



UNWTO WTD - September 27th, 2016

14:45h - 15:00h

**Keynote Speech On How The Media Can Help To Advocate
Accessible Tourism**

H.E. Mrs Kob-karn, the beautiful Minister of Tourism and Sports, Thailand

Mr. Xu Jing, Director Regional Programme for Asia and the Pacific, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

Mr. Pong-panu Sveta-rundra, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Sport, Thailand

Honourable Ministers

Mr David Scowsill, President and CEO of the WTTC

Mr. Mario Hardy, CEO of Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA)

Leaders from across the global Tourism and Media community

Colleagues, friends

Mr Andrew Stevens, CNN International

Ladies and gentlemen

SA WA DEE KRAB

All protocols observed

My name is Anita Mendiratta it is my honour and pleasure to deliver the keynote this afternoon on **How The Media Can Help To Advocate Accessible Tourism.**

The purpose of my address today is to provide a capture of the messaging that emerged out of yesterday's *'Workshop on Tourism & The Media'*.



Yesterday over 100 people from across the media and tourism industry, as well as students – the future of our sector - came together at the lovely Chulalongkorn University for a WTD pre-session to discuss, directly and practically, how to ensure the media can indeed help to advocate accessible tourism.

As said by the Hon. Minister of Tourism & Sport of Thailand, the workshop was the start of the duty to 'take action' to 'make a change' to unlock Thailand, and the world, with a commitment to Tourism For All.

To set the scene, and looking at the roots of the concept:

Firstly, what exactly defines 'accessibility'?

By textbook definition, **accessibility** refers to *the design of products, devices, services, or environments for people who experience disabilities.*

What do we mean by the term 'disability'?

Disability is defined as *'an impairment that may be physical, cognitive, intellectual, mental, sensory, developmental, or some combination of these that results in restrictions on an individual's ability to participate in what is considered "normal" in their everyday society.'*

As shared by the UNWTO:

- 15% of the world's population is estimated to live with some form of disability.
- That is 1 billion people worldwide who may be prevented from enjoying the gift of experiencing new places, cultures, people and natural environments because they face obstacles in accessing fundamentals of travel
- This includes those living with disability, young children, seniors, and persons with other access requirements
- Accessibility, Tourism For All, is an important market opportunity. As shared by Ivor yesterday, the demand for accessible tourism is only set to grow, reaching 862 million by 2020, and with each accessible traveller, an average of 2.2 people travel with them, each accessible traveller spending more time in-travel, and spending more money in-destination. In Europe alone, accessible tourism supports 9 million jobs.
- Innately, accessible tourism is rightly central to responsible and sustainable tourism policies and business development strategies.

So, ladies and gentlemen,



with this in mind, knowing that responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism is a core responsibility of the global tourism community, what is the role of the Media?

Many may ask, what does the media have to do with this?

Information and inspiration around the tourism sector, the world's fastest growing economic sector and a true force for good at social, economic, environmental, cultural and spiritual levels?

Absolutely.

Appreciation of the ways in which the tourism sector can and must ensure that the great gift of our world as a place for discovery by all people wishing to travel the world, and all people wishing to invite the world to visit, is truly accessible and equitable for all?

No question about it.

The media, like no other industry, has a unique ability to reach their world with critical messages of thought leaders and decision makers, mobilizing literally hundreds millions in a single moment.

For example, with over 426 million households and hotel rooms reached by CNN each day, not to mention the hundreds of millions reached through CNN.COM, CNN on Twitter and other social media platforms, and through CNN's global affiliate platforms, one single message has the ability to reach the world in a single moment.

These numbers are grown exponentially when you combine the total global media community, traditional and non-traditional media.

The media is, therefore, the world's messenger with the power to convey the world's messages.

However, Ladies and Gentlemen, as the truism goes, with great power comes great responsibility.

The media, with its reach and, in most cases, credibility, absolutely has the ability to highlight the need for the tourism sector to ensure that:

- products,
- services,
- experience offerings,
- information,
- innovation and



- opportunity creation

recognise and embrace principles of genuine, *'for-all'* accessibility through the supply chain, through the visitor experience from arrival to departure?

But it does not end there.

In addition to the media having a role in ensuring global awareness and appreciation of the need for physical accessibility into and around destinations,

as, if not more importantly,

the media has a critical role to play in enabling Psychological accessibility.

The investment into information and infrastructure is the output of the presence of what is at the heart of accessible travel - respect and appreciation of travellers with needs.

This is where the media has a profound, invaluable role to play.

It is the media that is able to put the spotlight on critical issues of the day.

It is the media than can, and must, share with the world the stories of the over 1 billion people around the world with a desire to travel the world, who just happen to have accessibility needs.

It is the media that can, and must, use its power to:

1. build understanding, appreciation, and respect of the global tourism industry, and global community at large,
2. sensitise, the global community at large:
 - inside the industry and outside,
 - travellers with needs
 - all travellers, and
 - governments
3. inspiring action to do more, to be more

At the heat of the power of the Media? Language.

Through the media,:

- 'them' becomes 'us'



- 'challenges' becomes 'opportunities'
- 'sensationalised' becomes 'humanised'
- 'compliance' becomes 'compassion & cooperation'
- 'statistics' becomes 'stories'

Because the reality is that: the need for accessibility can, and will, enter all of our lives, some day. It may be by birth. It may be by accident. It may be through the passing of time.

The Media is an essential stakeholder in the global tourism community, and a vital advocate of the need for Accessible Tourism – for Inclusive Tourism.

It is through the media – global, local, traditional, social, digital - whatever the platform or brand may be, that the world is able to understand accessible tourism as a not stats and stereotypes, but as citizens with the same dream to travel, the same desire to learn and explore and grow, as each and every one of us here today.

That starts with respect and rightful appreciation – psychological accessibility embedding the need for the world to caringly hold the door open when inviting the world to visit.

Kob Khun Ka – I thank you.