and awareness of accessibility grows, the demand for inclusive tourism will only increase. Addressing these barriers not only presents a crucial opportunity for economic growth but also holds the potential to reshape the industry into a more inclusive and equitable space.

Recognising these challenges and opportunities, this master's thesis seeks to explore the complex relationship between the tourism industry and people with disabilities, with a particular focus on those with reduced mobility. The study of tourism

as an academic field is relatively recent, only dating back to the late 1960s. During this period, tourism studies began to emerge as a distinct field, driven by a growing need to understand tourism's social, economic, and cultural impacts in an increasingly globalised world (Ateljević, 2014). It has since developed into a complex and multidisciplinary subject, requiring insights from fields such as sociology, economics, psychology, and management to fully grasp the dynamics at play. This shift from descriptive to theoretical research has enriched our understanding of tourism's role in society and helped establish it as a subject of significant academic inquiry (Butler, 2015). Similarly, the academic consideration of disability is also a more recent development, growing in prominence around the same time (Rice, 2025). The intersection of these two fields presents a timely and valuable area of research, offering the potential to inform practices that could significantly improve the treatment of PwD in various sectors of the tourism industry. This thesis is written as part of a master's degree in Tourism, Hospitality and Food Studies at ISTHIA, Toulouse Jean Jaurès University. The topic of accessibility for PwD is relevant to all three sectors covered by this programme, enhancing the personal and academic interest that guided this research. The multidisciplinary nature of the master's programme complements the complexity of the topic, allowing for a diverse insight into the challenges and opportunities surrounding accessible tourism. The initial stages of this research led to considering a broad question that aimed to encompass the relationship between tourism and people with reduced mobility while exploring potential avenues for improvement. Early readings highlighted the importance of stakeholder cooperation and technological innovation in advancing accessibility, prompting an initial research question: *"How can stakeholder collaboration and innovative strategies improve accessibility to tourism activities for people with reduced mobility?"* While this question provided a starting point, it became clear through further investigation that other dimensions, such as the concept of well-being in the context of accessible tourism, deserved deeper exploration. This evolution of focus will be developed later in the thesis. Furthermore, given the scope of this project and its academic context, the research process will primarily focus on France, providing a national framework for understanding broader international challenges. By examining these issues within a French context, the study aims to contribute not only to the academic discourse on accessible tourism but also to practical improvements that could shape industry practices and policies.

To explore this topic within the Master 1 thesis, a precise outline must be realised to give a comprehensive explanation of the themes approached, their problematisation and the methodology planned for the data collection. Therefore, this thesis contains first a literature review that sets up the scope of the thesis based on the previous works of academic researchers and on other documents. It encompasses an exploratory definition of disabilities, as well as tourism activities, to then explore the concepts of accessible tourism and tourism for people with reduced mobility (PRM). Then, a problem statement will be built, setting the research question and the base of its study, through hypotheses. Finally, the strategy to answer the research question, the methodology, will be explained, as well as the definition of the field of application and of the population studied. Overall, this first year thesis will provide for a comprehensive exploration of the interrelations of the topics of tourism, disability and well-being, setting the foundation for the continuation of the research to complete the Master 2 thesis.

Part 1: Literature review

Introduction of the Part 1

Before establishing a clear problematisation or defining a methodology, it is essential to first explore the broader context in which this research is situated. This section examines the key concepts of disability, tourism, and tourism for people with reduced mobility, providing a foundational understanding that will inform the subsequent stages of this thesis. By reviewing existing literature, this part will outline how these concepts have been previously studied, highlighting relevant theoretical frameworks, definitions, and empirical findings. The literature review will be based on a diverse range of sources, encompassing academic works from various disciplines, official reports from public institutions, as well as national and international policy documents addressing disability, tourism, or both. Additionally, articles from academic journals, book chapters, and legislative texts will be incorporated to ensure a comprehensive and multidisciplinary perspective. This broad collection of materials will allow for a thorough exploration of the field, identifying both well-established knowledge and existing gaps that require further investigation. By drawing from multiple perspectives and disciplines, this literature review aims to offer a holistic understanding of the interplay between disability and tourism. In doing so, it will establish the necessary conceptual groundwork for the research process, ensuring that subsequent analyses and methodological choices are well-informed by existing scholarship and institutional frameworks.

Chapter 1: The consideration and recognition of the rights of people with disabilities has been a complex process, worldwide and in France

This section will explore the development of disability rights and the significant steps taken towards inclusion and equality, including the shift from medical models to social models of disability. By examining the historical, legal, and societal milestones, we will also delve into the current challenges faced by PwD in France, particularly with regards to access, inclusion, and societal attitudes. This context is crucial to understanding how far society has come and the work that remains to ensure full participation and equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their disabilities.

1.1. Disability is an important global topic

The concept of disability is a complex one, which definition has evolved through time and still varies between countries and disciplines. It affects all countries of the world, and all populations, regardless of gender, race, class or any other social category. The latest figures state that 16 percent of the global population experience significant disability, or an estimated 1.3 billion people (World Health Organization, 2023). Moreover, not only the people carrying the disability are affected by it, as the families and carers of these people are indirectly affected. When taking into consideration the family members and carers of people with intellectual disabilities, the figure of people affected by disability rises to 30 percent of the world's population, or 2 billion people. It is estimated that the number of people living with disability worldwide will keep increasing, as the phenomenon of ageing of the global population will continue (World Health Organization, 2011). It is within the population of developed countries, such as within the European Union, that there is a proportion of the population directly affected by disability higher than the worldwide proportion. Indeed, it is considered in the European Union that up to 20 percent of the population has a form of disability (Ambrose, 2023), and that it is forecasted to increase to 30 percent by the year 2100 (Nigg & Eichelberger, 2021). This fact can be explained since the population aged 65 or older has been steadily increasing over the years in Europe (Eurostat, 2025). This phenomenon also occurs worldwide (World Health Organization, 2025), although it is less important in the developing regions, where in 2019 7.4% of the population was aged 65 and over, compared to a proportion of 16.9% in developed regions (United Nations, 2021). The ageing process then directly impacts the

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proportion of PwD in a society, since older adults are reported to have the highest disability prevalence. Indeed, the longer individuals live, the more likely they are to experience some form of impairment due to a health condition or an injury (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). Disability is therefore a topic that is getting more and more important in the world as years go by, and a comprehensive definition needs to be identified, so that the rights of PwD can be secured.

1.2. The evolution from the medical model to the social model

To give an objective and comprehensive definition of disability is a very complex task that has raised a lot of discussion amongst academics and public authorities. For most of the 20th century, disability has been mostly considered through the medical lens. This had as effect to be reductive of the social issue that was tackled and created an obstacle for real social progress to be made in the global legislations and their applications. Indeed, the medical model views disability as an individual's physical or mental impairment that needs to be fixed through medical intervention or rehabilitation. It thus places the emphasis on disability being the problem within the person, rather than a result of inadequate social structures. This way of considering disability tends to cause negative attitudes towards it, because it reinforces stereotypes and exclusion, while not tackling the responsibility of society in the inclusion of PwD (Daruwalla & Darcy, 2005). Furthermore, it often leads to a focus on “curing” or “correcting” the disabled individual, which can overlook the need for broad societal and structural changes. This narrow perspective has shaped policies and attitudes in ways that have hindered a more inclusive approach to disability. In reaction to the medical model has been developed the social model, that offers a more comprehensive and fair approach to disability. It emphasises that disability is not just about impairment, but results from barriers in society, may they be physical (inaccessible infrastructure), social (discriminatory attitudes) or even juridical (lack of inclusive policies). This model shifts the focus from fixing the individual to changing societal conditions promoting inclusion. It is in fact society that disables the individual rather than their impairment, which highlights the society's responsibility to bring solutions (Daruwalla & Darcy, 2005; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020). The social model not only provides a more inclusive framework for understanding disability but also stresses the need for structural changes in education, employment, and healthcare

systems to support disabled people in overcoming societal barriers. In addition, it opens a conversation about human rights, pushing for greater recognition of the equality and dignity of people with disabilities.

1.3. History of international rules and conventions

The rise of the debates on the inclusion, or exclusion, of the people with disability lead the international public institutions, such as the United Nations, to reflect on how to create global guidelines that would help improve the living conditions of these people. The first real action of the United Nations towards fostering progress in regards of the consideration of PwD was through the declaration of the International Year of Disabled Persons (UN General Assembly, 1981). The year 1981 was then meant to be dedicated to raise awareness about the issues faces by PwD. It marked a significant turning point, resulting in further recognition of the need for international standards and protections. Another step towards the current recognition of PwD was through the redaction of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in 1993, officially approved in 1994 (United Nations, 1994). These rules allowed for framing a comprehensive worldwide approach to disability rights. Nonetheless, this document still relied significantly on the medical approach of disability, with an emphasis on rehabilitation to help individuals with disabilities to function better and adapt their impairment to society, instead of focusing on fixing the societal barriers. The Standard Rules could be seen as advocating for a welfare approach to disability, considering the PwD as needing for services rather than as equal participants in society. Furthermore, these rules were not legally enforceable, encouraging voluntary actions without any consequences for the lack of engagement of the countries. Despite the drawbacks of this document, the United Nations was still headed in the right direction, and it is in 2006 than the current reference for the rights of PwD was written. After years of negotiation and drafting process, including significant participation from disabled persons' organisations, human rights experts and governments, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is an improvement on all previous actions (United Nations, 2006). This treaty provided a landmark opportunity for persons with disabilities to have their rights formally recognised under international law, with countries ratifying the CRPD being obligated to implement its guidelines and reporting on their progress.

This Convention is composed of 30 Articles, covering a wide range of issues by themes offering a comprehensive coverage of the topic, and encouraging the development of solutions to rectify them. Most importantly, it represents a clear shift away from the medical model, ensuring that it is the states that are considered responsible for removing societal barriers that impair the people with disabilities' lives, whether they might be physical, communication-related or attitudinal barriers. To this day, 185 out of the 193 UN Member States have ratified the CRPD and are therefore required to submit periodic reports to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, that holds two sessions per year (United Nations, 2025). Overall, the CRPD is more than a set of rules that countries have to follow, it is a major step in the global effort to ensure that PwD are not marginalised and can fully participate in all aspects of society, with equal rights and opportunities, and is a globally recognised documents by academics to push forward the definition of disability and apply it to studies (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020; Michopoulou et al., 2015).

1.4. History of the French consideration and laws regarding people with disabilities before 2005

Although a member of the United Nations since its creation, France has had a different history when considering the rights of people with disability. Indeed, because the United Nations have only been created in 1945, France has a much older history with disabilities, and the application of UN decisions and treaties within the French legislation have taken slightly different forms. To get a comprehensive understanding of the situation of PwD in France, it is important to look at the past, before the law 2005, that will be covered later. The first consideration of the PwD in France was a religious one, in the Middle Ages, viewing people with impairments as “cripples”, that were part of the “deserving poor”. This category covered all people that could not work because of physical disabilities, as well as orphans and widows with a large family to provide (Winance et al., 2007). These people were taken care of mostly through charity, as they represented for the Christians a symbol of the Christ's suffering and were therefore provided by rich people that saw in this help an opportunity to gain salvation. In that sense, there was no public responsibility and no legislation covering the fate of disabled people. Moreover, only people with clear visible conditions that completely impaired them from

working were seen as “deserving poor”, people with invisible or less important disabilities were then seen as fit to work and would fall into the “undeserving poor” category if they could not be as productive as other people and provide for themselves. It is only in the late 18th century, during the French Revolution that was introduced the idea that social assistance was a duty of the state, under the influence of the Enlightenment century (Winance et al., 2007). Nonetheless, this responsibility was then given to the local powers and were in fact optional, and public assistance became a legal obligation only a century later, in the law of July 1905, alongside the reaffirmation of a systematic pension system for older people. In the first article of this law, it is stipulated that assistance should be provided to people “either older than 70 years of age or afflicted with a disability or a disease recognized as incurable” (Stiker, 2019), detailing that in the absence of assistance by the local powers, it is ultimately the State that is responsible for it. The next big step in the French legislation towards a comprehensive recognition of the rights of PwD are the twin laws of 1975 (Law No. 75-534 & Law No. 75-535), that unify the different existing regimes and organise the protected sector (Bertrand, 2013). They detailed the rights of disabled people in areas such as education, employment and financial aid, bringing new measures to evaluate disability and allocate benefits. Nonetheless, these laws still had shortcomings, in the sense that they remained mostly medical-based, relying on bringing some services by segregated institutions rather than promoting full accessibility and inclusion in society.

1.5. The Law No. 2005-102 marked significant advancement in French disability policy

The law that represented a pivotal shift in French disability policy is the Law No. 2005-102 of February 11, 2005, titled "For Equal Rights and Opportunities, Participation, and Citizenship of Persons with Disabilities,". It marked a significant advancement in French disability policy, integrating a comprehensive approach to disability rights. As a matter of fact, the very first Article of this law states that "disability is not just a medical condition but a factor that limits a person's ability to participate fully in society" (LOI N° 2005-102, 2005), which represents a clear shift towards the social model on treating the topic of disability, emphasising on the barriers imposed by society that prevent the participation of PwD. The law continues by giving a definition of disability in the Article 2, which is as follows: "A disability is any limitation of activity or restriction of participation in

society experienced by a person due to a substantial, lasting, or definitive impairment of a physical, sensory, mental, cognitive, or psychological nature." (LOI N° 2005-102, 2005). This definition highlights the diversity of impairments that individuals might be affected by, offering a broader perspective that moves beyond a narrow categorisation. Thus, the law 2005 embodies a shift towards a personalised approach, focusing on individual needs and tailored support, recognising the unique circumstances of each person with a disability (Winance et al., 2007). This law also describes more concrete actions that can be implemented for PwD, like a clear definition of the "right to compensation", that covers all disability-related expenses by the welfare system (Bertrand et al., 2014). This financial support aims to enable PwD to be more included in society, which is further strengthened by the employment quotas that are now defined. Indeed, the 2005 law reinforced the obligation for employers with over 20 employees to ensure that at least 6% of their workforce is composed of PwD. This quota is a form of positive discrimination, that is meant to balance the negative discrimination that individuals with impairment face. (Bertrand et al., 2014). Within this law, 3 Articles address accessibility mandates: Article 41, which ensures that all built environments that are used by the public are accessible to all individuals; Article 45, which stipulate that all municipalities must consider people with disabilities in the planning for public roads and spaces; Article 47, that requires online public communication services to be accessible to PwD (LOI N° 2005-102, 2005). Furthermore, the law requires educational institutions to provide the necessary accommodations to welcome and integrate students with disabilities into the mainstream education. The 2005 Law presents many great progresses in the rights of PwD in France. Nonetheless, it is important to also consider the efficiency of the application of the new measures, as well as the limitations of this document.

1.6. Implementation and challenges after the Law No. 2005-102

The consideration and the rights of people with disabilities since the Law 2005 has evolved greatly in the right path. Many reports and studies highlight that the inclusion of PwD in society is now easier than before 2005, which is due to the implementation of the measures created by the legislative text. For instance, the creation of MDPHs (Maisons Départementales des Personnes Handicapées) has unified the access to services dedicated to persons with disabilities, making the process of reaching out to get financial

and social assistance more centralised and overall qualitative (Bertrand et al., 2014). Moreover, the objective of 6% employment in companies of PwD quota, although not quite reached yet, has set the job market in the right direction. This quota, alongside the Recognition of the Quality of Handicapped Worker (RQTH) has facilitated the formal recognition of workers with impairment, enabling access to employment support and workplace adaptation, and therefore improving the integration of PwD in the workforce (Baudot 2018; Bertrand et al., 2014). A steady increase of the number of students with disabilities attending mainstreams schools is also noticeable since the Law 2005's implementation, proving a certain effectiveness in the measures that aimed to foster educational inclusion (Baudot 2018). Furthermore, it has also been argued in multiple articles that there is in fact a notable increase in public awareness of disability rights. Indeed, many businesses create voluntarily more and more inclusive work environments, and the topic of disability is nowadays considered as important in many ongoing societal conversations and is a crucial element in accessibility and inclusion discourses (Durand, 2025; Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2021). The implementation of the Law No. 2005-102 has thus fostered significant progress in the French people with disabilities' rights and inclusion.

Nonetheless, there are still some challenges and limitations when it comes to the results of the measures of the disability law. The hosting of the Paralympic Games in Paris in 2024 has highlighted some of these issues, like the fact that many buildings in fact do not comply with accessibility standards (Durand, 2025). A striking example is the one of the accessibility of the metro stations of the capital of France, with only 29 out of the 300 stations, or 9,6% of the stations, being wheelchair accessible (Radio France Internationale, 2024). When interrogated on the lack of public infrastructure accessibility, municipalities and public institutions often cite budget constraints and administrative complexities as the reason why (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2021). As for the challenges concerning employment, the employment quota of 6% is not met yet, as only 4% of the employees in the private sector are disabled, and 40% of the companies even admit that they would prefer paying fines rather than hiring disabled workers (Durand, 2025; Bertrand et al., 2014). This results in the unemployment rate for PwD to almost double the national average, at 12% (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2021). Furthermore, although progress in the education systems has

been noticeable, the inclusion of disabled students is a slow process, with less than 30% of the students with disabilities being fully integrated into regular classes, often due to a lack of necessary support structures (Ané et al., 2024). In a lot of cases, professionals and even public institutions struggle with the comprehension and implementation of the measures of the Law 2005, because instead of replacing old systems, the law layered new rights over already existing frameworks, creating overlapping policies and administrative confusion. This legislative entanglement is worsened by the addition of similar laws by the European Union being created only years later (Baudot, 2018). On a societal level, the inclusion of PwD is a topic that is clearly not fully understood by the whole population, since disability-related discrimination remains the most reported form of discrimination to the Défenseur des droits, a French independent institution that protects the citizen's rights and fights discrimination. Indeed, this type of discrimination represents 21% of the cases (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2021). To conclude on the Law No. 2005-102, despite notable improvements initiated by this legislative text, ongoing issues highlight the need for further efforts to address legislative complexities and societal misconceptions surrounding the rights of people with disabilities.

1.7. Determining the different categories of disability

Understanding the various categories of impairment and disability is essential for developing a comprehensive understanding of all the aspects of life that are affected by them. There can be many ways to classify the different forms of disability, as different factors can be taken into consideration. One way to view these categories is using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), developed by the WHO in 2002. The ICF provides a comprehensive framework for classifying disabilities into several domains (World Health Organization, 2002).:

- Impairments, which are the problems in the body function or structure.
- Activity limitations, which are the difficulties that an individual may have in executing activities.
- Participation restrictions, which are the problems an individual may experience in involvement in life situations.

Therefore, this classification does not only focus on the physical impairment of the individuals, but also on how this can limit how they can participate in social life due to physical as well as social barriers. Personal and environmental contexts are taken into consideration when defining disability, providing a holistic understanding of the topic. Nonetheless, the ICF provides very personalised categories of disabilities, thus not permitting for general categories to be determined. Broader classification, although restricting at times, allows for better data collection as it provides a more synthetic vision of disabilities. Such classification has been provided by researchers of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States. Six primary types of disabilities have been identified (Lu et al., 2023):

- Mobility disability, which can be defined as serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs.
- Cognition disability, which can be defined as serious difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions.
- Hearing disability, which can be defined as serious difficulty hearing.
- Vision disability, which can be defined as serious difficulty seeing.
- Self-care disability, which can be defined as difficulty dressing or bathing.
- Independent living disability, which can be defined as difficulty doing errands alone.

Amongst these types of disabilities, mobility disability is the most prevalent, affecting about 1 in 7 adults in the United States in 2016 (Zhao et al., 2019). This category of disability is the one this master's thesis will focus on.

1.8. The case of People with Reduced Mobility in France

In order to understand the significance of accessibility in tourism, it is essential to examine the population of people with reduced mobility in France, a group that continues to grow due to demographic and health-related factors. Understanding the scope and diversity of this population is crucial to ensuring inclusive practices that accommodate their needs and enhance their well-being. A person with reduced mobility is broadly defined as "any person who has difficulties such as a physical handicap (sensory or locomotive, permanent or temporary) or emotional, cognitive, or any other cause of

handicap or age, and whose condition requires proper attention and adaptation of the general available services to his/her needs" (Law Insider, 2025). In France, this population represents a substantial portion of society. In 2019, nearly six million individuals aged 15 to 64 reported having a disability (Statista Research Department, 2021), a figure that excludes senior citizens, who are even more likely to experience mobility-related impairments. Specifically concerning PRM, national travel surveys have found that the proportion of the French population experiencing travel difficulties increased from 8% in 1993 to 9% in 2007 (Cadestin et al., n.d.), reflecting a persistent need for more accessible environments. One of the driving factors behind the increase in PRM is the ageing population. France has seen a steady rise in its elderly population due to a combination of declining birth rates and increasing life expectancy. In 2021, life expectancy reached a record high of 85.7 years for women and 80 years for men (Phelan, 2024). Consequently, the proportion of people over 65 grew from 13% of the population in 1970 to 20% in 2020, and predictions suggest that by 2040, nearly one in three French citizens will be senior citizens (Statista Research Department, 2024; Madeline, 2023). As ageing often leads to reduced mobility, this demographic shift will inevitably result in a growing number of people facing mobility challenges, further reinforcing the need for accessible environments. However, reduced mobility is not solely a consequence of ageing or permanent disability. Temporary mobility impairments can affect anyone at any stage of life. For instance, individuals recovering from injuries such as broken bones, undergoing surgical procedures, or experiencing temporary medical conditions may find their ability to navigate environments independently significantly impacted (University of Washington, 2024). Even university students and young professionals can experience temporary mobility challenges, highlighting the fact that accessibility measures benefit society as a whole, not just a specific demographic. Given the diverse and growing nature of the PRM population, ensuring accessible environments is essential. Accessibility is not merely a matter of convenience but a crucial factor in enhancing well-being, dignity, and social inclusion.

Chapter 2: Tourism is an essential component of societies, worldwide and in France

This section will examine the role of tourism as a global and national phenomenon, highlighting its economic, social, and cultural significance. By exploring key developments in the sector, from historical transformations to modern trends, we will provide an overview of how tourism has evolved into a major driver of economic activity and international mobility. Particular attention will be given to the structure of the tourism industry, the various types of tourism activities, and their impact on both global and French markets. Understanding these dynamics is essential to grasping the broader context in which tourism operates and the factors that shape its continued growth and diversification.

2.1. Definition of tourism

Tourism is a multifaceted phenomenon involving the movement of individuals outside their usual environment for a range of purposes. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, tourism encompasses the activities of people travelling to and staying in locations outside their typical place of residence for no longer than one consecutive year (UNWTO, 2019). The reasons for travel may include leisure, business, or other non-remunerated purposes. This broad definition positions tourism as both a social and economic activity, fostering interactions between travellers and their destinations while influencing cultural exchanges and economic flows. A key element within the tourism sector is the notion of a tourism activity, which the UNWTO (n.d.-c) defines as any specific action performed by a visitor that has a measurable impact on the economy and society. Tourism activities can range from sightseeing and cultural visits to outdoor recreation and business engagements, each contributing to the broader tourism value chain. These activities are integral in generating the economic benefits associated with tourism, providing a significant influence on local and national economies. The UNWTO (n.d.-c) also categorises tourism into three distinct types based on the direction of travel: domestic tourism, which involves residents travelling within their own country; inbound tourism, where non-residents travel to a particular country; and outbound tourism, in which residents travel to foreign destinations. Understanding these categories is critical, as they have direct implications for national policies, economic contributions,

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and infrastructure planning. Moreover, the tourism sector comprises various industries that facilitate the travel experience. Key components of the tourism infrastructure include transportation, accommodation, food services, and entertainment. These interconnected sectors play a vital role in sustaining global tourism and making it one of the major drivers of economic activity worldwide (UNWTO, 2019). By providing a clear definition of tourism and its constituent parts, the UNWTO offers a framework for measuring tourism flows, assessing its impacts, and promoting strategies for sustainable growth within the industry.

2.2. The evolution of tourism through time

Tourism, as both a social and economic phenomenon, has undergone significant transformation throughout history, shaped by various historical, societal, and technological developments. The earliest evidence of leisure travel can be traced back to ancient civilisations, where travel was primarily motivated by religious pilgrimages, trade, or military conquests. Notably, the Roman Empire facilitated the movement of people across its vast territories, with the elite often visiting coastal resorts and thermal baths for recreation and health. This early form of leisure travel laid the foundations for modern tourism (Gyr, 2010). However, it was not until the early modern period that tourism began to take on its recognisable form, particularly with the rise of the Grand Tour in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Grand Tour was an educational journey undertaken by young European aristocrats, who visited key cultural and historical centres in Europe. This practice popularised the idea of travel as a transformative and enriching experience, solidifying travel as an essential part of the elite's education (Towner, 1995). The most significant shift in the evolution of tourism occurred in the 19th century, driven by the Industrial Revolution. This period saw the democratisation of travel, as new technologies, such as railways and steamships, made travel increasingly accessible to the middle class. As transport became more efficient, the barriers to travel that had previously confined it to the wealthy were lowered, giving rise to mass tourism. Organisations like Thomas Cook pioneered the package tour, which enabled larger groups of travellers to journey together and provided organised travel experiences that were previously unattainable for most (Butler, 2015). This shift towards mass tourism led to the institutionalisation of the industry. Various organisations and institutions began to emerge, focusing on regulating, promoting, and formalising tourism. These developments were crucial in shaping the

tourism sector as a professional and economic force. However, despite the rapid growth of tourism, scholarly attention has traditionally focused on a Western, Eurocentric perspective, often overlooking the diverse travel experiences and tourism practices of other regions and cultures. In recent decades, however, there has been a concerted effort to broaden the scope of tourism studies and include a more diverse range of cultural contexts (Towner, 1995). In contemporary times, tourism is a highly complex and rapidly evolving field, influenced by global trends, technological innovations, and shifting societal values. The industry continues to adapt to new developments, reshaping its future trajectory (Mellon & Bramwell, 2018).

2.3. Key figures of the global and French tourism industry

Tourism plays a vital role in the global economy, contributing significantly to GDP, employment, and international trade. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), in 2023, the tourism sector accounted for 10.4% of global GDP, contributing approximately \$10.5 trillion to the world economy (WTTC, 2024). In terms of employment, the sector generated 334 million jobs worldwide, representing 10.1% of total employment. This underscores tourism's role not only as a major economic driver but also as a key source of employment across various sectors, such as hospitality, transport, and retail. Tourism's economic impact extends beyond direct contributions, creating substantial indirect and induced benefits through its extensive supply chain. Industries such as hospitality, transportation, and local services are all intricately linked to tourism, amplifying its economic footprint. In the context of global tourist arrivals, France continues to hold the position of the world's leading tourist destination, attracting 89 million international visitors in 2018, a title it has maintained for several years (UNWTO, 2024). This highlights the importance of the tourism sector not only for France's economy but also for its global cultural influence. In 2019, tourism directly contributed around 7.4% to France's GDP, and when accounting for indirect and induced impacts, the total contribution of tourism to the national economy rose to 10.7% of GDP (UNWTO, 2024). Moreover, tourism exports, which include the spending by international visitors, accounted for approximately 7% of France's total exports in 2019 (UNWTO, 2024). This indicates the significant role tourism plays in generating revenue for the country, further solidifying France's position as a leader in the global tourism market. Tourism also plays

a critical role in the French labour market, directly supporting approximately 2 million jobs in 2019, or around 7.2% of total employment (UNWTO, 2024). These jobs span a range of sectors, including hospitality, transportation, and cultural services. Importantly, tourism in France is not limited to international visitors; domestic tourism has also become increasingly important, particularly following the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic severely impacted international tourism in 2020, but as restrictions eased, domestic tourism began to recover. A growing number of French citizens chose to explore their own country, contributing to the recovery of the industry. This shift towards domestic tourism is part of a broader global trend, where many tourists have opted to explore local destinations due to safety concerns or the convenience of travel, particularly as global travel restrictions were implemented during the pandemic (OECD, 2024).

2.4. The diverse types of tourism offer different experiences

Tourism, as a multifaceted industry, caters to a wide array of motivations and desires, shaping a diverse range of experiences that have significant economic, social, and cultural impacts on destinations. Each type of tourism plays a unique role in meeting the needs of different travellers while also contributing to the broader dynamics of the global tourism market.

- Leisure tourism is the most common, driven by the desire for relaxation and recreation. Whether a beach holiday, a wellness retreat, or a visit to a theme park, this form of tourism is a major contributor to global revenue (UNWTO, 2019).
- Cultural tourism focuses on engaging with a destination's heritage and traditions. Tourists often visit museums, historical sites, and festivals, seeking deeper cultural understanding. This type of tourism promotes cultural exchange and preservation (UNWTO, n.d.-c).
- Business tourism includes travel for professional purposes, such as conferences and meetings. Increasingly, business travellers combine work with leisure, creating economic benefits for both sectors (UNWTO, 2019).

- Health tourism involves travel for medical treatments or wellness experiences, driven by the availability of specialised healthcare and competitive pricing in certain regions (UNWTO, n.d.-c).
- Adventure tourism appeals to those seeking physically challenging activities like trekking or extreme sports. It encourages a connection with nature while promoting sustainable practices (UNWTO, 2019).
- Ecotourism is focused on responsible travel to natural areas, aiming to preserve the environment and support local communities. It encourages awareness of conservation efforts and sustainability (UNWTO, 2019).

Each of these distinct types of tourism reflects the increasingly varied interests of contemporary travellers. As tourism continues to evolve, these different forms help drive the broader goals of economic development, cultural exchange, and sustainable practices across the globe.

2.5. The diverse tourism infrastructure and services are the backbone of the industry

Tourism infrastructure and services are the essential backbone of the industry, ensuring accessibility and enriching experiences for travellers. These elements play a central role in shaping the tourism experience and generating economic and social benefits. Accommodation is a primary aspect of tourism infrastructure, with a growing variety of options to suit diverse traveller preferences. From traditional hotels and resorts to alternative accommodations like Airbnb and hostels, the sector has adapted to demand for more authentic, local experiences (Capineri & Romano, 2021). This shift has also caused the rise of boutique and eco-friendly lodgings, enhancing the appeal of destinations. Moreover, food and beverage services are key to tourist satisfaction and destination appeal. Culinary tourism, including fine dining, street food, and wine tourism, has become a major motivator for many travellers. Local food traditions are central to many destinations' tourism strategies, providing cultural enrichment and significant economic benefits (OECD, 2012; Onat, 2024). Furthermore, transportation is a critical enabler, with efficient air, rail, and sea networks vital for maintaining connectivity. High-speed rail systems, for instance, boost regional tourism by offering sustainable travel alternatives (OECD, 2015). The quality and ease of transportation are crucial in shaping

tourists' experiences, with seamless services enhancing a destination's competitive edge (B. Mendes et al., 2022). Beyond mobility, guided experiences and entertainment further enhance tourism offerings. Cultural performances, guided tours, and festivals provide immersive ways for tourists to engage with local traditions and history. Festivals, in particular, drive destination attractiveness and generate substantial local economic benefits (Morris et al., 2020). Overall, the interconnected roles of accommodation, food, transport, and entertainment underline the importance of continuous investment in tourism infrastructure and services. Adapting to evolving traveller expectations is crucial to maintaining a destination's competitiveness in a dynamic global market.

2.6. The role of governments and organisations in tourism development

Tourism development is heavily influenced by the involvement of governments and international organisations, which guide policy, promote the sector, and ensure sustainable practices. Their roles in planning, regulation, and innovation are crucial for balancing economic growth with environmental and social considerations. At the global level, the UNWTO leads efforts to promote sustainable tourism by providing policy guidance, conducting research, and fostering international cooperation. The UNWTO's initiatives help destinations align their strategies with sustainability goals, addressing the environmental, social, and economic challenges associated with tourism growth (UNWTO, n.d.-a). UNESCO also plays a key role in cultural tourism through its World Heritage Sites program. These sites attract millions of tourists each year while encouraging the conservation of cultural heritage and benefiting local economies (UNESCO, n.d.). On a national level, the French government plays a pivotal role in shaping tourism. Through Atout France, the government promotes France as a global tourist destination, focusing on its cultural heritage, cuisine, and natural beauty. Atout France also supports local businesses, ensuring they meet international standards and enhance the overall tourism experience. The Destination France Plan, launched in 2021, focuses on modernising infrastructure, promoting sustainability, and introducing new experiences tailored to evolving traveller preferences. This plan aims to make tourism more inclusive and environmentally responsible (Atout France, 2023). At the regional and local levels, authorities help coordinate tourism policies, ensuring that growth is balanced across the country. This decentralised approach reduces pressure on high-demand areas

while promoting tourism in less-visited regions. Finally, the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs supports France's global tourism leadership by focusing on eco-tourism, heritage tourism, and luxury travel, aligning with the nation's broader cultural and environmental objectives (France Diplomacy, 2020). In summary, the governance of tourism is shaped by collaboration between international organisations, national governments, and local authorities. This multi-tiered approach ensures that tourism grows sustainably, benefiting both the economy and local communities.

2.7. The social and economic impacts of tourism

Tourism plays a vital role in both local and global economies, generating employment across sectors such as hospitality, transport, and retail (OECD, 2024). It supports local development, especially in rural areas, by creating jobs and encouraging investment in infrastructure. Urban destinations also benefit from tourist spending on accommodation, dining, and attractions (WTTC, 2024). However, tourism presents challenges, particularly seasonality, which leads to economic instability for businesses reliant on tourist traffic. Overcrowding during peak seasons strains infrastructure, while off-peak periods often leave businesses struggling (Capineri & Romano, 2021). Additionally, heavy reliance on tourism can expose regions to risks, as disruptions like economic downturns or global crises can devastate local economies. The rise of short-term rentals, such as Airbnb, has also contributed to rising housing costs and gentrification, displacing local residents (OECD, 2015). Socially, tourism can foster cultural exchange and mutual understanding. However, it also risks cultural commodification, where local traditions are altered to meet tourist expectations, sometimes eroding authenticity (Onat, 2024). In some cases, tourism leads to cultural imperialism, where dominant cultures overshadow local identities (Mendes et al., 2022). Environmental impacts are also a major concern, with tourism contributing significantly to carbon emissions, resource depletion, and biodiversity loss, particularly in fragile ecosystems (Mendes et al., 2022). Popular coastal areas, for instance, face the destruction of marine environments and depletion of water resources.

2.8. Sustainable and responsible tourism: how the tourism industry responds to the pollution it generates

As the environmental and social impacts of tourism become more apparent, the industry has embraced sustainable and responsible practices. These focus on reducing carbon emissions, conserving resources, and protecting ecosystems. Eco-certifications for businesses promote energy-saving measures, water conservation, and waste management, while the slow travel movement encourages longer stays to reduce the environmental footprint of frequent flights (Mohammad Shafiee, 2024). To combat overtourism, destinations are implementing strategies such as tourist quotas to prevent overcrowding and safeguard resources. Tourist taxes, like those in Barcelona, help manage the costs of tourist flows and infrastructure maintenance (Northrop, 2022). In 2023, Pollença in Spain limited visitor numbers, reducing environmental strain while improving tourism sustainability (Jones, 2024). Destinations are also prioritising climate change adaptation, with resorts investing in resilient infrastructure to protect against rising sea levels and extreme weather. Ski resorts, for example, are diversifying their activities to reduce reliance on weather-sensitive tourism (Drápela, 2023). Technological innovation plays a key role in sustainable tourism. Smart tourism technologies help manage visitor numbers, optimise resource use, and reduce environmental impact, enhancing both the visitor experience and sustainability (Mohammad Shafiee, 2024). In summary, while tourism's environmental footprint remains significant, growing adoption of sustainable practices offers a pathway toward a more balanced and responsible future, benefiting both people and the planet.

2.9. The trends and innovations of the future of tourism

The tourism industry is evolving rapidly, driven by changing consumer expectations, technological advancements, and increasing environmental awareness. Several key trends and innovations are shaping the future of tourism, transforming both the travel experience and the sector's sustainability. One major trend is the shift towards personalisation. With the help of artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics, travel companies are offering more tailored experiences, curating itineraries based on individual preferences and real-time data. This growing demand for personalised travel is not only

enhancing customer satisfaction but also fostering greater loyalty (Mohammad Shafiee, 2024). Another significant development is the rise of virtual tourism and augmented reality (AR). As VR and AR technologies improve, travellers can now explore destinations remotely, making it possible to visit museums, historical sites, and natural wonders from home. Although these technologies will not replace physical travel, they provide an alternative for those with mobility challenges or those wishing to explore before committing to a visit (Mendes et al., 2022). Sustainable tourism continues to gain importance as travellers become more conscious of their environmental impact. Many are now seeking eco-friendly travel options, such as carbon offset programs and sustainable accommodations. Additionally, electric vehicles and renewable energy-powered transport options are becoming more popular, especially among younger, eco-conscious tourists (Mendes et al., 2022). In addition, there is a growing interest in localisation and community-driven tourism. Travellers are increasingly seeking authentic, off-the-beaten-path experiences, which not only ease the pressure on over-touristed areas but also support local economies. This trend is prompting communities to take a more active role in managing tourism, ensuring both economic benefits and cultural preservation (Capineri & Romano, 2021). Lastly, the rise of digital nomadism is reshaping travel patterns. As remote work becomes more widespread, many people are combining travel with their professional lives. Cities and countries are responding by offering long-term visas and coworking spaces, attracting digital nomads who seek reliable internet, a good quality of life, and a welcoming environment (Jones, 2024). In summary, the future of tourism will be shaped by personalisation, sustainability, technological innovation, and a focus on authentic experiences. As the industry adapts to these trends, it must balance growth with environmental and social responsibility, ensuring that tourism benefits both travellers and host communities.

Chapter 3: Tourism for people with reduced mobility

This section will explore the advancements and challenges in making tourism more accessible for people with reduced mobility, focusing on the infrastructure, services, and legal frameworks that have shaped the industry. By examining the concept of accessibility within tourism, we will explore the importance of universal design, the role of digital platforms, and the increasing demand for inclusivity in tourist destinations. Special attention will be given to the evolution of policies, certifications, and best practices that aim to improve the tourism experience for PRM. Despite progress, persistent barriers remain, and this chapter will highlight the gaps between legal standards and real-world usability, as well as the ongoing efforts needed to ensure greater comfort and equality in tourism for all.

3.1. The concept of accessibility in tourism

The concept of accessibility in tourism involves ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their physical, sensory, or cognitive impairments, can fully participate in tourism activities in an inclusive, equitable, and seamless manner. At its core, accessible tourism aligns with the broader principles of social inclusion, equality, and human rights. The goal is to eliminate barriers that prevent people from engaging in tourism experiences and, instead, create environments where everyone without distinction can enjoy the benefits of travel and leisure (Buhalis & Darcy, 2011). This concept is not only about removing physical obstacles but also about fostering an environment that values diversity and promotes equal access to tourism experiences. A crucial distinction in the field of accessible tourism is the difference between universal design and adapted tourism. Universal design refers to the creation of environments, products, and services that are usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design. This approach advocates for inclusivity from the very beginning of the design process, ensuring that tourism experiences are accessible to all, including people with disabilities (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020). Universal design is seen as a proactive approach, where accessibility is an inherent feature, built into the fabric of tourism infrastructure and services. In contrast, adapted tourism focuses on modifying existing tourism infrastructure or services to cater to the specific needs of PRM or other impairments (Buhalis & Darcy, 2011). While adapted tourism plays an important role in

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addressing immediate accessibility barriers, it is sometimes criticised for being reactive, rather than proactive. Indeed, instead of anticipating and addressing accessibility needs at the design stage, adapted tourism often involves renovating existing spaces or services, which may not always lead to optimal user experiences or long-term solutions. It is important to recognise that accessible tourism is not solely about catering to PwD, but also about meeting the needs of a broad spectrum of travellers, including the elderly, families with young children, and those who may experience temporary impairments due to injury or illness. In this sense, accessible tourism is inclusive by design, benefiting a wider range of tourists and making tourism more equitable for all (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020). This view challenges the traditional perception of accessible tourism as a niche market, highlighting its relevance to society as a whole. As the UNWTO (n.d.-b) notes, accessible tourism contributes to the sustainability and inclusivity of the entire tourism sector by recognising the diverse needs of different traveller groups. The economic potential of accessible tourism has gained increasing attention in recent years, with the sector often referred to as the "purple economy." This term reflects the significant economic opportunities that accessible tourism presents, particularly as the global population ages and the number of people with disabilities grows (UNWTO, n.d.-b). Accessible tourism is not just about providing a better experience for PwD, it is also about recognising the substantial spending power of PRM tourists. Overall, the concept of accessibility in tourism is complex and multi-dimensional, encompassing both the design and delivery of tourism experiences that cater to the needs of all individuals. By creating inclusive tourism environments, destinations can unlock opportunities for social, cultural, and economic development that benefit society as a whole.

3.2. The legal and policy frameworks for accessible tourism

Accessible tourism is guided by a combination of international, national, and regional legal frameworks, which ensure that people with disabilities and reduced mobility can fully participate in tourism. These frameworks play a critical role in shaping policies that aim to remove barriers and promote inclusivity in the tourism sector. At the international level, the CRPD already mentioned earlier, adopted in 2006, stands as a cornerstone of accessible tourism policy. The convention mandates that state parties guarantee the full participation of persons with disabilities in all areas of life, including

tourism. It underscores the need to ensure that PwD can access all public spaces, facilities, and services without discrimination (United Nations, 2006). This global commitment influences policies worldwide, including those within the European Union, where directives and regulations aim to enhance accessibility in public spaces and transport systems, key components of the tourism sector (Rossato & Baratta, 2023). These international obligations are reflected in regional EU policies, which focus on improving physical accessibility and removing barriers to tourism for PwD disabilities (Ambrose, 2012). By promoting universal design in public infrastructure and tourism services, these policies ensure that accessibility is integrated from the start, rather than requiring later modifications. In France, the 2005 Disability Law (LOI N° 2005-102), which has already been discussed in the context of broader disability rights, extends to tourism by requiring the accessibility of public spaces, including tourism-related infrastructures. It mandates that all public buildings and facilities, such as hotels, museums, and public transport systems, be accessible to individuals with various impairments (LOI N° 2005-102, 2005). This law is central to the efforts made by local authorities to ensure that both new constructions and existing tourist sites are fully accessible to all visitors. Moreover, the French Tourism Code further specifies the responsibilities of tourism providers and public authorities in ensuring accessibility across all tourism services, ranging from accommodation and transport to leisure activities. This includes provisions to adapt infrastructure and services to meet the needs of PwD, aligning with the principles of both the national disability law and international agreements (Code Du Tourisme, 2025). Overall, the legal frameworks for accessible tourism in France and Europe are designed to foster an inclusive tourism environment where PwD can enjoy the same rights and opportunities as other tourists. These frameworks work in tandem to promote accessibility and ensure that the tourism sector is accessible to all, not just in theory but in practice

3.3. Infrastructure and services for tourists with reduced mobility

The accessibility of infrastructure and services is central to the success of accessible tourism. For PRM, well-designed infrastructure ensures that they can participate fully in tourism activities, from transportation to accommodation and tourist attractions. Inadequate or poorly designed infrastructure, on the other hand, can act as significant barriers to their participation in leisure and tourism experiences. Transportation

is a critical component of accessible tourism infrastructure, with research highlighting that accessible transportation, including buses, trains, and airports, plays a vital role in ensuring that people with mobility impairments can travel independently (Sen & Mayfield, 2004). However, in many destinations, insufficient accessible transport infrastructure restricts the movement of individuals with mobility challenges, making it difficult for them to access tourist attractions. To address this, it is essential for transport networks to be universally accessible, integrating various modes of mobility, from public transport to taxis and private hire vehicles, to ensure seamless transitions for PRM tourists (Gonda, 2023). In addition to transportation, accommodation plays a crucial role in accessible tourism. Accessible hotels and other lodging facilities must meet the needs of guests with reduced mobility, offering features such as wheelchair-accessible rooms, wide doorways, and adapted bathroom facilities. The design and availability of accessible accommodation are often inconsistent, with some facilities meeting minimum standards while others fail to provide adequate services. It has been argued that tourism providers must prioritise accessible design principles, ensuring that accommodations are not only physically accessible but also equipped with services that make guests' stays more comfortable and enjoyable (Gonda, 2023). Finally, the accessibility of tourist sites and attractions is another critical area for development, as it plays a significant role in the tourism experiences of individuals with reduced mobility. Many popular tourist attractions, such as museums, historical buildings, and recreational areas, often fail to meet accessibility standards, with uneven flooring, narrow doorways, and lack of signage posing barriers for PRM. It has been shown that integrating universal design in the planning and renovation of these sites can significantly improve accessibility, allowing people with various disabilities to engage with cultural heritage more meaningfully. The physical accessibility of historical buildings and public spaces is particularly important for people with mobility impairments, as these spaces often require special adaptations to accommodate wheelchair users and other PRM (Dascălu et al., 2024; Sen & Mayfield, 2004). Overall, the development of infrastructure and services for accessible tourism is a multifaceted challenge. Tourism destinations must not only meet basic accessibility requirements but also foster environments that enhance the comfort and experience of tourists with reduced mobility (TwRM). The integration of accessible transport, accommodation, and tourist sites will ensure that tourism is truly inclusive, benefiting both PRM tourists and the tourism industry as a whole (Gonda, 2023).

3.4. Digital accessibility in the tourism industry

Digital accessibility is a crucial component of inclusive tourism, enabling people with disabilities, including those with reduced mobility (PRM), to independently access travel information, book services, and navigate destinations. As the tourism industry undergoes rapid digitalisation, technology holds significant potential to enhance accessibility. However, despite legal and ethical requirements, many digital platforms continue to present barriers that exclude PRM from fully participating in tourism (Achillas et al., 2024). One of the main challenges is the inaccessibility of tourism websites and mobile applications, which often fail to meet established accessibility standards such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Many platforms have poor contrast, lack alternative text for images, or feature complex navigation structures, making it difficult for PRM to book transport and accommodation or access essential travel information. These limitations also affect elderly travellers and those with temporary impairments, highlighting the broader impact of inaccessible digital environments (Ndhlovu et al., 2024). Addressing these shortcomings is essential to ensuring that tourism's digital transformation is genuinely inclusive. A promising avenue for improvement is the integration of digital accessibility within smart cities. Technologies such as mobile applications, interactive kiosks, and AI-driven virtual assistants can provide real-time information on accessible routes, transport services, and tourist attractions, enhancing mobility and autonomy for PRM. However, despite their potential, many cities have yet to implement these solutions effectively, limiting their impact. Coordinated efforts between urban planners, tourism authorities, and technology developers are needed to ensure that smart city innovations genuinely meet accessibility needs (Fernández-Díaz et al., 2023). Legal frameworks play a vital role in enforcing digital accessibility within tourism. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) mandates that digital services be accessible to all individuals (United Nations, 2006), while the European Accessibility Act (EAA) strengthens these obligations within the EU (Achillas et al., 2024). However, enforcement remains inconsistent, with many tourism providers failing to comply. Stricter monitoring and clearer implementation strategies are needed to ensure these regulations translate into real improvements. Beyond compliance, achieving true digital accessibility requires a user-centred approach. This involves engaging PRM

in the design and testing of tourism websites and applications to identify and address usability barriers effectively. Participatory approaches, where individuals with disabilities contribute firsthand insights, are crucial to developing solutions that genuinely enhance accessibility (Ndhlovu et al., 2024). Without such inclusive strategies, digital barriers will persist, restricting PRM's ability to engage with tourism services independently. In conclusion, digital accessibility is fundamental to inclusive tourism, yet significant challenges remain. Only through such comprehensive approaches can digital tourism platforms become truly accessible to all.

3.5. The labels and certifications for accessible tourism

Ensuring accessibility in tourism requires structured approaches that promote inclusion and provide reliable information to visitors with disabilities. Accessibility labels serve as essential tools in this process, helping destinations and service providers adhere to universal design principles while enhancing the travel experience for PRM. These labels function both as quality indicators for consumers and as incentives for businesses to implement inclusive practices, fostering a tourism environment that is welcoming and functional for all (Landa-Mata et al., 2024). However, their effectiveness depends on consistent implementation and widespread recognition, making it crucial to assess how different certification schemes contribute to accessible tourism. Beyond providing guidance to businesses, accessibility labels help build consumer confidence by offering clear and verifiable information on accessible services and infrastructure. They also play a key role in policy development, fostering collaboration between public and private stakeholders to create a more systematic approach to accessibility improvements across the tourism sector (Acteurs du Tourisme Durable, 2023). Rather than treating accessibility as an afterthought, these certification schemes encourage long-term commitments to inclusive tourism, ensuring that accessibility measures remain a priority. In France, several accessibility labels have been developed to improve inclusivity in tourism. One of the most recognised is the "Tourisme & Handicap" label, introduced in 2001 and officially registered in 2003. This national certification assesses tourism establishments based on their ability to accommodate visitors with motor, visual, auditory, and cognitive disabilities. By setting clear benchmarks, the label enables accommodation providers, restaurants, and cultural sites to improve their accessibility, ensuring that PRM can navigate travel

experiences with greater ease (Bercy Infos, 2024). Such initiatives highlight the importance of structured accessibility measures that go beyond legal compliance to actively enhance user experience. In addition to certifying individual establishments, France has introduced destination-wide initiatives to promote inclusive tourism. The "Destination pour Tous" label, launched in 2013, evaluates the accessibility of entire cities or regions based on their tourism offerings, transport infrastructure, and local services. Unlike site-specific certifications, this label promotes a holistic approach to accessibility, ensuring that PRM can move freely and comfortably within a destination (Direction Générale des Entreprises, 2025). A notable example is the city of Toulouse, which has been awarded this label in recognition of its efforts to integrate accessibility into urban planning, public spaces, and tourism services (Direction Générale des Entreprises, 2023). By considering accessibility at a broader scale, such initiatives encourage long-term inclusion and inspire other destinations to adopt similar approaches. As accessibility labels evolve, they are increasingly being integrated into sustainable tourism frameworks. Recognising that inclusive design is a key element of responsible tourism development, destinations and service providers are encouraged to align accessibility improvements with environmental and social responsibility efforts. This approach ensures that accessibility is embedded into long-term planning rather than treated as a separate issue (Landa-Mata et al., 2024). Ultimately, the expansion of accessibility labels in France and internationally reflects a growing awareness of the need for inclusive tourism. As accessibility gains prominence in tourism policies, certification schemes will continue to be vital tools in shaping a more equitable and sustainable travel industry.

3.6. The persisting challenges and gaps in accessible tourism

Despite advancements in legislation and accessibility initiatives, significant challenges continue to hinder the full inclusion of PRM in the tourism sector. While legal frameworks have driven improvements in infrastructure and services, persistent barriers remain, preventing seamless accessibility in all aspects of travel. These barriers arise from various factors, including inconsistent policy implementation, gaps between theoretical compliance and practical usability, and a lack of standardised data to support accessibility improvements (Rubio-Escuderos et al., 2025). A major issue lies in the discrepancy between formal accessibility compliance and real-world usability. Many

destinations and service providers meet legal requirements but fail to offer genuinely accessible experiences. For instance, an establishment may technically adhere to regulations yet still present obstacles such as steep ramps, heavy doors, or unclear signage. These issues, while not outright violations, significantly affect the ease and independence of travellers with reduced mobility. Furthermore, the inconsistent availability of accessibility data results in fragmented and unreliable information, making it difficult for individuals to plan their journeys confidently. The uncertainty surrounding the accessibility of services and environments discourages travel and limits participation in tourism (Saarela & Partanen, 2024). Beyond basic compliance, the concept of "comfort of use" is increasingly recognised as a crucial aspect of accessibility. Meeting minimum legal standards does not necessarily ensure a positive user experience. Factors such as the height of information panels, the placement of light switches, the ease of movement within spaces, and overall design quality all contribute to genuine accessibility. Without these considerations, many spaces remain difficult or uncomfortable to use despite meeting formal requirements. A shift towards user-centred accessibility, which prioritises both compliance and comfort, is essential in fostering greater independence and dignity for travellers with reduced mobility (Darcy, 2010). Achieving these improvements requires stronger research efforts and better data collection. Without accurate and consistent information, identifying key accessibility challenges and assessing the effectiveness of existing solutions remains difficult. The current lack of standardised research frameworks leads to fragmented initiatives, leaving critical issues unresolved. Accessible urban mobility, and by extension accessible tourism, demands not only infrastructural adaptations but also a coordinated approach to data collection, analysis, and policymaking (Ozden et al., 2024). Strengthening research in this field is essential for developing evidence-based policies that address accessibility needs more effectively. Ultimately, addressing these challenges is crucial to creating a tourism industry that is genuinely inclusive. By embracing a more holistic and user-focused approach, the sector can ensure that accessibility is not merely an obligation but a fundamental aspect of the tourism experience.

Part 2: Problematisation and hypotheses

Introduction of the Part 2

Having established the contextual foundations of disability and tourism in the previous section, this thesis now shifts towards the process of problematisation, a crucial step in academic research that involves critically examining assumptions and reframing the focus of inquiry. This section seeks to refine the research approach by introducing the concept of well-being as a central consideration in the study of accessible tourism. By doing so, it moves beyond definitions of physical accessibility to explore the broader implications of inclusive travel experiences. Through this lens, the research question is reformulated to integrate the dimension of well-being, acknowledging that accessibility is not merely a matter of infrastructure but also one of social inclusion, autonomy, and overall quality of experience for people with reduced mobility. This refined perspective provides a stronger foundation for developing hypotheses that will guide the subsequent analysis, ensuring that the research captures both the practical and experiential aspects of accessibility in tourism. By problematising the relationship between accessibility and well-being, this section advances the study beyond descriptive accounts and towards a more analytical approach. This deeper exploration will serve as a bridge between the conceptual background established in Part 1 and the empirical investigation that follows, shaping the research design and methodological choices in a way that responds meaningfully to the complexities of accessible tourism.

Chapter 4: Reformulation of the research question

In academic research, the reformulation of the research question is a crucial step that allows for a more precise and nuanced exploration of the topic. Building on the contextual foundation established in the literature review, this section introduces the concept of well-being as a key analytical lens through which accessible tourism will be examined. To do so, this thesis will critically assess existing knowledge, identify gaps, tackle existing models to measure well-being, and frame the research question. The refined research question aims to guide the investigation towards a more thorough understanding of the personal, social, and emotional dimensions of accessibility.

4.1. Relevance of the idea of well-being in the study of accessible tourism

After establishing the context of accessible tourism and the challenges faced by PRM in the literature review, it becomes crucial to move beyond the practical aspects of accessibility and delve into its broader implications for individuals and societies. Accessible tourism is often framed as a matter of infrastructure and policy, focused on removing physical barriers and ensuring equal access to tourist activities. While these elements are undeniably important, they represent only part of the picture. The experiences of Tourists with Reduced Mobility (TwRM) are shaped not only by the availability of ramps, elevators, and adapted transportation but also by the emotional and social dimensions of travel. These experiences inevitably impact overall well-being, an aspect often overlooked in discussions centred purely on accessibility. In this context, well-being emerges as a valuable framework for assessing the wider implications of accessible tourism. Indeed, tourism for PRM also holds the potential to affect multiple dimensions of well-being, such as physical health, emotional fulfilment, and social inclusion. Investigating these dimensions offers a more complete understanding of the benefits and limitations of accessible tourism, shining light on aspects that go far beyond physical accessibility. For instance, participation in tourism activities can contribute to increased self-confidence and autonomy, the formation of meaningful social connections, and the creation of enriching, memorable experiences. However, these potential benefits remain somewhat underexplored in academic research, which has traditionally prioritised the technical and logistical aspects of accessibility over the human experience behind it. By incorporating well-being into the analysis, this research aims to develop an aspect of

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tourism studies that is still in its early stages, shifting the focus from accessibility as a practical goal to accessibility as a means of enhancing quality of life. Through this lens, the study will examine not only whether tourism is accessible but also whether it meaningfully contributes to improving the well-being of PRM, ultimately seeking to highlight tourism's potential to foster greater personal development, social inclusion, and emotional resilience.

4.2. Definition and dimensions of well-being

The definition of well-being by the World Health Organization will be used as a starting point for comprehensively studying the concept. The WHO describes it as “a positive state experienced by individuals and societies, encompassing quality of life and the ability to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose” (World Health Organization, n.d.). This definition can be expanded by tackling the multifaceted aspect of well-being, defining its various dimensions. Seven dimensions of well-being can be identified, as follows (Livingston et al., 2022):

- Physical well-being: relating to the health and proper functioning of the body
- Social well-being: involving having supportive relationships and a sense of connection to the community
- Emotional well-being: encompassing the presence of positive emotions and moods (contentment, happiness) and the absence of negative emotions (depression, anxiety)
- Psychological well-being: overall mental state of an individual, sense of balance, resilience, and the ability to cope with life's challenges
- Eudaimonic well-being: focusing on self-realisation and purpose in life
- Community well-being: relating to the quality of life in one's community and the extent of engagement with community activities
- Subjective well-being: involving an individual's personal perceptions and self-evaluation of their lives

For research purposes, this paper will focus on the evaluation of physical, social and emotional well-being, which are generally agreed to be the three most important ones when it comes to studying an individual's overall well-being without exploring too complex

psychology concepts. Each of these three dimensions can be directly affected by tourism experiences and can be evaluated through qualitative and quantitative research with PMR. An explanation of a model to evaluate well-being will be provided later.

4.3. People with disabilities face greater well-being issues than the rest of the population

Before providing a model that can apply psychological definitions of well-being to the concrete lives of people with disabilities, it is important to understand the reality of the general well-being states of PRM, especially in the light of TwRM. One important aspect of the gravity of the study of this topic is that they are more likely to experience mental health issues compared to people without disabilities. Indeed, the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that in 2022, nearly 43% of PwD reported experiencing depression, more than three times more than people without disabilities, for who the proportion is of around 13% (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). This proves that there are disparities in mental health and well-being between people with and without disabilities, which must be understood to then be resolved. In the context of tourism, this is important because the tourism experience plays a major role in either worsening or improving these disparities. Insufficient accessibility or social barriers can lead to exclusion and further emotional distress, while inclusive tourism offers opportunities for experience that can enhance well-being. Tourism, when designed inclusively, can have a positive impact on the physical and emotional well-being of PRM, helping to mitigate the adverse effects of social isolation and improving their quality of life. In fact, it has oftentimes been proven that tourism leads to a better well-being of individuals, by providing opportunities to escape daily routines, to foster feelings of inclusion, to engage in recreational sports and enriching experiences (Konstantopoulou et al., 2024). These opportunities should not be reserved for people without disabilities, and developing awareness on these issues is an important step to move towards equality in the consideration of PRM's well-being.

4.4. Theoretical models and approaches to consider well-being

Now that we have defined what is well-being and why it is relevant to the study of accessible tourism, we need to determine theoretical approaches to study it for the rest

of the thesis. The study of well-being can be framed through several theoretical approaches, two of which offer particularly valuable insights for understanding the experiences of tourists with reduced mobility: the PERMA model and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The PERMA model, developed by psychologist Martin Seligman, identifies five core elements that contribute to an individual's well-being: *Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment* (Madeson, 2017). Positive emotion (P) refers to the capacity to experience joy and contentment, while Engagement (E) reflects a sense of being fully absorbed in activities. Relationships (R) encompass the importance of social connections and support, Meaning (M) relates to finding purpose in life, and Accomplishment (A) focuses on achieving goals and feeling a sense of competence. This model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how accessible tourism could enhance well-being by creating opportunities for enjoyment, fostering social inclusion, and providing a sense of achievement. Complementing this perspective is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, a theory that organises human needs into five levels: *physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation* (McLeod, 2025). According to Maslow, individuals are motivated to satisfy basic needs such as safety and physiological comfort before pursuing higher-level needs like social connection, self-esteem, and personal growth. In the context of accessible tourism, this hierarchy highlights the importance of addressing physical accessibility and safety as prerequisites for TwRM to fully engage in experiences that foster emotional well-being, social connection, and personal development. Together, these models provide a robust foundation for investigating the multifaceted impacts of accessible tourism, offering tools to assess whether travel experiences meet fundamental needs while also enabling higher-level experiences that contribute to long-term well-being. By adopting these complementary frameworks, this research aims to examine how accessible tourism influences various dimensions of well-being, from satisfying basic needs to unlocking deeper experiences of fulfilment and personal growth.

4.5. Framing the research question

After exploring the importance of the consideration of the well-being of tourists with reduced mobility, a precise research question can be determined. Refining the question is a critical part of the research process, as it sets forward the whole thesis, and can bring

clarity and focus when done right. It is thus important to deeply consider different versions of this question before selecting the most appropriate one. The original research question considered was “How can stakeholder collaboration and innovative strategies improve accessibility to tourism activities for people with reduced mobility?”. This question focused more on accessible tourism with the point of view of enabling it from a more professional, institutional and managerial perspective. Nonetheless, research on the topic has led to the conclusion that this topic has already been thoroughly studied, and it has been the subject of many national and international legislative texts to encourage its implementation by professionals. However, during this research, the topic of well-being has appeared in a few academic articles read and turned out to be an interesting aspect to study in a thesis. Out of this realisation came two new research questions, the first being “*How does accessible tourism influence the well-being of people with reduced mobility?*” and the second “*In what ways does accessible tourism impact the physical, emotional, and social well-being of people with reduced mobility?*”. At first sight, the first question seems less thorough, leaving aside interesting concepts. Indeed, the second one includes the idea of “physical, emotional and social well-being”, thus directly implementing within the question the different dimensions of well-being that will be studied in the course of this thesis. This could add value to the research, framing it more precisely, and bringing answers to specific elements. Nevertheless, after some reflection and a first draft of hypotheses, the specificity of the second research question revealed to be more of a drawback than an advantage. Indeed, it made the research process overly complex, as the three dimensions of well-being had to be considered at the forefront of the whole thesis. Turning back to the first option allows for more freedom in the hypotheses and the following data collection, which will bring more complete results and ultimately an answer that will have relevance in more cases. The concept of the physical, emotional and social dimensions of well-being are not completely set aside, as they will naturally be tackled in the general study of well-being. The comparison of the different research questions has then led to the following one to be chosen: *How does accessible tourism influence the well-being of people with reduced mobility?* From this question, different hypotheses have been created, to bring a comprehensive answer.

Chapter 5: Formulation of the hypotheses

The formulation of hypotheses is a crucial step in the research process, as it provides a clear direction for data collection and establishes the foundation for analysing relationships between variables. They offer a framework for translating broader research questions into specific, testable propositions, ensuring that the inquiry remains focused and methodologically sound. In the case of this thesis, five hypotheses will provide leads to explore the many benefits of tourism for the well-being of people with reduced mobility, covering the challenges and innovations that this involves.

5.1. Hypothesis 1: Tourism is crucial to the well-being of people with reduced mobility

This hypothesis delves into the significant role that tourism may play in enhancing the well-being of PRM, with a particular focus on its physical, social, and emotional dimensions. It examines whether adapted tourism activities, such as outdoor excursions or nature-based experiences, can foster greater physical engagement, mobility, and overall well-being within supportive and inclusive environments. The social aspect of tourism is explored through the lens of its potential to provide opportunities for connection, inclusion, and meaningful social interaction. Group travel, accessible cultural events, and guided tours may help to reduce the feelings of isolation that PRM sometimes experience, offering a platform for forming new friendships and strengthening social bonds. On an emotional level, tourism has the potential to empower individuals by providing a sense of independence, while offering enriching and transformative experiences that can lead to enhanced emotional resilience and well-being. However, the precise degree to which these factors translate into meaningful and sustained improvements in well-being remains to be explored in greater depth. Moreover, this hypothesis also considers how different forms of tourism, such as cultural, wellness, or adventure tourism, might uniquely contribute to well-being outcomes. Additionally, this study will explore how the pyramid of needs framework applies to these different dimensions of well-being, helping to understand how tourism might meet various levels of need for individuals with reduced mobility. For example, wellness tourism, with its focus on relaxation and emotional restoration, may specifically address mental health and emotional recovery, while adventure tourism, offering adapted physical challenges, may cultivate a sense of personal achievement and physical empowerment. The research aims to investigate

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whether certain types of tourism are particularly effective in enhancing specific well-being outcomes. By exploring these varying dimensions, this hypothesis seeks to clarify which aspects of well-being (physical, social, or emotional) are most significantly impacted by tourism for individuals with reduced mobility. Ultimately, this exploration aims to uncover tourism's broader potential as a catalyst for personal growth, development, and overall well-being, all while considering the unique challenges faced by PRM when engaging with the tourism industry. The findings from this investigation may highlight the positive role that tourism plays in boosting well-being through the enhancement of social connection, autonomy, and access to enriching experiences. At the same time, it is possible that barriers such as inadequate accessibility or limited social inclusion could hinder these positive outcomes, indicating that while tourism can indeed offer significant well-being benefits, it may not guarantee positive experiences for all without complementary support structures in place.

5.2. Hypothesis 2: While barrier-free environments are essential, they alone do not guarantee an enjoyable tourism experience for people with reduced mobility

This hypothesis explores the notion that while physical accessibility is a critical foundation, it may not be sufficient on its own to ensure a truly fulfilling and enjoyable tourism experience for PRM. Accessible infrastructure, such as ramps, elevators, and adapted transportation, are vital components for allowing individuals with mobility challenges to reach destinations and engage in various activities. However, this study aims to delve deeper into the less tangible factors that may also play a significant role in shaping the overall tourism experience. Informational barriers, for instance, may impact tourists' ability to navigate new environments with confidence. The availability and clarity of accessibility-related information, such as details on accessible routes, facilities, or services, may affect a tourist's autonomy and influence their decision-making during their trip. The provision of accurate, easily accessible information could, therefore, be as important as the physical environment itself in enabling positive experiences. Operational factors, such as the quality of staff training and the level of service provided, also hold considerable weight in shaping the tourism experience. Well-trained staff who understand the specific needs of PRM can significantly enhance the perceived supportiveness of a destination, potentially improving tourists' satisfaction and overall experience.

Furthermore, attitudinal factors, such as societal awareness and perceptions of disability, play a role in how tourists feel included and valued. For example, positive attitudes and inclusive behaviours from both staff and fellow tourists can help create a welcoming environment, while negative attitudes may lead to feelings of exclusion or diminished dignity. In addition to these factors, the role of policy frameworks must be considered. While policies that prioritise physical accessibility are vital, they may fail to address broader social and emotional aspects of tourism. A comprehensive, holistic approach that considers both physical and non-physical factors may therefore be necessary to ensure genuinely enriching and inclusive tourism experiences. This research aims to investigate how these various factors, physical accessibility, informational clarity, staff training, social awareness, and policy considerations, interact to shape the tourism experience for PRM. The findings from this study could show that physical accessibility alone is insufficient to guarantee an enjoyable tourism experience. Factors such as staff attitudes, the availability of clear and accessible information, and social inclusion may play an equally crucial role in ensuring that PRM feel welcome, respected, and empowered during their travels. On the other hand, it is also possible that physical accessibility remains the most important factor, with non-physical elements playing a secondary role, particularly if tourists prioritise ease of movement, infrastructure, and convenience over social interactions or the quality of services provided. Ultimately, this hypothesis seeks to understand whether a more nuanced, holistic approach to accessibility is required for truly enriching tourism experiences for all.

5.3. Hypothesis 3: New technologies offer opportunities to enhance the well-being of tourists with reduced mobility

This hypothesis explores the potential of emerging technologies to improve the well-being of TwRM, addressing both practical and psychological barriers during their journey. Digital tools like apps providing real-time accessibility information and navigation assistance could increase autonomy and reduce anxiety by helping tourists navigate unfamiliar environments with ease. Virtual reality (VR) technologies that allow for pre-trip familiarisation could further enhance confidence, providing a sense of control before arrival. Additionally, social platforms and peer review networks can foster a sense of community, empowering travellers by sharing experiences and advice. These tools could

provide emotional support, offering reassurance and promoting social connections, which are key for well-being. However, limitations such as digital literacy, cost, and unequal access to technology might restrict the effectiveness of these solutions. Not all tourists may have the same level of access to devices, or the skills required to use them, which could limit the benefits of these technologies. By examining the role of technology at different stages of the journey, before, during, and after the trip, this hypothesis aims to assess how digital innovations enhance the tourism experience for PRM. While the expected results suggest that technology could improve accessibility and emotional well-being, challenges such as unequal access may limit its universal impact, making the overall benefits mixed depending on the tourist's circumstances.

5.4. Hypothesis 4: Improving the well-being of tourists with reduced mobility not only enhances their individual experience but also brings broader social and economic benefits

This hypothesis investigates the wider social and economic benefits that could result from enhancing the well-being of TwRM. By improving accessibility, destinations may increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, leading to repeat visits and ultimately greater economic gains for businesses. The tourism sector could tap into a growing and diverse market that includes not only individuals with permanent disabilities but also ageing populations and those with temporary impairments, presenting new opportunities for expansion. Moreover, the increased demand for accessible tourism could lead to longer stays, which would positively impact local economies, creating a ripple effect of economic growth. From a social perspective, improving accessibility might contribute to raising awareness within local communities, fostering greater understanding and empathy, and encouraging meaningful interactions between tourists and residents. These positive exchanges could help reduce social stigma and strengthen the social fabric of communities. Destinations that prioritise accessibility could also establish themselves as leaders in inclusive and responsible tourism, enhancing their reputation and appeal. However, the extent to which these broader benefits will materialise remains uncertain. The impact of accessibility improvements could be constrained by factors such as high travel costs, limited availability of accessibility information, and the persistence of social stigma, all of which might limit the effectiveness of such initiatives. This suggests that

improving accessibility alone may not guarantee long-term economic or social change unless coupled with additional measures, such as targeted marketing, policy support, and a broader societal shift towards inclusion.

5.5. Hypothesis 5: Accessible tourism has long-term positive impact on the individual well-being of tourists with reduced mobility after their trip

This hypothesis examines the long-term impact of accessible tourism on the well-being of TwRM, focusing on whether the benefits of accessible travel extend beyond the duration of the trip. Accessible tourism experiences may promote personal growth, such as increased confidence, autonomy, and emotional resilience, as individuals face and overcome the challenges of navigating new environments. The process of adapting to unfamiliar spaces, overcoming obstacles, and engaging in enriching activities can boost self-esteem and create lasting memories that enhance emotional well-being. Socially, the connections formed during travel, such as new friendships, group activities, or interactions with local communities, may have enduring effects on tourists' social lives. These relationships can contribute to a sense of belonging and inclusion, encouraging greater participation in social activities and community events after the trip. Positive memories from the travel experience may further sustain happiness and well-being over time. Additionally, the skills developed, such as problem-solving, adaptability, and increased self-reliance, may equip tourists with the tools to handle challenges in their daily lives, improving their overall resilience and coping strategies. However, the sustainability of these benefits could be influenced by external factors, particularly the accessibility of environments and the presence of supportive social networks upon returning home. If the home environment lacks the same level of accessibility, inclusion, and support experienced during the trip, these benefits may diminish, limiting the long-term positive impact. This hypothesis will investigate whether the positive effects of accessible tourism endure after the trip or if they fade once tourists return to less accommodating environments. By exploring these dynamics, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how accessible tourism can contribute to long-term emotional, social, and psychological well-being.

5.6. Justification of hypotheses – clarifying boundaries between hypotheses

The process of developing these 5 hypotheses required careful consideration of the multiple layers through which accessible tourism influences well-being. Given its multifaceted nature, some overlap between the hypotheses is inevitable. Specifically, doubts arose when developing Hypothesis 4 and Hypothesis 5. Indeed, the idea of merging them into a single hypothesis was initially explored, for example resulting in the following hypothesis: *“Improving the well-being of tourists with reduced mobility leads to both immediate and long-term benefits for individuals, businesses, and communities.”* This integrated perspective would frame post-visit social participation and a sense of belonging as part of the broader impact of accessible tourism. However, the decision was made to keep them distinct for two key reasons. Hypothesis 4 explores more the interest in accessible tourism benefiting the well-being of communities and the economy, contrary to solely benefitting individuals with disabilities like some could believe. In contrast, Hypothesis 5 focuses more into the well-being that accessible tourism brings to the PRM in the long-term. This would allow this thesis to focus on sustained emotional well-being and social integration after the trip. Merging these hypotheses risked oversimplifying these complex processes, as Hypothesis 4 explores the benefits for “individual // community”, whereas Hypothesis 5 studies the benefits in “short-term // long-term”. Keeping them separate ensures that each dimension receives the attention it requires, while still acknowledging their interconnectedness. This distinction allows the research to address both perspectives thoroughly and provides a more nuanced exploration of accessible tourism’s ripple effects across time and social contexts. Overall, the five hypotheses proposed in this thesis tackle a variety of topics, that will provide for a holistic vision of how tourism influences the well-being of people with reduced mobility.

**Part 3: Methodology to conduct research that answers the
research question**

Introduction of the Part 3

Having established the theoretical framework and formulated the research hypotheses, this section presents the methodology designed to address the research question. While the literature review has provided a strong foundation, gathering new empirical data is essential to gaining deeper insights into the well-being of tourists with reduced mobility. A robust methodological approach ensures that the study moves beyond theoretical discussions and engages directly with lived experiences, offering a more comprehensive understanding of accessibility in tourism. To achieve this, it is crucial to carefully select appropriate research methods that align with the study's objectives. The choice of methodology must balance qualitative and quantitative approaches, allowing for a nuanced exploration of accessibility challenges and their impact on well-being. Equally important is the precise definition of the target population and the field of application, as these elements will determine the relevance and reliability of the findings. This section, therefore, details the research design, outlining the strategies employed to collect and analyse data. By ensuring methodological rigour and clarity, it lays the groundwork for an informed and evidence-based discussion in the following sections, strengthening the study's contribution to the field of accessible tourism.

Chapter 6: Exploration of the different methods to conduct data collection

Choosing the right method is key to producing reliable and insightful findings, especially when studying a complex concept like well-being. This section will identify relevant indicators to measure well-being and justify the selected research approach, whether qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. The goal is to ensure that the chosen methodology effectively captures the experiences of tourists with reduced mobility and aligns with the broader research aims by bringing element of answers for each hypothesis.

6.1. Indicators and scales to measure well-being

Having established the relevance of well-being in the study of accessible tourism, the next step is to determine appropriate tools for evaluating and analysing it. Identifying clear indicators is crucial to understanding how tourism experiences impact PRM and to providing a structured framework for assessment. One widely recognised model for measuring well-being is the PERMA model, developed by Martin Seligman, which identifies five core elements that contribute to human flourishing (Butler & Kern, 2016), which have already been explored in Part 2. These five elements are still broad and theoretical, but in their study, Julie Butler and Margaret L. Kern introduced the PERMA-Profiler, a concise tool that is designed to measure these five dimensions (Butler & Kern, 2016). This profiler is a short, multidimensional questionnaire that consists of 23 items to identify the five original dimensions of well-being, plus the additional measures of negative emotion, health and loneliness. Participants respond to items using a Likert scale (from 0 to 10), with higher scores indicating greater well-being in each area. This tool offers a simple to apply yet comprehensive understanding of an individual's well-being across the dimensions, making it practical for use in diverse settings. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) tool can also be considered when assessing the well-being of a population. It is a concise, five-item instrument to measure an individual's global judgments of their life satisfaction, by using a seven-point Likert scale (Diener et al., 1985). Nonetheless, this tool, that has been developed decades before the PERMA-Profiler, does not allow to delve into specific domains or dimensions. This makes the PERMA-Profiler a stronger tool, as the PERMA model's five key elements to evaluating well-being can be easily applied to the different dimensions of well-being, specifically the

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Figure 1: The 23-item PERMA-Profiler measure (Butler & Kern, 2016)

Label	Question	Response Anchors
A1	How much of the time do you feel you are making progress towards accomplishing your goals?	0 = never, 10 = always
E1	How often do you become absorbed in what you are doing?	
P1	In general, how often do you feel joyful?	
N1	In general, how often do you feel anxious?	
A2	How often do you achieve the important goals you have set for yourself?	
H1	In general, how would you say your health is?	0 = terrible, 10 = excellent
M1	In general, to what extent do you lead a purposeful and meaningful life?	0 = not at all, 10 = completely
R1	To what extent do you receive help and support from others when you need it?	
M2	In general, to what extent do you feel that what you do in your life is valuable and worthwhile?	
E2	In general, to what extent do you feel excited and interested in things?	
Lon	How lonely do you feel in your daily life?	
H2	How satisfied are you with your current physical health?	0 = not at all, 10 = completely
P2	In general, how often do you feel positive?	0 = never, 10 = always
N2	In general, how often do you feel angry?	
A3	How often are you able to handle your responsibilities?	
N3	In general, how often do you feel sad?	
E3	How often do you lose track of time while doing something you enjoy?	
H3	Compared to others of your same age and sex, how is your health?	0 = terrible, 10 = excellent
R2	To what extent do you feel loved?	0 = not at all, 10 = completely
M3	To what extent do you generally feel you have a sense of direction in your life?	
R3	How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?	
P3	In general, to what extent do you feel contented?	
Hap	Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are?	0 = not at all, 10 = completely

physical, social and emotional ones. Indeed, the physical dimension can be measured through Engagement in physical activities and Accomplishment in achieving physical goals for instance. As for the social dimension of well-being, it is reflected in building meaningful Relationships and experiencing social inclusion. Finally, when it comes to the emotional dimension, the PERMA model obviously tackles it through the Positive emotions, Meaningful experiences and Engagement in activities. The PERMA-Profiler is therefore a more complete tool to use to assess the well-being of individuals.

6.2. Relevance of the indicators to tourists with reduced mobility

The PERMA model helps frame well-being in general, and is useful to measure the impact of accessibility, with indicators for emotional uplift, social integration and physical participation, therefore tackling the most important dimensions of well-being. The

adaptability of the model and the PERMA-Profiler make them effective tools for examining how tourism can improve people with reduced mobility's quality of life, ensuring a complete yet manageable approach to well-being assessment. The five key elements of PERMA are indeed relevant to use for TwRM. The explanation of this relevance can be put into a table for clarity purposes, as follows:

Figure 2: Relevance of the PERMA model to tourists with reduced mobility

Key element of PERMA	Relevance to tourists with reduced mobility
Positive emotion (P)	Accessible tourism can enhance these emotions by reducing stress and frustration associated with mobility challenges.
Engagement (E)	Tourism activities being adapted with proper equipment to allow PRM to engage in more experiences
Relationships (R)	Inclusive tourism facilitates social interactions by removing barriers
Meaning (M)	Enjoyable tourism experiences can contribute to a sense of purpose to people
Accomplishment (A)	Navigating new environments or participating in activities previously deemed inaccessible to PRM enhances feelings of achievement and boosts self-esteem

The implementation of the PERMA model has already been realised for senior tourist, which has provided valuable insights on tourism for older people or people with disabilities (J. Mendes et al., 2022), proving that this model can bring relevant information for this thesis. The model's good balance between theoretical depth and practical applicability makes it an excellent choice for a master's thesis with limited time and resources. It also allows to assess well-being in a structured, measurable way while keeping the concept clear and accessible to both researcher, respondents and readers.

6.3. Description of the four main methods to conduct data collection

Identifying models and indicators to guide data collection is only the first step of the research process. It is now essential to consider the methods through which these indicators will be applied in practice. Various strategies can be used to gather data, each offering distinct approaches to understanding the well-being of TwRM. The main options include observation, questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups, each providing either qualitative or quantitative insights into the subject matter.

- **Non-participant observation:** This method involves the researcher observing TwRM in specific tourism contexts without directly interacting with them, gathering quantitative and qualitative data (Williams, 2008). For instance, observations could take place at the reception area of a tourist activity, in transportation hubs, or at tourist sites, where the researcher could take note of tourists' behaviours, interactions, and emotional responses in real time. Indicators such as body language, frequency of assistance requests, perceived comfort, and engagement levels could be recorded systematically. This approach can provide insights into behaviours and social dynamics that participants may not consciously report in other forms of data collection. Observations may yield both quantitative data, for example, by counting occurrences of specific behaviours, and qualitative data through more descriptive accounts of individual experiences.
- **Questionnaires:** Questionnaires offer a structured method of quantitative data collection, allowing researchers to gather responses from a large group of participants in a relatively efficient manner (Adams & Cox, 2008). In the context of this study, questionnaires could be designed to cover multiple themes related to well-being, such as physical accessibility, emotional experiences, and social inclusion during travel. These could be administered either in physical form, handed out at tourist sites or accommodation facilities, or digitally, distributed via email, social media, or tourism-related websites. Multiple questionnaires could be created for different stages of the research process, such as pre-trip expectations and post-trip reflections. However, it may be more practical to develop a comprehensive questionnaire covering various dimensions of well-being in a single survey. Likert scales, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended responses could be used to balance quantitative measurement with some qualitative insights.

- Interviews: Conducting one-on-one interviews allows for an in-depth exploration of personal experiences and perspectives, collecting qualitative data (Williamson, 2018). Interviews could be carried out directly with TwRM, providing them with a platform to share detailed narratives of their travel experiences, challenges, and sources of well-being. Alternatively, interviews could also be conducted with other stakeholders, such as tourism professionals, accessibility advocates, or individuals who have experienced temporary mobility impairments. Interviews offer the flexibility to adapt questions based on the participant's responses, potentially uncovering new dimensions of the topic. They can be conducted in person, over the phone, or through video calls, ensuring accessibility for participants regardless of location.
- Focus groups: Focus groups provide a collaborative setting where multiple participants engage in guided discussions led by the researcher, allowing to collect qualitative data (Williamson, 2018). This method can bring together diverse profiles, including TwRM, tourism professionals, and members of the general public, fostering dialogue that highlights contrasting perspectives and shared experiences. Focus groups encourage participants to reflect on each other's experiences, potentially revealing insights that might not surface in individual interviews. The group dynamic may also promote a sense of solidarity, where participants feel validated and heard. Sessions can be recorded and transcribed for analysis, capturing both the content of the discussions and the group's interactive dynamics.

Each of these methods presents unique opportunities for exploring well-being in the context of accessible tourism. The selection of one or a combination of these approaches will shape the type and depth of data collected, ultimately influencing the study's ability to capture diverse perspectives and experiences.

6.4. Comparison and selection of the methods used

Selecting the appropriate research method is a crucial step to ensure the quality and relevance of the data collected. Each method presents distinct strengths and weaknesses, which must be carefully weighed to determine the best fit for this study.

Below is a comparison of four possible methods: observation, questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups.

- Non-participant observation offers the advantage of capturing participants' natural behaviours without interference, as individuals tend to act more authentically when unaware they are being observed. This avoids the "observer effect," where behaviour changes under scrutiny. However, in the context of accessible tourism, observation is impractical. Identifying a sufficiently large group of TwRM in a public setting is unlikely, making data collection challenging. Additionally, observation alone does not provide insight into participants' motivations or emotions, limiting its capacity to assess personal well-being.
- Questionnaires are an efficient method for collecting data from a large number of participants, especially if a broad network is available. They offer the possibility of covering diverse topics and generating quantitative data that can be analysed statistically. Online distribution further expands accessibility, reaching participants across different locations. However, ensuring a high response rate is difficult, as participation depends on individuals voluntarily taking the time to respond. Additionally, questions must be exceptionally clear, as participants cannot seek clarification, and the process of designing, distributing, and analysing questionnaire data is time-consuming.
- Interviews provide a rich, qualitative approach that allows for an in-depth exploration of personal experiences, emotions, and perceptions. The flexibility of interviews enables researchers to adapt questions in real time, following up on unexpected but relevant topics as they emerge. Each conversation has the potential to reveal unique insights into individual perspectives. However, interviews require participants to be available and willing to engage in potentially lengthy discussions, and the quality of data relies heavily on the researcher's skills in guiding the conversation and interpreting responses.
- Focus groups create a dynamic environment where diverse participants can share experiences, react to each other's perspectives, and spark conversations that may lead to new insights. This method allows researchers to observe group interactions and identify emerging themes, providing a broader understanding of shared

experiences. Nevertheless, organising focus groups can be challenging, requiring careful coordination of multiple participants' schedules and securing a suitable location. Additionally, group dynamics may affect contributions, with some participants dominating the conversation while others hesitate to speak.

After careful consideration, observation is not suitable for this study due to its impracticality in identifying a representative group of TwRM. Questionnaires are a valuable option, offering the chance to collect data from a broader population. However, they pose risks if responses are too few or if questions fail to capture the complexity of well-being. Interviews emerge as the most reliable method, providing in-depth qualitative insights into personal experiences and perceptions, making them essential for understanding the nuanced impacts of accessible tourism on well-being. Focus groups could also be beneficial if properly organised, as they allow for the exploration of diverse perspectives in a group setting. Ultimately, this research will prioritise interviews, potentially complemented by questionnaires and focus groups if time and resources allow.

6.5. The themes of the research to examine each hypothesis

The determination of a theoretical tool to measure well-being and of which qualitative and quantitative will be used allows to now focus more concretely on how to collect data to test the hypotheses. Interviews, potentially alongside questionnaires and focus groups will be guided by the PERMA-Profil (Butler & Kern, 2016), offering both quantitative and qualitative insights into the physical, social, and emotional dimensions of well-being in accessible tourism. Below is a proposed strategy for each hypothesis:

- Hypothesis 1: To examine the role of tourism in enhancing the well-being of people with reduced mobility, the study will primarily rely on interviews and questionnaires. Interviews will provide an in-depth understanding of participants' personal experiences, exploring the emotional, social, and physical benefits they gained from accessible tourism activities. Questions will focus on how travel contributed to their sense of autonomy, connection with others, and emotional empowerment. Elements of the PERMA-Profil can be included indirectly within the questions to measure its elements. Moreover, a questionnaire, based on the PERMA model,

could quantify the changes in well-being across the five components before and after their trips, particularly focusing on physical engagement, social connection, and emotional resilience. This mixed-method approach could help identify which aspects of well-being are most positively impacted by accessible tourism.

- Hypothesis 2: To assess the importance of factors beyond physical accessibility, the study will utilise both interviews and questionnaires. Interviews with TwRM will explore their experiences with non-physical barriers such as service quality, social inclusion, and clarity of accessibility-related information. Participants will be asked how these factors influenced their overall enjoyment and sense of inclusion. A questionnaire could be used to measure satisfaction with both physical and non-physical aspects of their travel experience, including staff attitudes and the availability of helpful information. Additionally, a focus group could allow for diverse perspectives on how non-physical factors—such as staff attitudes, informational barriers, and policies—affect the tourism experience for people with reduced mobility. By gathering input from tourists, tourism professionals, and local residents, the group dynamic would facilitate a deeper understanding of how these factors interact to influence overall satisfaction. This combined approach will highlight how non-physical barriers can influence the enjoyment of tourism, even in accessible environments.
- Hypothesis 3: This hypothesis will be explored using questionnaires and interviews. In-depth interviews will allow participants to share their personal experiences with emerging technologies, providing richer insights into how technology may support their travel planning and in-destination navigation. The questionnaire could assess tourists' experiences with various digital tools (apps, virtual tours) and how they impacted their autonomy and emotional well-being. Likert-scale questions will measure the perceived usefulness of these tools in enhancing independence, reducing anxiety, and fostering social connections. These questions could be included within the interviews too if questionnaires turn out too complex to be conducted. This approach will help evaluate the specific benefits and challenges associated with technology for TwRM.
- Hypothesis 4: To explore the wider benefits in society of accessible tourism, a combination of interviews and questionnaires will be used. Interviews will delve

into participants' experiences with local communities and businesses during their travels, focusing on their perceptions of the social and economic impact of accessible tourism. They will discuss how their presence as tourists contributed to local economies and fostered greater social inclusion. Questionnaires could be employed to quantify satisfaction levels with local hospitality and assess the economic and social impacts as perceived by TwRM. Here, focus groups could also provide an opportunity to explore the social and economic impacts of accessible tourism from different viewpoints, including those of tourists with reduced mobility, local business owners, and community members. Discussions could reveal how improved accessibility not only enhances individual well-being but also fosters social inclusion and economic growth. This will help gauge how accessible tourism can benefit both tourists and the broader community.

- Hypothesis 5: To explore the long-term effects of accessible tourism on well-being, in-depth interviews will be the primary method of data collection. These interviews will allow participants to reflect on how their experiences during accessible travel have influenced their long-term emotional, social, and physical well-being. The questions will focus on whether their sense of autonomy, social inclusion, and emotional resilience have been sustained after returning from their trips. Participants will be asked about changes in their daily lives, such as increased confidence, new social connections, or the development of coping strategies. This qualitative approach will provide rich, personal insights into how accessible tourism can contribute to lasting improvements in the well-being of individuals with reduced mobility.

This approach aligns the data collection methods with the PERMA model, ensuring that each hypothesis has a defined method and themes to be examined holistically.

6.6. The use of secondary sources

In addition to primary data collection methods such as interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups, secondary sources play a vital role in enhancing the research process. Secondary data, gathered and analysed by other researchers, offers valuable insights and supports a broader contextual understanding. Utilising these sources can save time

and enrich the analysis by providing access to extensive datasets, diverse perspectives, and long-term trends (Kumara, 2022). In this thesis, secondary data has already informed the literature review and will continue to support the investigation into the relationship between accessible tourism and the well-being of people with disabilities. Integrating secondary sources will strengthen the research by validating findings, contextualising primary data, and ensuring a more comprehensive exploration of the subject.

Chapter 7: Determination of the field of study and population to survey

After establishing the research methods, the next step is to identify the field of study and determine the population to be interviewed. This stage is critical, as it shapes the direction of the research by clarifying the key participants and ensuring the data collected is relevant and representative. Defining the population not only sets the foundation for the study but also helps refine research objectives and develop a concrete strategy for data collection. Understanding who to interview — as well as how to effectively reach these individuals — will enhance the study's depth and ensure diverse perspectives are captured, particularly those directly impacted by accessibility challenges in tourism.

7.1. Field of study – France, mostly Toulouse

Defining the field of study is a crucial step, as it establishes a clear framework for data collection and ensures the research remains organised and focused. When examining tourism for PRM, the research could theoretically be conducted in any location, as this segment of the population exists worldwide, spanning all geographical and cultural boundaries. However, selecting a field that balances both practical accessibility for the researcher and relevance to tourism is essential. For this dissertation, France has been chosen as the primary field of study, offering a practical environment for conducting interviews and distributing questionnaires. Conducting research in a familiar setting like France allows for easier access to participants and facilitates on-site data collection, ensuring a more thorough exploration of the subject. While a comparative study between two countries could have been insightful, time and logistical constraints — given that this dissertation is completed over only two academic years at a French university — make focusing on one country a more feasible approach. Within France, Toulouse has been selected as the central point of focus. The city provides practical advantages due to the researcher's proximity, enabling direct interactions with participants and access to local tourism infrastructure. Additionally, Toulouse holds particular interest as a tourism destination, notably in the MICE sector (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Events). However, the study is not limited to Toulouse alone. Incorporating perspectives from other French destinations would enrich the findings, particularly from areas with a stronger focus on leisure tourism, offering a broader understanding of accessible tourism

practices. Remote interviews via digital platforms, such as Zoom, will allow the inclusion of participants beyond Toulouse, ensuring more diverse insights. Finally, as the focus is on the experiences of TwRM across various tourism contexts, the study is not confined to a single type of tourism activity or organisation. An internship within a tourism-related business could provide valuable insights, but it will not serve as the primary method of data collection. The aim is to gather a well-rounded perspective by exploring a range of tourism experiences. In summary, the field of study is set within France, with a particular focus on Toulouse, while remaining open to contributions from other locations to ensure a comprehensive understanding of accessible tourism practices.

7.2. Population: primary focus on tourists with reduced mobility

Within the geographical field of study, the selection of the population for data collection is pivotal, as it directly influences the outcomes of the research. Defining a well-suited population ensures that the gathered insights are both relevant and actionable, providing a clearer understanding of the specific challenges faced by the individuals at the heart of the study and how it affects their well-being. For this thesis, the primary focus will be on TwRM, who will represent the majority of the population surveyed. The importance of focusing on this group cannot be overstated, as their lived experiences are key to uncovering the accessibility challenges within tourism destinations and services, and their emotional impact. Tourists with reduced mobility form a diverse group, including individuals with permanent disabilities, elderly travellers, and those temporarily affected by injury or illness. By centring this population in the research, it becomes possible to gain direct insights into how accessibility in tourism influences their well-being, as they are uniquely positioned to identify the impact that the tourism experience has on them. By prioritising this population, the research aims to address not only the physical barriers encountered but also the often-overlooked issues, such as the lack of clear accessibility information or the emotional toll of facing exclusion while travelling. The testimonies of TwRM will provide valuable perspectives on how accessibility, or the absence of it, can affect their quality of life during travel, offering valuable insights into the less visible consequences of accessibility challenges. It is also essential to recognise the diversity within this group. TwRM do not constitute a homogenous population; their experiences are shaped by a variety of factors, including age, travel preferences, and socio-economic

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background. For instance, the needs of an elderly traveller might differ significantly from those of a younger individual with mobility impairments, and economic factors can also influence travel choices. Therefore, the data collection process will aim to represent this diversity as fully as possible, taking into account variations in age, gender, travel habits, and socio-economic factors. Capturing this diversity will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how accessibility challenges affect the well-being of different types of travellers with reduced mobility. In conclusion, focusing on TwRM as the primary population for this study will provide essential insights into how accessibility issues in tourism activities influence their physical, emotional, and social well-being. Their input is crucial in highlighting the less visible consequences of accessibility gaps and will contribute to a broader understanding of how tourism can be made more inclusive for all.

7.3. Population: secondary focus on professionals and additional perspectives

In addition to tourists with reduced mobility, this research will gather insights from other key groups to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how accessible tourism influences well-being. Including these perspectives will enrich the data collection process, allowing for a broader analysis of the social, emotional, and physical impacts of accessibility, ultimately helping to answer the research question and assess the validity of the hypotheses. A secondary focus will be placed on industry professionals, such as hotel managers, tour operators, and transport providers, who directly influence the accessibility of tourism experiences. Interviews and surveys with these stakeholders will help uncover current practices and the challenges faced in delivering accessible services. Their insights will be instrumental in evaluating how these practices impact the well-being of TwRM, whether by enhancing ease and comfort or unintentionally creating additional obstacles. Furthermore, collecting data from industry professionals will provide a clearer picture of the tourism sector's level of awareness and its willingness to adapt to diverse needs, contributing to a deeper understanding of the structural factors affecting well-being. In addition, the perspectives of carers and companions will be explored through targeted questionnaires and interviews. As they play a crucial supportive role during travel, understanding their experiences is vital for capturing the emotional and physical demands they face, as well as their perceptions of existing accessibility measures. Including their voices will offer further insight into the social aspects of accessible tourism,

revealing how travel environments influence not only the well-being of tourists with reduced mobility but also that of those who assist them. This layer of data collection will enrich the study, helping to paint a more holistic picture of how accessible tourism experiences affect the emotional and social well-being of both tourists and their support networks. Finally, the perspectives of local populations in tourism destinations will be investigated. Through interviews and surveys, hospitality staff, tourism service providers, and residents will be asked about their awareness of accessibility challenges and the role they play in shaping inclusive tourism environments. Understanding their viewpoints will reveal the extent to which accessibility is perceived as a shared responsibility and how social dynamics influence the emotional well-being of TwRM. Additionally, this data will help assess the cultural and societal factors that may either support or prevent inclusive practices. By incorporating these diverse perspectives into the data collection process, the research will adopt a multifaceted approach to understanding the interplay between accessibility and well-being. Gathering input from industry professionals, carers, companions, and local communities will provide richer data to support or challenge the research hypotheses and offer a more comprehensive answer to the research question. These additional viewpoints will not only deepen the analysis but also help identify practical avenues for improving accessible tourism practices, ultimately enhancing the well-being of TwRM.

7.4. Access the tourists with reduced mobility and their carers

Having defined the field of study and identified the key populations for this research, the next step is to determine the most effective strategies for accessing these groups. To begin with the primary focus population of PRM, reaching a sufficiently large and diverse sample of TwRM, across various ages, genders, and socio-economic backgrounds, presents a challenge, particularly as participants must not only be found but also willing to share their experiences. Random encounters in public spaces would be neither practical nor efficient, making a more targeted approach essential. One primary channel for engaging with this population is through associations dedicated to supporting people with reduced mobility or disabilities more broadly. Organisations such as *APF France Handicap* and *Unapei* offer networks of individuals who may be open to participating in interviews or completing surveys, given their personal connection to the

subject. Additionally, associations specifically focused on accessible tourism, like *Handiplage* and *Tourisme & Handicaps*, could provide access to individuals with firsthand experience of travelling with reduced mobility. Collaborating with these associations not only facilitates contact with potential participants but also increases the likelihood of obtaining diverse perspectives. Furthermore, these networks may offer the opportunity to reach carers or companions, whose insights could enrich the research by shedding light on additional dimensions of well-being during travel. Another potential avenue is engaging with travel agencies that specialise in organising trips for PRM, such as *YOOLA*, *mobee travel*, and *Behandi*. While these agencies cater directly to the target population, access to their client base may prove more difficult due to privacy regulations and commercial interests. Nonetheless, these agencies could serve as valuable intermediaries, potentially promoting the research through their communication channels or providing broader context regarding the travel experiences of their clientele. Ultimately, associations appear to be the most promising route for reaching TwRM, as their members are often motivated by a shared desire to improve accessibility and well-being, aligning closely with the objectives of this thesis. Engaging with these communities through emails, phone calls or direct visits not only offers access to a broader and more diverse range of participants but also ensures that the research is grounded in authentic experiences, therefore enhancing the validity of the findings and providing rich data to explore the research questions and test the proposed hypotheses.

7.5. Access the professionals and local communities

Reaching the professionals and local communities relevant to this study presents its own set of challenges, necessitating diverse strategies to ensure meaningful data collection. Engaging tourism industry professionals is crucial for understanding how accessibility impacts the well-being of TwRM. Specialised travel agencies catering to this demographic are valuable points of contact, as their staff frequently navigates accessibility issues and may offer insights into their clients' experiences. Beyond these niche agencies, it would be beneficial to interview a broader range of professionals connected to tourism, including general travel agencies, tourism activity providers, hospitality staff, and restaurant personnel. Understanding whether accessibility and the well-being of TwRM are considered in their practices could offer nuanced perspectives

on industry awareness and preparedness. Contact methods could include emails, phone calls, or in-person visits, ensuring a flexible and responsive approach to hopefully conduct interviews. Local residents in popular tourist destinations can also provide valuable insight into the social dimension of accessibility, shedding light on the community's perception of inclusive tourism and its effects on local life. However, engaging this group poses challenges, as community members may be less inclined to dedicate time to surveys or interviews. To improve response rates, reaching out to neighbourhood councils or local representatives via email or phone could help build trust and legitimacy. Additionally, distributing letters or surveys directly to residents' addresses may extend the outreach, though a higher rate of non-response should be anticipated. In sum, accessing professionals and local communities requires targeted outreach strategies tailored to each group's context. Gaining their perspectives is essential to broadening the understanding of how accessibility in tourism impacts the well-being of individuals with reduced mobility, from both service provider and societal viewpoints.

The development of a clear and structured methodology for surveying diverse populations using multiple data collection methods provides a solid foundation for this Master 2 thesis. It ensures that the research process is well-organised, allowing for the collection of meaningful data that will support a deeper understanding of how accessibility in tourism influences the well-being of tourists with reduced mobility.

Conclusion

This thesis has sought to establish a strong foundation for the study of accessible tourism and its influence on the well-being of people with reduced mobility. Through an extensive literature review, the formulation of a research question, and the development of hypotheses and methodology, this work has prepared the ground for the empirical research to be conducted in the second year of the dissertation. The central research question “*How does accessible tourism influence the well-being of people with reduced mobility?*” aims to explore an area that, while not entirely new, remains underdeveloped compared to other aspects of accessible tourism studies. Despite the extensive research already conducted on accessible tourism, this thesis contributes to the field by emphasising the well-being dimension, an angle that has received comparatively less attention. Furthermore, its focus on France, and more specifically on Toulouse, offers a fresh perspective within the national and local contexts. The production of primary data will also serve as a meaningful addition to existing literature, as first-hand accounts from tourists with reduced mobility will provide direct insight into their experiences and needs.

Critically assessing the work carried out, the literature review has proven to be comprehensive, incorporating a wide range of sources and covering various relevant topics. The broad scope of the research question allows for an in-depth exploration of multiple aspects of accessible tourism and well-being. However, some challenges have emerged in formulating hypotheses. Certain hypotheses, such as *Improving the well-being of tourists with reduced mobility not only enhances their individual experience but also brings broader social and economic benefits*, may be difficult to evaluate due to the complexity of measuring such impacts in a quantifiable way. The theoretical model chosen to frame this research, the PERMA model, provides a solid analytical structure for assessing well-being in the context of tourism and disability. While it is not the most intricate or exhaustive model available, this serves both as a limitation and an advantage. On one hand, a more complex model could provide deeper insights; on the other hand, the relative simplicity of the chosen framework ensures that the research remains accessible and manageable, preventing excessive theoretical complexity from becoming a barrier to practical analysis. Another challenge encountered in the realisation of this thesis has been time management. Balancing this research with other academic projects

throughout the year has made the process demanding. Nonetheless, the progress achieved lays a structured and coherent groundwork for the continuation of the dissertation.

Looking ahead to the second year, the next phase of the research will involve conducting empirical studies to test the formulated hypotheses and answer the research question. The first steps will include designing precise questionnaires and interview questions, establishing contact with disability associations to organise interviews, and carrying out data collection. Following this, the results will be transcribed, analysed, and interpreted to determine whether they align with the initial hypotheses and contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between accessible tourism and well-being. By bridging theoretical insights with empirical findings, the continuation of this research will not only validate or challenge the assumptions made but also provide practical recommendations for enhancing the accessibility and inclusivity of tourism experiences. Ultimately, this work aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the role accessibility plays in the well-being of tourists with reduced mobility, offering meaningful insights for researchers, policymakers, and industry professionals alike.

Annexes

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Table of acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym or abbreviation	Meaning
WHO	World Health Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
CRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
PwD	People with Disabilities
PRM	People with Reduced Mobility
TwRM	Tourists with Reduced Mobility
PERMA	Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment

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Résumé

Malgré les avancées législatives, le tourisme reste largement inaccessible aux personnes à mobilité réduite, limitant leurs opportunités de loisirs et leur participation sociale. Ce mémoire explore l'impact du tourisme accessible sur leur bien-être, en dépassant la seule question de l'accès physique pour en analyser les dimensions sociales, économiques et psychologiques. Si les lois sur l'accessibilité ont permis d'améliorer infrastructures et services, des obstacles persistent. Cela souligne l'importance d'aller au-delà de la simple conformité aux normes pour intégrer des critères d'ergonomie et de confort d'usage. La question de recherche structure cette étude, qui s'appuie sur plusieurs hypothèses. Une méthodologie rigoureuse, fondée sur des questionnaires et des entretiens menés à Toulouse permettra de recueillir des données primaires. En intégrant la notion de bien-être aux recherches sur le tourisme accessible, ce travail apporte un éclairage nouveau sur le contexte français et ouvre des perspectives inédites.

Mots-clés : Personnes à Mobilité Réduite – Droits des personnes en situation de handicap - Tourisme accessible – Bien être

Summary

Despite legal advancements, tourism remains inaccessible for many people with reduced mobility, limiting their opportunities for leisure and social participation. This thesis examines how accessible tourism influences their well-being, moving beyond physical access to explore its social, economic, and psychological impacts. While accessibility laws have improved infrastructure and services, barriers persist, highlighting the need to consider usability and comfort. The research question guides the study, with hypotheses addressing tourism's role in well-being, the limitations of barrier-free environments, and the potential of technology to enhance experiences. A comprehensive methodology has been developed, focusing on questionnaires and interviews in Toulouse, France, to gather primary data. This work contributes by integrating well-being into accessible tourism research and offering new perspectives on the French context.

Key words: People with Reduced Mobility – Disability rights - Accessible tourism – Well being