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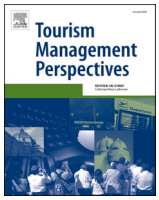

Disability representation in adventure tourism: An evaluation of activity provider websites in Eryri National Park, Wales

Nigel Halpern [a,*], Marcus Hansen [b], Brian Garrod [c], Jillian Rickly [d]

[a] School of Communication, Leadership and Marketing, Kristiania University of Applied Sciences, Kirkegata 24-26, 0153 Oslo, Norway
[b] Liverpool Business School, Liverpool John Moores University, Egerton Court, 2 Rodney Street, Liverpool, L1 2UA, UK
[c] School of Management, Swansea University, Bay Campus, Fabian Way, Swansea, SA1 8EN, UK
[d] Nottingham University Business School, University of Nottingham, Wollaton Road, NG8 1BB, UK

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ABSTRACT

Participation in adventure tourism can benefit disabled individuals, yet engagement may be hindered by inadequate representation in media content from providers. This study uses content analysis to investigate disability representation on the websites of 69 adventure activity providers in/around Eryri National Park, Wales. The analysis covers over 88,000 audio/visual items and two million words of text. Findings reveal a low proportion of disability representation. Common stereotypes are generally avoided but there remains room for greater diversity. Disability-related content is largely segregated from mainstream narratives. Overall, the study highlights aesthetic and structural marginalisation, and advocates for transformative inclusion, recommending enhanced audio/visual representation, integration of accessibility information into mainstream narratives, use of inclusive language and symbols, development of inclusive workforce practices, stakeholder collaboration, emphasis on empowerment over risk management, and setting measurable goals. Although focused on Eryri National Park, the findings offer insights for destinations seeking to improve inclusivity in adventure tourism.

1. Introduction

Adventure tourism, as defined by UN Tourism (2025), involves participants engaging in physical activity and/or cultural exchanges, often in natural settings. Historically, this form of tourism was reserved for explorers and pioneers, but it has since become commercialised and widely available (Buckley, 2012; Cloke & Perkins, 2002; Janowski, Gardiner, & Kwek, 2021). According to the Adventure Travel Trade Association (2024), the most popular physical activities in adventure tourism are hiking, trekking, walking, cycling, climbing, kayaking, canoeing, snorkelling, rafting, horse riding, and running. These activities vary in terms of commitment, required skills, and perceived risk (Gross & Sand, 2020; Huddart & Stott, 2020; Wang, Lyons, & Young, 2024). They can therefore accommodate people with a wide range of abilities and, by extension, disabilities.

While the UN Tourism definition includes cultural exchanges, this study focuses on the physical activities' aspect of adventure tourism. Disabled people are likely to be less physically active than non-disabled people, increasing their risk of ill health (Carr, Atkin, & Milton, 2024). Participation in physical activities can, however, offer significant benefits for disabled people such as enhanced social participation, independence, and personal and social rehabilitation (Goodwin, Peco, & Ginther, 2009; James, Shing, Mortenson, Mattie, & Borisoff, 2018; Martin, 2013; Mavritsakis, Treschow, Labbé, Bethune, & Miller, 2021; Merrick et al., 2021). Indeed, "[physical activity] is arguably more important for people with disabilities relative to people without disabilities although they are quite inactive" (Martin, 2013, p. 2030). More broadly, adventure tourism has been linked to improved wellbeing and quality of life for participants (Buckley, 2021; Gardiner, Janowski, & Kwek, 2023; Janowski et al., 2021; Mackenzie, Hodge, & Filep, 2023).

As Goodnow and Chmielewski (2025), p. 461) assert, "While not every single adventure tour is for everyone, adventure travel *is* for everyone", and there is no reason why disabled people should not be interested in partaking in adventure tourism activities. Carr et al. (2024) found that many disabled people wish to be more physically active, while Chikuta, du Plessis, and Saayman (2019) found that disabled people are equally motivated to engage with nature as non-disabled people, seeking to escape everyday life, pursue personal development,

* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: nigel.halpern@kristiania.no (N. Halpern), M.H.Hansen@ljmu.ac.uk (M. Hansen), Brian.Garrod@Swansea.ac.uk (B. Garrod), Jillian.Rickly@nottingham.ac.uk (J. Rickly).

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and socialise.

However, disabled people participate in adventure tourism activities less frequently than non-disabled people (Kastenholz, Eusébio, & Figueiredo, 2015; Kelly, 2022; Williams, Vogelsong, Green, & Cordell, 2004). This results in missed opportunities for both disabled people and activity providers given the significant spending power of disabled people and their families. In the UK, where this study has been carried out, over one in five people are disabled, with a combined spending power of £274 billion (GOV.UK, 2021a). In 2023 alone, inbound visitors with a health condition or impairment contributed approximately £624 million to the tourism economy of the UK (Office for National Statistics, 2024).

The lower participation rate among disabled people can be due to a range of constraints that have been categorised as being attitudinal (i.e., societal and cultural biases that marginalise individuals), informational (i.e., the absence of suitable, readily available information and communications), and physical (i.e., elements that hinder or obstruct accessibility) (Randle & Dolnicar, 2019). Previous research has recognised how such constraints affect the participation of disabled people in physical activities that are popular in adventure tourism (Bodde & Seo, 2009; Jaarsma, Haslett, & Smith, 2019; Martin, 2013; Rimmer, Riley, Wang, Rauworth, & Jurkowski, 2004; Stumbo & Pegg, 2004; Uçar, Yıldızer, & Yılmaz, 2023; Wilson, Longo, Ma, & Bulut, 2024), and these constraints can lead to uncertainty about being welcomed, sufficiently informed, or able to fully participate in tourism experiences (Carr et al., 2024; Garrod & Fennell, 2023; Goodnow & Chmielewski, 2025; McKercher & Darcy, 2018). This uncertainty may be exacerbated by inadequate disability representation in the media content used by tourism providers, which plays a crucial role in the tourism customer journey, particularly when individuals are seeking inspiration and information (Halpern, 2025).

Disability representation is an epistemological process shaped by media content, as well as by prior knowledge and cultural norms, that often reinforces ableist assumptions (Johanssen & Garrisi, 2020). Visibility plays a major role in the framing of disability representation. For instance, in adventure tourism, many non-disabled customers see people like them reflected in media content, with numerous activity options available. However, disabled people rarely see themselves represented, leading to concerns about their needs being met, their comfort, and their safety (Kelly, 2022). Visibility alone is insufficient, however, without meaningful portrayal and inclusive practices, which also help to frame disability representation (Johanssen & Garrisi, 2020).

In this context, disability representation includes the presence of disability-related content (visibility), the nature of its depiction (portrayal), and the extent to which it is integrated into mainstream narratives (inclusive practices), aligning with broader definitions of marketing representation as the fair and proportional coverage of diverse groups (Campbell, Sands, McFerran, & Mavrommatis, 2025).

Representation is especially important on websites because they typically serve as the primary interface between tourism actors such as adventure activity providers and potential customers (Maurer, 2021). Far more than information tools, websites function as strategic marketing platforms (Domínguez Vila, Alén González, & Darcy, 2020), and the way disabled people are, or are not, represented on them directly influences their sense of inclusion and likelihood of participation (Domínguez Vila, Rubio-Escuderos, & Alén González, 2024). They are particularly influential, being the most frequently used source of inspiration and information for disabled travellers after word-of-mouth recommendations (Ray & Ryder, 2003; Zajadacz, 2014). As such, disability representation in tourism is significantly shaped by the content conveyed on these platforms.

Given this context, the present study aims to investigate disability representation on the websites of adventure tourism activity providers operating in and around Eryri National Park in Wales. Eryri is the largest national park in Wales and attracts nearly four million visitors annually (Eryri National Park, 2025). Promoted as the Adventure Capital of the UK (Visit Snowdonia, 2025), the park offers a rich context for examining disability representation in adventure tourism.

Utilising the park as a contextual framework enables a destination-level approach, which is essential for fostering meaningful progress in inclusive tourism, but addressing inclusivity at this scale, requires collective efforts (Connell & Page, 2019; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020), with destinations playing a pivotal role in collaboration with activity providers and other stakeholders. These entities act as key enablers of change, driving advancements in inclusivity within the adventure tourism sector (Nyanjom, Boxall, & Slaven, 2018; Sisto, Cappelletti, Bianchi, & Sica, 2022).

In view of the foregoing discussion, the research presented in this paper seeks to address the following questions, each pertaining respectively to visibility, portrayals, and inclusive practices:

1. To what extent is disability visibly represented on the websites of adventure tourism activity providers in and around Eryri National Park, and in what types of content do these representations appear?

2. How is disability portrayed across different types of website content used by adventure tourism activity providers in and around Eryri National Park?

3. To what degree do the different types of website content used by adventure tourism activity providers in and around Eryri National Park reflect inclusive practices, particularly in terms of integrating disability into mainstream narratives?

By addressing these questions, the study contributes to the literature on inclusive tourism and offers practical insights for improving disability representation at the destination level. Unlike previous studies that focus on single or several items of content (Benjamin, Bottone, & Lee, 2021; Cloquet, Palomino, Shaw, Stephen, & Taylor, 2018; Fennell & Garrod, 2022; Rita & António, 2020; Rydzik, Agapito, & Lenton, 2021), this study evaluates all types of content: photos, pictures, icons, logos, videos, podcasts, and text.

This study considers all forms of disability, acknowledging that not all disabilities are visible (Hendry, Wilson, Orr, & Scullion, 2022; Ysasi, Becton, & Chen, 2018). Representation impacts other underrepresented communities, including those with intersecting identities such as race, gender, and sexual orientation (Abdeahad & Lindsay, 2025; Acker-Verney, 2016; Aspler, Harding, & Cascio, 2022; Vo, 2023). While these broader considerations would provide a more comprehensive reflection of diversity within the disabled community, intersectionality is beyond the scope of this study.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: the next section reviews relevant theoretical foundations and literature on disability representation in tourism. This is followed by a description of the study area and selected companies, and the approach to data collection and analysis. The findings are then presented, followed by a discussion and conclusion.

2. Disability representation in tourism

2.1. Theoretical foundations

Disability representation in tourism must be understood within the broader context of disability studies, a key feature of which is the shift from a medical to a social model of disability (Garrod et al., 2025). The medical model of disability views disability as an impairment within an individual. The social model is often proposed in its place, argueing that disability arises not from individual impairments but from societal constraints such as attitudinal, informational, and physical constraints (Randle & Dolnicar, 2019), which exclude and marginalise disabled people (Haegele & Hodge, 2016), including those who wish to participate in adventure tourism (Goodnow & Chmielewski, 2025). This

contrasts with the medical model, which frames disability as a personal tragedy or deficit to be treated or overcome (Haegele & Hodge, 2016). A growing body of literature reinforces this perspective, emphasising the need for inclusive tourism practices that address systemic constraints rather than individual limitations (Accordino, Coppolino, & La Rocca, 2022; McKercher & Darcy, 2018; Portales, 2015).

Following on from this, Siebers' (2008) theory of disability aesthetics argues that disabled bodies are systematically excluded from visual culture because they challenge not only dominant ideals of beauty but also other aspects such as ability and desirability. Disability representation is, therefore, not just a matter of inclusion but of confronting deep-seated cultural norms. Similarly, Olkin (2002) critiques the absence of disability from diversity discourses, noting that disabled people are often left out of conversations about equity and inclusion.

The following sub-sections build on these foundations by examining three dimensions of disability representation: visibility, portrayals, and inclusive practices. Together, these dimensions reflect the core concerns of this study and directly inform the research questions, which explore the extent, nature, and integration of disability representation on the websites of adventure tourism activity providers in and around Eryri National Park.

2.2. Visibility of disability representation in tourism

In this study, visibility refers to the extent to which disabled people are seen on the websites of adventure tourism activity providers. As mentioned in the introduction, visibility is important in adventure tourism because seeing oneself reflected in the media content of activity providers can influence perceptions of safety, comfort, and belonging (Carr et al., 2024; Kelly, 2022). Moreover, the limited visibility of disabled people in media content can perpetuate psycho-emotional disablism, reinforcing perceptions that such experiences are not meant for them (Burns, Watson, & Paterson, 2013). However, disabled people remain significantly underrepresented when it comes to visibility in tourism, a trend documented across multiple studies.

Benjamin et al. (2021) found only 12 disability-related photos among 9427 photos in 211 U.S. tourism brochures; Cloquet et al. (2018) found no disability-related photos in brochures and only six photos and one video across 175 websites of visitor attractions in Cornwall, England; Fennell and Garrod (2022) found only one disability-related logo among all logos on the home pages of 100 certified ecotourism provider websites in Australia and noted that only one of these websites provided alternative text for images, which is essential for screen-reader accessibility; Rita and António (2020) found only two disability-related photos among 11,175 photos in 109 brochures of European destination marketing organisations – both disability-related photos were related to the promotion of medical tourism, reflecting the medical model of disability; Rydzik et al. (2021) found no disability-related photos among 671 photos in a 16-year run of tourism brochures from a UK-based wedding tour operator.

The findings of these studies point to a pervasive trend of excluding disabled people from visual narratives in tourism that requires further investigation in different geographic locations and sectors of the tourism industry, which is addressed by this study. Furthermore, as the five studies only looked at photos, logos, and one video, further investigation is needed across a diversity of audio/visual, as well as textual content such as is provided by this study.

Addressing this lack of visibility is important not only for promoting diversity and inclusivity but also for ensuring that adventure tourism meets the needs of all potential customers. By improving the representation of disabled individuals, adventure tourism activity providers can foster a more inclusive environment that acknowledges and respects the diverse experiences and requirements of all travellers.

2.3. Portrayals of disability representation in tourism

While visibility is essential, it is equally important to consider how disabled people are portrayed in adventure tourism, as visibility without meaningful portrayal risks reinforcing stereotypes rather than promoting inclusion. Stereotypes are oversimplified and widely held beliefs or assumptions about groups of people (Kanahara, 2006). They often reduce individuals to fixed characteristics, overlooking the diversity and complexity of their lived experiences. Additionally, they reflect how groups behave toward other groups, known as directed stereotypes (Sng, Choi, Williams, & Neel, 2025). In the context of disability, directed stereotypes reflect public perceptions and influence how disabled individuals are treated, represented, and included in society (Santuzzi & Cook, 2020).

Two dominant stereotypes have been identified in tourism media content (Halpern, Rickly, Hansen, & Garrod, 2024), as well as in other media content such as online news (Svastics, Petri, Kozma, & Bernát, 2025): (1) the hero, where disabled people are portrayed as inspirational figures who overcome adversity through extraordinary effort – these portrayals often focus on achievements in challenging environments, framing disability as something to be conquered; (2) the victim, where disabled people are depicted as passive recipients of help, dependent on others to participate in activities – this narrative emphasises limitations and reinforces the idea that disabled people are inherently vulnerable or incapable.

Although often well-intentioned, both stereotypes are problematic because they portray disability as a deviation from the norm, reinforcing the notion that disabled people must either transcend their condition or be pitied. This perspective compounds existing inequalities by framing disability as a problem to overcome, failing to reflect real-life experiences, and making it difficult for people to relate to them (Halpern et al., 2024).

More inclusive portrayals challenge these narratives by showing disabled people participating on equal terms with non-disabled people (Cloquet et al., 2018). This includes engaging in standard activities, being represented as leaders or providers (not just consumers), and being depicted in everyday scenarios. Such portrayals communicate integration and normalisation, helping to dismantle ableist assumptions and promote a more equitable tourism landscape (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020).

However, diversity within portrayals remains limited. Most visual representations focus on wheelchair users, with little attention given to non-visible or less-visible disabilities such as neurodivergence, sensory impairments, or mental health conditions, which are challenging to represent due to the less visible nature of them. For instance, of the 12 photos found by Benjamin et al. (2021), six featured a wheelchair user, five featured people using white canes, and one featured an unoccupied wheelchair, which could be criticised for depersonalising disability. The six photos and one video found by Cloquet et al. (2018) mainly featured people using a wheelchair or mobility scooter.

Lack of diversity is also often present in symbols used to represent disabilities, with the prevailing image being of a wheelchair (United Nations Development Programme, 2023). Textual content often mirrors this narrow focus, with limited references to the diversity of disabilities (Fennell & Garrod, 2022). Such disparities can lead to a narrow portrayal of disability that fails to capture the full spectrum of the lived experiences of disabled people (Downey, 2025).

To move beyond stereotypes and reflect a greater degree of diversity, tourism actors need to adopt a more nuanced and representative approach that reflects the full spectrum of lived experiences of disability and promotes genuine inclusion (Benjamin et al., 2021). By embracing diverse and realistic portrayals, the tourism industry can contribute to a more inclusive society, where disabled and other marginalised individuals are recognised and valued for their unique contributions and experiences (Chen & Hsu, 2021; Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018).

2.4. Inclusive practices regarding disability representation in tourism

Inclusive practices refer to the ways in which disabled people are meaningfully integrated into mainstream narratives, rather than being treated as an exception or afterthought. This includes how accessibility is communicated, how disabled people are represented in both visual and textual content, and how tourism providers engage with disability as part of their mainstream offering (Benjamin et al., 2021; Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018).

One of the most common forms of inclusion is textual representation, which often exceeds audio/visual representation in volume but not necessarily in impact. For instance, studies have shown that disability is more likely to be mentioned in terms of facilities, such as accessible toilets, parking, or ramps, than in descriptions of the tourism experience itself (Benjamin et al., 2021; Cloquet et al., 2018). This suggests a tendency toward compliance-based messaging, where accessibility is framed as a legal or logistical requirement rather than a value-driven commitment to inclusion.

Moreover, accessibility information might be siloed in separate sections of websites, rather than embedded within general activity descriptions. This structural underrepresentation reinforces the idea that disabled people are not part of the mainstream tourism audience (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020). It also limits the visibility of inclusive practices, making it harder for disabled travellers to identify opportunities for participation.

Inclusive practices also involve the use of appropriate language, which can convey positive rather than negative messages and emphasise abilities as opposed to limitations. Benjamin et al. (2021), however, found that the language in tourism brochures was often negative and incorporated outdated terminology when referring to disability. This is despite readily available guidance regarding language. This is a UK-based study and guidelines from the UK government regarding words to avoid and use when communicating with or about disabled people are provided in Table 1.

Source: Adapted from GOV.UK (2021b).

There are, however, several areas of debate when it comes to language, especially regarding whether to use person-first or identity-first language (Andrews, Powell, & Ayers, 2022; Ferrigon & Tucker, 2019; Gillovic, McIntosh, Darcy, & Cockburn-Wootten, 2018; Grech, Koller, & Olley, 2024; Halpern et al., 2024; Halpern, Garrod, Hansen, & Rickly, 2025). Person-first language (i.e., 'people with disabilities') follows the United Nation's rights-based approach (United Nations, 2021), while identity-first language (i.e., 'disabled people') follows the UK's social model approach (GOV.UK, 2021c). In their analysis of 122 journal articles and book chapters on accessible tourism, Gillovic et al. (2018) found that 63 % of them used 'people with disabilities' as a descriptor at least once, while 25 % used 'disabled people'. As a result of differences of opinion on this and other terminology, several studies make a point of highlighting their choices, depending on the norms of the country in which their study is conducted or the preferences of any charities they have collaborated with (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015; Goodall, Pottinger, Dixon, & Russell, 2004; Harpur, 2012; Rickly, Halpern, Hansen, & Welsman, 2022).

In this paper, identity-first language is predominantly used, which is fitting given that it is a UK-based study. As discussed by Halpern et al. (2025), identity-first language suggests that societal barriers, rather than an individual's impairment, are disabling. Conversely, person-first language primarily defines individuals in relation to their disability, aligning more closely with the medical model. However, person-first language can also serve to prioritise the individual over their disability. Both approaches are suitable for general communication about disabled people and emphasise the importance of considering individual preferences whenever possible, but it does highlight a challenge for tourism, especially international tourism, as travellers from different countries may encounter varying language approaches that affect their sense of inclusion.

Beyond content, inclusive practices extend to the organisational level, including staff training, collaboration with disability organisations and other stakeholders, and the employment of disabled people in tourism roles. These practices help ensure that inclusion is not just symbolic but embedded in the culture and operations of tourism providers (Bellucci, Biggeri, Nitti, & Terenzi, 2023; Lu, Moyle, Yang, & Reid, 2024).

Ultimately, inclusive communication is about more than accessibility; it is about belonging. When disabled people see themselves reflected in the media content of adventure tourism activity providers, realistically portrayed, and included in mainstream narratives, it is likely to foster confidence, encourage participation, and signal that adventure tourism is truly for everyone.

Table 1
Words to avoid and use when communicating with or about disabled people.

Avoid	Use
The disabled	Disabled [people, persons, riders, visitors, customers, clients] People/persons with disabilities
The blind, the deaf	People/persons with [name of condition or impairment]
Suffer/suffered/suffering from	Has [name of condition or impairment]
Confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound	Wheelchair user
Cripple, invalid	Disabled person
Mentally handicapped, mentally defective, retarded, subnormal	Learning difficulties
Able-bodied	Non-disabled
Diabetic	Person with/someone who has diabetes
Epileptic	Person with/someone who has epilepsy
Depressive	Person with/someone who has depression
Spastic	Person with cerebral palsy

3. Methodology

3.1. Study area and selected companies

This study focuses on adventure tourism activity providers operating in and around Eryri National Park. Eryri is the largest national park in Wales, covering 1424 km^2. It has 119 km of coastline and nine mountain ranges, including the highest mountain in Wales (Yr Wyddfa). The park is home to over 26,000 people and nearly four million people visit the park each year (Eryri National Park, 2025). Visit Snowdonia, the official website for the destination, promotes Eryri National Park as the adventure capital of the UK, with a wide range of activities and outdoor opportunities (Visit Snowdonia, 2025). It therefore provides a good choice of context for the study.

Companies included in the study are those that offer activity-based experiences for tourists in an outdoor setting. A list of 90 activity providers was taken from Visit Snowdonia's website. Twenty-one companies on that list were excluded for the following reasons: ceased operations before or during the collection of data; shops with very little involvement in outdoor activities; indoor centres; local clubs with little or no provision for tourists.

Sixty-nine companies were included in the study. All were located in or close to the park (Fig. 1). Forty-nine only offered activities in the National Park, 14 also offered activities in other parts of the UK, six also offered activities abroad. Regarding target audiences, 57 targeted individuals, 52 groups, 36 families, 25 schools, 19 corporate groups, 14 celebrations/parties, 11 events, six charities, and three schools for children with special educational needs and disabilities. One company was an accessible adventure tourism specialist, offering accessible outdoor activities and adventure therapy, mainly for families and other groups. Activities offered by companies in the study are listed in Table 2.

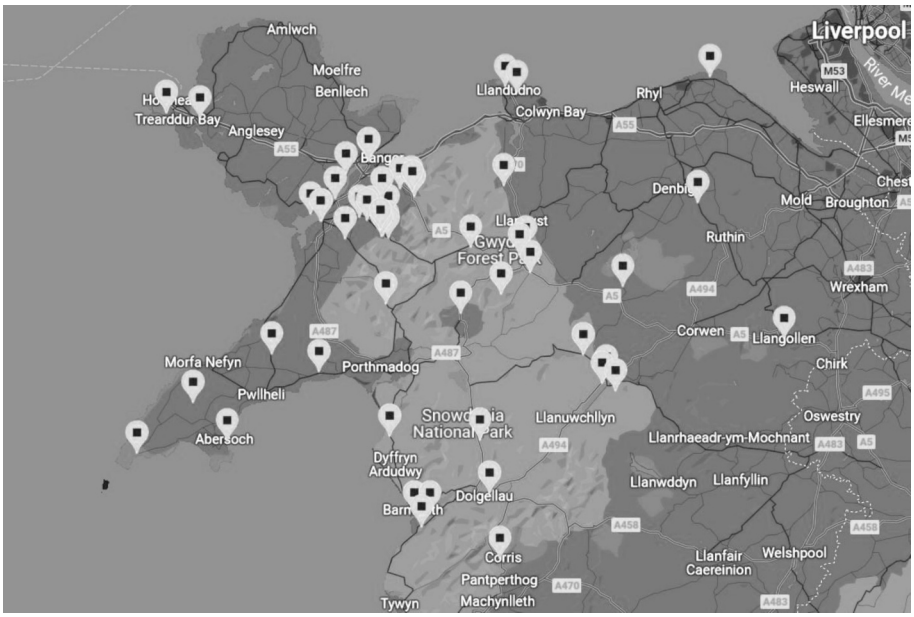

Fig. 1. Location of companies in the study.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

The study adopts a destination-scale, content-analysis approach, which is appropriate for evaluating how tourism providers collectively represent disability within the defined geographic area. This aligns with calls in the literature to address accessibility and inclusion at the destination level, where coordinated efforts among stakeholders can drive systemic change (Connell & Page, 2019; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020).

The unit of analysis is the website content of adventure tourism activity providers, including photos, pictures, icons, logos, videos, podcasts, and text. Websites were selected as the primary data source because they are a key channel through which tourism providers communicate with potential customers, and they significantly influence perceptions of inclusion (Halpern et al., 2024). In addition, the internet is the most frequently used source of tourism information for disabled travellers after word-of-mouth (Ray & Ryder, 2003; Zajadacz, 2014).

The content analysis followed guidelines, especially those regarding units of analysis, inter-coding reliability, and coding schemes outlined by Krippendorff (2018) and Neuendorf (2017). This meant that a systematic approach was taken to measuring and analysing the content so that inferences can be drawn from it and its meaning can be understood.

Regarding units of analysis (specific elements within the content to be analysed), the Google Search Command 'site:[company website address]' was used to find all web pages that Google has indexed for each website, combined with a manual check of web pages on each website to check for any that were not indexed by Google. Then, during the first half of 2024, counts were carried out on each web page for different types of content (Table 3). The only types of content to be excluded from the counting were symbols or design elements that are abstract representations of something (e.g., arrows, dots, drop-downs, bullet points, boxes).

Regarding intercoder reliability (assessing and agreeing approaches to counting the same content between different coders), all four authors of this paper conducted counts on the home pages of 15 companies selected at random using the descriptions in Table 3. The authors held a workshop to discuss and validate the approach. This process aligns with inter-coder reliability protocols recommended by Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Bracken (2010) and reflects the collaborative reflexivity approach advocated by Bradshaw, Atkinson, and Doody (2017). One author then conducted the counting on each web page of all websites. This decision was made to reduce variability in interpretation and is supported by Guest, MacQueen, and Namey (2012), who note that single-coder analysis can be appropriate when preceded by rigorous calibration. For each type of content, counts were made for the total number of items and words of text, as well as the number of disability-related items and words of text.

Regarding coding schemes (developing a structured system for classifying content into defined categories), details were recorded for each disability-related item that had been found (Table 4). Details to be recorded were informed by the approaches taken by previous studies reviewed in Sections 2.2-2.4 of this paper, for instance, regarding what is seen or written about, the disabilities that are represented, evidence of stereotyping (i.e., as heroes or victims) and of being integrated in adventure tourism, and the use of alternative text. In addition, textual content was allocated to categories listed in Table 4 that were created by the authors using an inductive-coding approach that did not rely on prior assumptions or expectations and instead, allowed the authors to read through the text and identify categories as they emerged (Bingham, 2023; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020). This allowed for an in-depth exploration of the data and helped to capture the richness and diversity of it. The coding process was easier than expected given that each piece of textual content tended to fit clearly into the categories that emerged.

The analysis followed a quantitative content-analysis approach for frequency counts and a qualitative thematic analysis for interpretive insights. This mixed-methods approach is consistent with best practice in tourism content analysis (Hall & Valentin, 2005).

Descriptive analysis was used to show the total number of web pages and different types of content included in the study (Table 5). Disability-related audio/visual and textual content was then analysed separately. For audio/visual content, the analysis examined the extent to which disabilities were represented (by types of content and the number of companies). It also examined how disabilities were represented taking into consideration: activities, equipment or facilities; disabilities; evidence of stereotyping; evidence of being integrated in adventure tourism; and text or alternative text that accompanied each item. A similar approach was taken to the analysis of textual content to examine the extent to which disabilities were represented. This was followed by an analysis of the categories of textual content and language used.

There is always a chance that researcher positionality influences the interpretation and analysis of the data in such a study. However, the team of authors, with diverse lived experiences of disability and

Table 2
Activities offered by companies in the study.

Activity (alternative names)	Companies
Climbing	33
Guided walks	24
Scrambling (rock hopping, non-technical climbing)	24
Kayaking	22
Coasteering (coastal exploration) / sea level traversing	22
Canyoning / gorge walking	21
Abseiling	17
Canoeing	15
Trails guides	14
Bushcraft / wilderness skills / foraging	13
Stand up paddleboarding	13
Mountain biking	12
Caving	11
Hiking / trekking	11
Mountaineering / mountain walking	10
Orienteering	10
Raft building	10
Whitewater rafting	10
Zip wires (zip line, flying fox, death slide)	9
Guided biking	7
Rope walks (ropes course, aerial adventure course)	7
Archery	6
Sailing	6
Horse riding	5
Power boating / rigid inflatable boat rides	6
Surfing	4
Adventure play (creative / explorative / free play)	3
River tubing / river bugging	3
Wild swimming	3
Bike hire	2
Bike packing	2
Bouldering (climbing short routes or 'problems')	2
Foil ride (hydrofoil surfing, foil boarding)	2
Go karting	2
Paint balling	2
Quad biking	2
Shooting	2
Windsurfing	2
Axe throwing	1
Boat hire	1
Shooting	1
Dog sledding	1
Fishing	1
Freefall (skydiving / parachuting)	1
Jet ski	1
Roller coaster	1
Segway (personal transporter)	1
Skateboarding	1
Snowsports	1
Swing (rope swing)	1
Tramper hire (rental of off-road mobility scooters)	1
Trampoline	1
Tobogganing	1
Wakeboarding	1

considerable experience in conducting research with disabled individuals, disability organisations, and peers and experts in the field, were well-equipped to interpret and analyse the data. Their firsthand experiences have provided them with unique insights and empathy, allowing them to approach the research with a balanced perspective. This diversity within the team fosters a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved, ensuring that their analysis is informed by a wide range of viewpoints and grounded in real-world contexts.

4. Findings

4.1. Disability representation in audio/visual content

From the 88,391 audio/visual items, 426 represented disabilities (0.5 % of the total). The 426 items appeared on 352 web pages (10.8 % of the total). Thirteen of the 69 companies (19 %) had disability-related items on their websites, but a small proportion of the companies accounted for a large proportion of them (Table 6).

Descriptions of the audio/visual items are given in Table 7. Regarding the 77 photos that represented disabilities, twenty-two of

Table 3
Types of content included in the study.

Content	Description
Photos	Taken by a camera and feature people or other aspects such as landscape, equipment, facilities. Includes all photos on a web page, as well as from web pages that have social media integration or a gallery/photo album. Text associated with photos, including alternative text viewed using Image Alt Text Viewer for Google Chrome, is checked to see if they represent disabilities.
Pictures	A drawing, painting, artwork, illustration. Includes objects created, modified, or altered using a computer (e.g., Google Maps images, screenshots, graphs).
Icons	An image or small picture that represents a real thing, including icons for social media platforms. Does not include symbols or design elements that are abstract representations of something (e.g., arrows, dots, drop-downs, bullet points, boxes).
Logos	Visual image that represents the company whose website is being looking at (own logo) or other organisations (other logo).
Videos	Digital moving visual content displayed directly on the web page via YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, Facebook, or other media.
Podcasts	Digital audio content typically featuring a host engaged in a discussion on a topic or event; created and played directly on the web page via a podcast hosting service.
Text	Words on a web page counted using Word Counter for Google Chrome. Disability-related word count is for blocks of text within which disability-related content appears, rather than just the exact number of disability-related words. For study replication purposes, the blocks of text were highlighted when triple clicking on a laptop touchpad and include whole lists, sentences, and headings.

Table 4
Details recorded for each disability-related item.

Content	Details recorded
Audio/visual	Brief description of what is seen
	Activities, equipment, or facilities seen
	Whether or not people or parts of a person are seen
	Name of organisation represented (for logos only)
	Disabilities represented
	Evidence of stereotyping (i.e., as heroes or victims)
	Evidence of being integrated in adventure tourism
	Text that is on or associated with the item
	Alternative text for the item
Textual	Brief description of what is written
	Activities, equipment, or facilities written about
	Category (for what the text is about): - Offer or activities: about accessible offers or activities - Equipment or facilities: about accessible equipment or facilities - Event: about accessible events - Staff: about staff working with groups of disabled people or disability organisations - Testimonials: from schools for children with special educational needs and disabilities - Accessibility statement: to make the website accessible in accordance with regulations - Disability association: that the company is a home base for a disabled association - Declaration: asking customers to declare their disabilities before booking or taking part in activities - Medication: reminding customers to take personal medication with them during activities - Restricted participation: stating that activities are not or may not be suitable for people with disabilities - Personal data: stating that the company collects personal data regarding customers' disabilities - Equity, diversity, inclusion: blog posts highlighting barriers preventing disabled people from participating in activities and the importance of doing something about them

Table 5
Web pages and types of content.

Characteristic	Websites	Total	Mean	Minimum	Median	Maximum
Web pages	69	3259	47	1	30	346
Audio/visual (items)	69	88,391	1281	20	585	9096
- Photos	69	23,637	343	2	216	2435
- Pictures	55	1616	23	0	4	196
- Icons	67	43,571	631	0	217	4199
- Own logo	67	5555	81	0	40	692
- Other logos	66	12,819	186	0	64	2076
- Videos	45	1114	0	0	2	354
- Podcasts	4	79	1	0	0	34
Textual (words)	69	2,149,145	31,147	268	14,191	180,807

Notes
Websites is the number of companies with each characteristic on their website – the maximum being 69.
Mean, minimum, median, and maximum figures are calculated according to all 69 websites in the study, and not the number of websites with the characteristic.

Table 6
Number of companies accounting for disability-related audio/visual items.

Company	Photos	Pictures	Icons	Own logos	Other logos	Videos	Total
1	8	0	0	0	149	0	157
2	0	0	7	0	95	0	102
3	32	0	0	38	0	0	70
4	0	0	41	0	0	0	41
5	15	0	0	0	0	0	15
6	0	0	12	0	0	0	12
7	8	2	0	0	0	0	10
8	7	0	0	0	0	0	7
9	1	0	3	0	0	0	4
10	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
11	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
12	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
13	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	77	2	64	38	244	1	426

them featured disabled people; 41 featured people along with text that implied they had disabilities; five featured a group of people holding a flag that said 'making adventures accessible to all'; nine featured accessible equipment or facilities (five of an accessible ramp to water and one each of a tramper for hire, a hoist for adaptive surfers, adapted canoes, and an accessible bathroom). Activities featured in the photos are shown in Fig. 2.

Regarding the diversity of disabilities, 18 photos featured people with reduced mobility (15 using wheelchairs, three surfing on their knees); 10 featured neurodivergent people, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, and Down's syndrome; one featured several mental and physical disabilities and injuries including post-traumatic stress disorder. Disabilities could not be determined from remaining photos even though accompanying text meant they were disability related.

Regarding portrayals, 29 photos featured disabled people participating in activities. Three of them featured competitors at a surfing event, who could be interpreted as heroes, and seven featured people with spinal cord injuries being carried in hiking wheelchairs by groups of people during a charity event, who could be interpreted as victims. Remaining photos portrayed more real-life situations of disabled people actively and independently participating in activities that are accessible for all. Many of them featured children and students receiving support from activity staff (i.e., when kayaking, climbing, gorge walking, or stand-up paddleboarding), but the level of support was consistent with any participant of a young age, for instance, with activity staff paddling with them in a two-person kayak or on a stand-up paddleboard, belaying a safeguard rope as they are climbing, and standing by with rescue equipment while they are gorge walking. The children were actively participating, and the photos did not give the impression that participation was dependent on receiving help from others.

From the 63 photos featuring disabled people, only four depicted the people in them as being integrated in adventure tourism (i.e., on web pages promoting activities for all versus those that are specifically for disabled people): one of a child in a wheelchair on a canoe with other children in an underground mine; two of a child in a wheelchair grilling a sausage on an outdoor campfire, along with other children; one of a person with Down's syndrome kayaking alone. The other photos were on web pages that were devoted to accessibility, for instance, regarding tramper hire, staff that work with disability groups, events for disabled people, or activities specifically for disabled people.

Alternative text for the disability-related items is shown in Table 8. Twenty-nine of the 77 photos (38 %) had alternative text. Seven of the 29 had relevant alternative text, although only three of those (4 %) had disability-related text. The other 22 (29 %) just said 'picture', which does not provide a meaningful description of what is shown. The two pictures did not have alternative text. Icons and logos had relevant alternative text, except for one icon that read 'data-dm-image-path'.

4.2. *Disability representation in textual content*

There were 21,653 words of disability-related text (1 % of the total words). These were generally of two types: (1) text that used 'specifically related' terms like disability, disabled, accessibility, reduced mobility, adaptive equipment; (2) text that used 'possibly related' terms like medical or health conditions, impairments, additional needs. 'Possibly related' terms are not specifically related to disability, but could be, and were therefore included. Indeed, GOV.UK (2021b) suggests that many people who need disability services, do not identify with terms like 'disabled people'. Consequently, terms like 'people with health conditions or impairments' should be used if it seems more appropriate. Just over half of the disability-related text used 'specifically related' terms (12,373 words; 0.6 % of all words of text on the websites), while just under half used 'possibly related' terms (9280 words; 0.4 %).

Forty-seven of the 69 companies (68 %) had disability-related text (Table 9). All but one of the companies listed in Table 9 is also listed in Table 6, meaning 12 companies (17 %) had disability-related audio/visual and textual content, while 48 companies (70 %) had one or the other. Twenty-one companies (30 %) had no disability-related content at all.

Categories of disability-related text, along with the number of words and extent to which text is specifically or possibly related, is shown in Fig. 3.

Declaration text was the most common category of text, consisting of 6369 words on 88 web pages. It typically asked customers to declare their disabilities before booking or taking part in activities, often requiring them to check with a doctor beforehand and being able to produce a doctor's note if required. For instance:

"All participants must be physically fit and able. They must, at the time of booking, advise of any illness or disability (such as diabetes,

Table 7
Total and disability-related audio/visual items.

Content	Total items	Disability-related items	Disability to total items (%)	Description of disability-related items
Photos	23,637	77	0.3	Twenty-two feature disabled people. Forty-one feature people along with text that implies they are disabled. Five feature a group of people holding a flag that says 'making adventures accessible to all'. Nine feature accessible equipment or facilities: 5 of an accessible ramp to water; 1 each of a tramper for hire, a hoist for adaptive surfers, adapted canoes, and an accessible bathroom.
Pictures	1616	2	0.1	Two of an adaptive surf event poster featuring a surfer with a prosthetic leg riding a wave.
Icons	43,571	64	0.2	Forty-one of the ReachDeck Toolbar[1] icon. Twenty-three of wheelchair icons.
Own logos	5555	38	0.7	Thirty-eight on each page of the same website for the accessible adventure tourism specialist company. The logo includes the text 'Making adventures accessible for all'.
Other logos	12,819	244	1.9	One hundred and forty-nine of the SEAS[2] logo on each page of one website. Ninety-five of the Disability Confident Committed[3] logo on each page of one company website.
Videos	1114	1	0.1	One features disability for a few seconds while the manager of an activity centre, who is disabled, talks about the centre.
Podcasts	79	0	0.0	No disability-related podcasts.

Total items = 88,391; Disability-related items = 426 (0.5 % disability to total items).

[1] ReachDeck Toolbar icon is an accessibility feature that adds text-to-speech, reading, and translation support to websites.

[2] SEAS is a charity that supports accessible sailing and other adventures for disabled people in North Wales.

[3] Disability Confident Committed is a UK government scheme to help and recognise employers who are committed to inclusion and diversity in the workplace.

epilepsy, asthma, heart condition, recent injuries, hearing impairment, visual impairment etc) that may affect their ability to participate. If at all unsure, participants must check with a doctor before booking and must be able to produce a note from their doctor if required" (quote from the website of an outdoor activity centre).

There was some degree of overlap between this category and those on restricted participation and personal data. The former typically stated that activities are not suitable or may not be suitable for people with [sometimes listing specific] disabilities. The latter typically stated that the company collects personal data regarding customers' disabilities. For instance:

"Our arrangements may not be suitable for people with certain disabilities, medical conditions or significantly reduced mobility" (quote from the website of a company offering mountain bike tours).

"The personal data we hold will vary depending on our specific relationship with you, and may include: […..]; Personal data provided by you for a specific purpose (e.g. disability or dietary preferences for event management purposes)" (quote from the website of an outdoor activity centre).

An accessible offer or activities was mentioned on 54 web pages. Thirty-six of them mentioned general offers rather than specific activities; 20 were in the footer of each page on one company website stating that the company was started with the aim of providing exciting, accessible, and value for money adventure activities. Many of the others were presented as question-and-answer type statements. The questions being do you or can you cater for disabilities? Some of the answers were positive, for instance, saying that staff were qualified and experienced in delivering activities for disabled people, that their sites were risk assessed accordingly, and that accessible accommodation can be arranged. However, in most cases, they stated that the company tries to cater for everybody, but that people should contact them if they have a disability. For instance:

"We started [the company and the year it was started] with the aim of providing the most exciting, accessible and value for money adventure activities in North Wales" (quote from the website of a provider of guided water and mountain-based activities).

"Can you cater for disabled people? Yes, all our staff are fully qualified to deal with disabled people and have lots of experience in doing so. All our sites are risk assessed for specific risks and we can also arrange for specific accommodation" (quote from the website of a provider of rafting, adventure, and team development activities).

"Do you cater for disabilities? At [the company] we try to cater for everybody, so if you have a disability and would like to get more information on what we can offer please give us a call on [phone number] or just let the staff know on the day" (quote from the website of an outdoor activity centre).

Activities for disabled people were mentioned on 18 web pages. The activities were climbing, abseiling, canoeing, kayaking, hiking, wild camping, coasteering, rigid inflatable boat rides, paddling, gorge walking, go karting, balloon airship, walking, archery, stand-up paddleboarding, and surfing. The tone of the text was largely positive, for instance, about the activities being suitable for all people, safety measures that are in place for the activities, and the benefits of participation:

"Twin seater go karts. Disabled customers and younger children (aged 3 and up) can enjoy the thrill of karting on our junior circuit in one of our double-seated karts driven by an accompanying adult (aged 18 or over)" (quote from the website of an outdoor activity centre).

"The Mega SUP was sourced by SEAS Sailability – the [company] partner disability charity, as such it is an inclusive activity suitable for disabled and non-disabled children alike" (quote from the website of an outdoor activity centre).

Regarding equipment or facilities, there was little text on adaptive equipment: about trampers (on three web pages), a hoist (on one web page), stand-up paddleboards (on one web page), and canoes (on one web page). In addition, there was little text, often just a line or two each time, on accessible facilities: about parking for disabled visitors, accessible toilets, accessible sites, changing facilities (on three web pages), accommodation (on eight web pages), wheelchair access to the building, ramps and pontoons, a lagoon, accessible toilet facilities, and horse-mounting blocks and ramps (on one web page). For instance:

"The Tramper is a specially designed, all-terrain mobility scooter, which can be used off road and even on rough ground, mud and grass. It is very robust, with light, accurate steering and tailored suspension, making it easy to handle and comfortable to ride on. It enables people who have a mobility impairment to experience the countryside; and to accompany friends and family when out walking" (quote from the website of a company providing guided outdoor activities, bicycle hire,

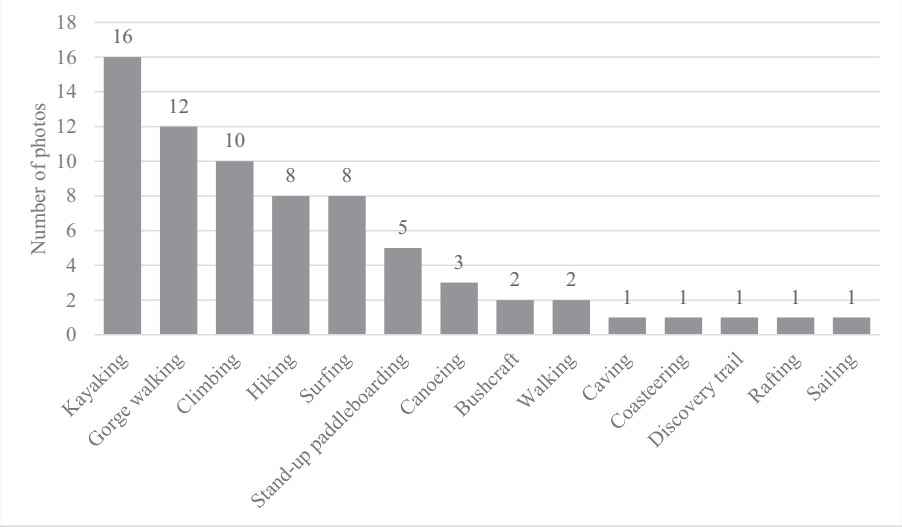

Fig. 2. Activities featured in disability-related photos.

Table 8
Alternative text for disability-related audio/visual items.

Format	Number of items	Items with alternative text	Alternative text as it is written for each item (number of observations)
Photos	77	29	Adaptive surfers share a wave (1) hoist by surf lagoon (1) Tramper (1) Surfers and their surfboards beside a wave pool (1) underground-EXPLORATION-uk (1) buschcraft-fire-lighting-course-uk (2) picture (22)
Pictures	2	0	–
Icons	64	56	Listen with the ReachDeck Toolbar (41) Disabled Badge (11) Disabled Riders (1) data-dm-image-path (3)
Own logos	38	38	[company name] (38)
Other logos	244	244	seas (149) disability confident (95)

Table 9
Number of companies accounting for disability-related text.

Company	Disability-related words	Company	Disability-related words	Company	Disability-related words
1	3095	17	371	33	116
2	2807	18	371	34	114
3	1594	19	365	35	101
4	1305	20	332	36	89
5	1154	21	320	37	88
6	1007	22	253	38	76
7	976	23	245	39	55
8	872	24	242	40	49
9	736	25	233	41	44
10	623	26	229	42	43
11	520	27	206	43	41
12	495	28	138	44	39
13	448	29	137	45	37
14	416	30	136	46	37
15	407	31	135	47	29
16	394	32	133	Total	21,653

and expedition equipment).

"We have two accessible pods which sleep a maximum of three guests per pod. Our accessible pods have ramped access" (quote from the website of an outdoor activity centre).

"Wheelchair access to building, changing facilities and waterfront" (quote from the website of an outdoor activity centre).

"Accessible Toilets: All of our indoor toilet facilities are easily accessible to everyone" (quote from the website of an outdoor activity centre).

Twenty-six web pages reminded customers to take their personal medication with them during activities. Most of the web pages, 23 of them, were on one website with the following text:

"What to bring: Personal medication(s)" (quote from the website of a provider of paddleboarding activities).

Basic descriptions of other categories, which featured on relatively few web pages, can be seen in Table 4.

In general, the language used follows official guidelines (Table 10). For instance, mostly using variations of 'disabled people' or 'people with disabilities' instead of 'the disabled'. Similarly, using 'people with [name of condition or impairment]' instead of terms like 'the deaf' or 'the blind'. One area where guidelines were not followed was with use of the terms 'suffer' 'suffered' or 'suffering' (used 18 times). The word 'autistic' was used twice; however, autism is not listed in Table 10 as a preferred alternative to autistic. This is because autism is often seen as being part of who someone with the condition is, rather than being separate to them. In many cases, 'autistic' is therefore preferred to 'autism' (NHS England, 2024). The terms 'special needs' and 'special educational needs' were used frequently in the text: 26 and 11 times respectively. In addition, 'special requirements' pertaining to disability was used three times.

5. Discussion

5.1. Main findings

This study set out to explore how disabled people are represented on the websites of adventure tourism activity providers in and around Eryri National Park. Guided by three research questions, it examined visibility, portrayals, and inclusive practices regarding disability representation across a range of website content. The findings offer valuable insights into the current state of disability representation in adventure tourism and highlight both progress and persistent gaps.

In addressing the first research question: *to what extent is disability visibly represented on the websites of adventure tourism activity providers in*

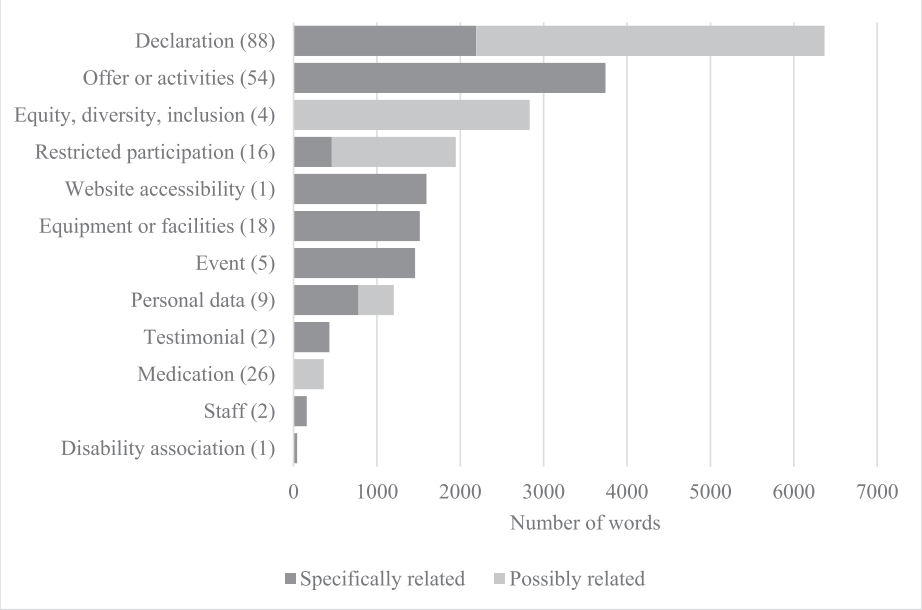

Fig. 3. Categories of disability-related text (the number of web pages is shown in brackets).

Table 10
Number of terms used in the text according to whether they should be avoided or used.

Avoid	Number	Use	Number
The disabled	2	Disabled [people, persons, riders, visitors, customers, clients]	12
		People/persons with disabilities	11
The blind, the deaf	0	People/persons with [name of condition or impairment]	15
Suffer/suffered/suffering from	18	Has [name of condition or impairment]	10
Confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound	0	Wheelchair user	2
Cripple, invalid	0	Disabled person	1
Mentally handicapped, mentally defective, retarded, subnormal	0	Learning difficulties	5
Able-bodied	0	Non-disabled	1
Diabetic	0	Person with/someone who has diabetes	10
Epileptic	0	Person with/someone who has epilepsy	16
Depressive	0	Person with/someone who has depression	1
Spastic	0	Person with cerebral palsy	1

Note: Terms to avoid and use are adapted from GOV.UK (2021b).

and around Eryri National Park, and in what types of content do these representations appear, the study found a greater volume of disability-related content than previous research (Benjamin et al., 2021; Cloquet et al., 2018; Fennell & Garrod, 2022). However, the overall proportion remains strikingly low: only 0.5 % of audio/visual items and 1 % of text.

This underrepresentation is particularly concerning given that 24 % of the UK population identifies as disabled (Kirk-Wade, 2023). It aligns with the findings of earlier studies that highlight the systemic exclusion of disabled people from tourism media content (Rita & António, 2020; Rydzik et al., 2021). It also reflects what Siebers (2008) describes as the aesthetic marginalisation of disabled bodies in visual culture, where their absence reinforces dominant ideals of ability and desirability. In the context of adventure tourism, often marketed through imagery of physical prowess and risk-taking (Schlegelmilch & Ollenburg, 2013), this exclusion is especially pronounced.

The limited visibility of disabled people on adventure tourism websites may thus perpetuate the perception that such experiences are not for them, reinforcing psycho-emotional disablism (Burns et al., 2013). This will not only affect participation but also undermine the inclusive potential of adventure tourism as a vehicle for wellbeing and empowerment.

The second research question: *how is disability portrayed across different types of website content used by adventure tourism activity providers in and around Eryri National Park,* revealed a modest but meaningful shift away from stereotypical portrayals. Unlike earlier studies that predominantly featured wheelchair users or white-cane users (Benjamin et al., 2021; Cloquet et al., 2018), this study identified a broader range of disabilities, including neurodivergent and mental-health conditions.

There was minimal evidence of the 'hero' or 'victim' approaches critiqued by Halpern et al. (2024). Instead, some representations showed disabled people actively participating in adventure activities, often in everyday scenarios. These portrayals are more aligned with inclusive representation, which normalises disability and challenges ableist assumptions.

However, diversity within portrayals remains limited. Most visual representations still focus on mobility impairments, with little attention given to non-visible or less-visible disabilities. This narrow framing risks reinforcing a singular narrative of disability and overlooks the complexity and richness of lived experiences of disability.

The third research question: *to what degree do the different types of website content used by adventure tourism activity providers in and around Eryri National Park reflect inclusive practices, particularly in terms of integrating disability into mainstream narratives,* highlighted a significant gap between inclusive intent and execution. Disability-related content was largely confined to accessibility-specific pages, rather than integrated into general activity descriptions. Only four photos depicted disabled people participating alongside non-disabled peers in mainstream narratives.

This structural segregation supports Olkin's (2002) critique of disability's marginalisation within diversity discourses. It suggests that while some providers acknowledge the importance of accessibility, they often fail to embed it within their mainstream narratives. This reinforces the perception that disabled people are peripheral to adventure tourism, rather than integral to it.

Moreover, the absence of non-visible and less-visible disabilities, and the limited use of meaningful alternative text, suggests that providers are still grappling with how to represent disability in inclusive and accessible ways. As the United Nations Development Programme (2023) notes, inclusive representation must go beyond visibility to challenge assumptions and reflect the full diversity of lived experiences with disability.

The findings also revealed a tension between risk management and empowerment. Many providers practiced what might be termed 'quiet accessibility', offering inclusive activities but failing to communicate this effectively. Others adopted a 'cautious accessibility' stance, emphasising risk management and legal disclaimers over empowerment and participation. This aligns with Benjamin et al. (2021), who found that tourism providers often focus on compliance with regulations rather than proactively addressing the needs of disabled people.

It is important to avoid being too critical of the focus on risk management given that safety has been recognised as the most influential accessibility attribute for shaping the perceived image of a destination, thus highlighting the strategic importance of risk management in inclusive tourism (Leiras, Domínguez-Vila, & Magano, 2025). However, in the context of disability representation, the prevalence of declaration forms, restrictions on participation, and references to 'medical conditions' or 'additional needs' may inadvertently reinforce exclusion by framing disability as a liability. Providers should aim to prioritise empowerment over risk management by shifting risk-related language to emphasise safety and support, rather than exclusion.

While the language used generally adhered to official guidelines (GOV.UK, 2021b), problematic terms such as 'suffer' and 'special needs' were still present. These terms, as Gernsbacher, Raimond, Balinghasay, and Boston (2016) argue, can stigmatise and diminish the identities of disabled people. The mixed use of identity-first ('disabled people') and person-first ('people with disabilities') language also reflects ongoing debates in disability discourse (Andrews et al., 2022; Ferrigon & Tucker, 2019; Gillovic et al., 2018; Grech et al., 2024; Halpern et al., 2025, 2024), though the preference for identity-first language aligns with UK guidelines regarding the social model perspective (GOV.UK, 2021c).

5.2. Theoretical contributions

The findings of this study offer theoretical contributions by engaging with Siebers' (2008) theory of disability aesthetics and Olkin's (2002) critique of disability marginalisation.

Siebers' theory of disability aesthetics posits that disabled bodies are systematically excluded from visual culture because they disrupt dominant ideals of beauty, ability, and desirability. This exclusion is not merely incidental but reflects a deeper cultural discomfort with disability as an embodied difference. In the context of adventure tourism, which is often marketed through imagery that celebrates physical prowess and risk-taking (Schlegelmilch & Ollenburg, 2013), Siebers' theory is particularly salient. The finding that only 0.5 % of audio/visual items and 1 % of text featured disability emphasises this aesthetic marginalisation. Even when disabled people were depicted, they were often confined to accessibility-specific sections of websites, rather than integrated into mainstream narratives. This supports Siebers' argument that disabled bodies are not only underrepresented but are also symbolically excluded from cultural spaces that valorise normative physicality.

Moreover, the limited diversity in portrayals, particularly the dominance of mobility-related disabilities and the near absence of non-visible and less-visible disabilities, further reflects the aesthetic constraints identified by Siebers. The tendency to represent disability through a narrow visual lexicon (e.g., wheelchair icons) reinforces reductive and medicalised understandings of disability, rather than embracing its full spectrum. This aesthetic narrowing not only limits the visibility of disabled people but also constrains the ways in which they are imagined as participants in adventure tourism.

Olkin's critique of disability marginalisation within diversity discourses is also highlighted by the findings. While many tourism providers acknowledge disability through compliance-based messaging (e.g., accessibility statements, medical declarations), few embedded disability within their core narratives of inclusion. This reflects Olkin's concern that disability is often treated as an afterthought in diversity frameworks – mentioned but not meaningfully included. The structural segregation of disability-related content into separate website sections, rather than integrating it into general activity descriptions, exemplifies this marginalisation. It signals that disabled people are not considered part of the mainstream adventure tourism audience, but rather as a special category requiring separate treatment.

This marginalisation is further reinforced by the language used on websites. Although most providers adhered to official guidelines, problematic terms such as 'suffer' and 'special needs' were still present, echoing Olkin's observation that even well-intentioned efforts can perpetuate exclusion through outdated or stigmatising language. The mixed use of identity-first and person-first terminology also reflects broader tensions in disability discourse, with identity-first language aligning more closely with the UK's approach.

Together, Siebers' and Olkin's frameworks help illuminate the deeper cultural and structural dynamics at play in disability representation within adventure tourism. They emphasise the need for a shift from tokenistic inclusion to a more transformative approach that challenges aesthetic norms, integrates disability into mainstream narratives, and repositions disabled people as central participants in tourism experiences. By applying these theories to the empirical findings, this study contributes to a more critical and nuanced understanding of how disability is represented, and often marginalised, in adventure tourism media content.

5.3. Practical implications

The lack of disability representation in adventure tourism is not merely symbolic, it has practical consequences. It can deter disabled people from engaging with service providers, reduce their confidence in being welcomed, and perpetuate psycho-emotional disablism. Adventure tourism activity providers therefore have a unique opportunity and responsibility to challenge these narratives. To do so, they must move beyond compliance and adopt a strategic, value-driven approach to inclusion, for instance, by taking the following actions:

Enhance audio/visual representation. Activity providers should reflect diversity by including more images and videos of disabled people engaging in adventure activities. This can be achieved by partnering with content creators and disabled adventure tourists, commissioning inclusive photo shoots that reflect real experiences, and featuring disabled people in promotional campaigns, not just in accessibility sections of the website. Also, by adding meaningful alternative text to images, which is needed for screen reader accessibility.

Integrate accessibility information into mainstream narratives. Accessibility information should not be siloed in separate sections of the website. This can be achieved by embedding it within activity descriptions, highlighting it through testimonials and case studies, and presenting it in a way that emphasises empowerment and participation rather than limitations.

Use inclusive language and symbols. Official guidelines can be followed (e.g., GOV.UK, 2021b) to avoid the use of outdated, stigmatising, or stereotypical terms. Identity-first or person-first language can be used depending on the context, and a broad range of disability symbols can be incorporated beyond the wheelchair icon, including those for non-visible and less-visible disabilities, such as the Sunflower Lanyard (Hidden Disabilities Sunflower, 2025).

Develop inclusive workforce practices. This is so that representation extends beyond participants to include staff. This requires effective human resource policies and practices that enable disabled people to become providers, not just consumers (Bellucci et al., 2023; Lu et al.,

2024), by recruiting and training disabled guides and instructors, and showcasing disabled staff in information and communications.

Foster collaboration among stakeholders. Adventure tourism stakeholders often operate at the intersection of outdoor recreation and tourism, therefore offering benefits for both residents and visitors. As a result, destinations should coordinate efforts across providers, local authorities, and disability organisations to conduct accessibility audits, share best practices, and co-create inclusive experiences and strategies.

E*mphasise empowerment over risk management*. While not advocating a diminished approach to risk management given the positive influence it can have on the perceived image of a destination (Leiras et al., 2025), providers should seek ways to emphasise empowerment over risk management by reframing risk-related language to focus on safety and support rather than exclusion. This can be achieved by replacing language like 'not suitable for people with disabilities' with 'please contact us to discuss how we can accommodate your needs'. In addition, activity providers can give clear, empowering information about adaptive equipment and support services that are available.

Set measurable goals for disability representation. Providers and destinations can set measurable goals for disability representation by aiming to increase disability-related content by a certain percent within a certain period and requiring that every activity page includes accessibility information and a minimum amount of inclusive content.

These actions are not only inclusively orientated but also economically strategic, given the significant spending power of disabled people and their families (GOV.UK, 2021a; Office for National Statistics, 2024).

5.4. Limitations and further research

This study has several limitations. First, it focused exclusively on website content, which may not fully capture the offline, or even online, practices or intentions of activity providers. Second, the analysis was limited to one national park in the UK, which may affect the generalisability of the findings. Third, while efforts were made to interpret audio/visual and textual content objectively, some degree of subjectivity is inherent in content analysis. Based on these limitations and the findings of this study, several areas for further research are recommended:

Impact of representation on disabled travellers' perceptions and behaviours. This study revealed that disabled people are underrepresented and rarely depicted in mainstream adventure tourism narratives. Further research should explore how improved representation affects disabled travellers' perceptions of safety, belonging, and willingness to participate. This would help validate the assumption that representation influences behaviour and could guide more effective marketing strategies.

Constraints to disability representation. While some providers offered inclusive activities, they often failed to communicate this effectively. The prevalence of cautious or compliance-driven messaging suggests uncertainty or discomfort around disability representation. Further research should investigate the organisational, cultural, and psychological constraints that prevent providers from adopting inclusive practices. This includes exploring providers' perceptions of risk, lack of training, and concerns about misrepresentation.

Co-creation and participatory design in media content. The study highlighted a lack of diverse portrayals, particularly of non-visible and less-visible disabilities. Further research should explore how co-creation with disabled people, for instance, through participatory design, storytelling, and media production, can lead to more inclusive content. This would shift the focus from representation of disabled people to representation by disabled people, fostering empowerment.

Comparative studies across destinations and sectors. Comparative studies can help identify the influence of policy, leadership, and local culture on disability representation. Similarly, comparing adventure tourism with other tourism sectors could reveal sector-specific challenges and opportunities for inclusion.

Evaluation of destination-level strategies and stakeholder collaboration. Leading on from the previous point, destination-level policies might be able to catalyse change. However, the effectiveness of these strategies is likely to depend on stakeholder engagement and implementation. Further research should evaluate how destination authorities, tourism providers, disability organisations, and local communities collaborate to deliver inclusive tourism experiences. This includes assessing the outcomes of training, partnerships, and shared accountability mechanisms.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate how disability is represented on the websites of adventure tourism activity providers in and around Eryri National Park, focusing on three dimensions: visibility, portrayals, and inclusive practices.

The findings reveal that disability-related content is present but remains proportionately low, with only 0.5 % of audio/visual items and 1 % of text dedicated to it. While representations generally avoid common stereotypes, there is room for greater diversity. However, this study did find a broader diversity compared to previous studies, indicating some progress. Disability-related content is largely segregated from mainstream narratives, with a near absence of non-visible and less-visible disabilities. Additionally, there is limited use of meaningful alternative text, tension between risk management and empowerment, and problematic language persists despite general adherence to inclusive guidelines.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on inclusive tourism highlighting the exclusion of disabled people in the media content used by adventure tourism activity providers. It supports calls for more inclusive audio/visual cultures and critiques the marginalisation of disability within diversity discourses.

Practically, the findings emphasise the importance of strategic, value-driven approaches to inclusion. They offer actionable insights for adventure tourism activity providers to enhance audio/visual representation, integrate accessibility information into mainstream narratives, use inclusive language and symbols, develop inclusive workforce practices, foster collaboration among stakeholders, emphasise empowerment over risk management, and set measurable goals.

Overall, this study demonstrates that disabled people continue to be marginalised in adventure tourism media content and highlights the need for more visible, diverse, and integrated representations to foster inclusion.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Nigel Halpern: Project administration, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft. **Marcus Hansen:** Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft. **Brian Garrod:** Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft. **Jillian Rickly:** Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

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Nigel Halpern is Professor of Air Transport and Tourism Management at Kristiania University of Applied Sciences in Norway. His main interests are in accessibility, digital transformation and marketing. Regarding accessibility, his research has focused on information and communications for accessible tourism, institutional frameworks for accessible tourism, technology-based experiences in accessible tourism, and lived experiences of travelling with guide dogs. Prior to joining academia, he held various positions in adventure tourism, hospitality, and transport policy and regulation.

Marcus Hansen is Senior Lecturer in Tourism and Events at Liverpool John Moores University. He is Director of the Liverpool Centre for Olympic Research on Inclusion. Marcus teaches and conducts research in relation to tourism and events management. His research interests are particularly around the topics of accessible tourism. Marcus has published widely, including in key tourism journals such as Tourism Management and Annals of Tourism Research. Marcus also hosts the Accessible Tourism Podcast, in which he talks to disabled people and people from industry. Through his research, Marcus continues to work with various organisations, nationally and internationally, to make tourism more accessible to disabled people.

Brian Garrod is Professor of Marketing in the School of Management at Swansea University. His research interests cover sustainable tourism, neurodiversity in tourism, destination marketing and management, and the use of photographic methods in tourism research. He is the author of eight books and more than 60 refereed articles. His most recent book, 'Managing Visitor Attractions' (with Alan Fyall, Anna Leask and Stephen Wanhill) is in its third edition. He has been consultant to the UN World Tourism Organization and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). His work has been funded by grants from the AHRC, the EU Structural Fund, the Welsh Government, The Countryside Commission, and Tourism Partnership Mid Wales, among others.

Jillian Rickly is Professor of Tourism at the University of Nottingham. She is a tourism geographer with research interests in authenticity/alienation, mobilities, accessibility, and human-animal relations.