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Beyond accessibility: exploring the representation of people with disabilities in tourism promotional materials

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ABSTRACT

Globally, over one billion people experience some form of disability. The number of people with disabilities (PWDs) continues to rise due to an ageing population, the spread of chronic diseases, and improvements in measuring disabilities. However, tourism promotional materials continue to perpetuate a homogenous gaze catering to non-disabled audiences. Thus, informed by critical disability theory, and an inclusive tourism approach, this study explores how PWDs are represented in tourism promotional materials, specifically tourism brochures, from the American Southeast. Through a content analysis of over 200 county-level brochures from nine southeastern states and interviews with state-level tourism marketing directors,three emergent themes were identified: ADA compliant is 'good enough'; 'Diversity' means including more people of color or 'ethnic' groups; and Pets are welcomed but how about PWDs? The findings offer insights for inclusive tourism and breaking down the physical and psychological barriers that hinder PWD participation in travel and tourism.

Introduction

Underrepresented populations in society, including people of color, LGTBQIA+, and people with disabilities (PWDs), are growing markets in hospitality and tourism and make a significant economic contribution to the industry. Focusing specifically on PWDs, globally one billion people, or fifteen percent of the world's population, experience some form of disability, and this number is increasing due to an ageing population, the spread of chronic diseases, and improvements in measuring disabilities (World Health Organization, 2019). Specifically, in the United States, the Open Doors Organization stated that in 2002, PWDs in the U.S. took 32 million trips and spent more than $13.6 billion on travel (Open Doors Organization, 2019). Furthermore, a study by McKinsey & Company stated that the baby-boomer generation commanded almost 60% of net U.S. wealth and 40% of spending (Court et al., 2007). In many categories, including travel, boomers will represent over 50% of consumption. Their impact on the travel and tourism sector is significant as over 40% of boomers will be retiring with some form of disability, raising the total value of this sector to over 25% of the market by 2020 (Open Doors Organization, 2019).

Most recently, a podcast from *Skift*, the travel resource center, shared that adults with disabilities in the U.S. spend $17.3 billion a year on leisure and business travel, and 26 million adults with disabilities took 73 million trips in 2016 (Samson, 2017). Yet, many marginalized groups, specifically PWDs, are not properly represented in tourism promotional materials that traditionally cater toward White, cisgender, heterosexual, and non-disabled men - perpetuating a White male touristic gaze (Alderman, 2013; Cloquet et al., 2018; Pritchard, 2001; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000a; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000b). The lack of inclusiveness disallows for a broader scope to address PWDs in tourism development and results in inequitable treatment of under-represented groups; they have little voice or ability to convey their needs and interests to disparate tourism service providers. PWDs have also been generally marginalized in tourism research, which has been slow overall to take up issues related to justice and fairness. The co-founders of the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism,* Bill Bramwell and Bernard Lane, noted that "while more researchers are beginning to look at the equality of tourism outcomes, there is still relatively little research on the wider issues of equity, fairness and social justice in tourism" (Bramwell & Lane, 2008, p. 2). More recently, scholars have begun attempting to explore and address disability issues within tourism studies (e.g., Cloquet et al., 2018; Darcy, 2002; Darcy & Taylor, 2009; Michopoulou et al., 2015; Nyanjom et al., 2018; Richards et al., 2010). However, disability is still predominantly a neglected subject within tourism inquiry (Aitchison, 2009) and an under-researched phenomenon (Darcy, 2002), despite the loyalty and growing economic power of this targeted group.

The recognition of PWDs in the tourism industry has been discussed in relation to *access* to tourism venues and services, but has yet to embrace an *inclusive* perspective where PWD travelers are recognized and actively involved in the ethical production, consumption, or sharing of tourism benefits (Cloquet et al., 2018; Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). Furthermore, promotion and advertising in marketing is an essential and crucial component of enabling and empowering PWDs' interests and motivations for planning and visiting touristic destinations. Though several recent studies have explored the inclusion of PWDs in tourism promotional materials and the accessibility of tourism information to PWDs (e.g., Buhalis & Michopoulou, 2011; Cloquet et al., 2018; Darcy, 2010; Nyanjom et al., 2018), these works focused on either European or Australian tourism markets. Thus, this paper shifts the focus to the United States to explore how people with visible physical disabilities are represented in tourism promotional materials.

Dr. Pauline Sheldon posited in her recent Travel Tourism Research Association Conference keynote address, "it's clear we need to shift our thinking about tourism … we need a new relationship with capitalism … [to] put the wellbeing of planet, people, and places-not just profits and growth-on the agenda" (personal communication, 2019). While recognizing the importance of economic arguments in justifying studies of inclusive tourism, as our own introduction does, we agree with Sheldon's assertion for a new relationship with capitalism. Through conceptions of tourism as a social force, empowered by the studies of humanities and their critical epistemologies (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006), one can see how tourism has the power to change cultures and societies and, to quote Sheldon, the power to shift from a "me to we" economy. Consequently, our study aims to examine the extent to which the tourism industry has adopted an 'inclusive marketing approach,' specifically in the southeastern U.S., through a framework influenced by critical disability theory. Through an analysis of promotional literature from the American Southeast, we provide foundational insights to answer the following research questions: In what ways are people with physical disabilities included in tourism promotional materials in the southeastern United States? How can tourism promotional materials be more inclusive for PWDs? Our paper concludes that currently tourism marketing in the southeastern states of the U.S. cannot be regarded as *just* or *fair*, as it perpetuates an image in which PWDs are absent from the tourism and traveler populations.

The growing presence and influence of PWDs within tourism

Globally, it is estimated that over one billion people have a disability - defined as any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities and interact with the world around them (i.e. vision, movement, thinking, remembering, learning, communicating, hearing, mental health, social relationships) (The American Disability Association, 2019). Furthermore, within the European Union, people with access needs took 783 million trips in 2012, and this number is anticipated to grow to about 862 million per year by 2020 (GFK Belgium, 2014). Within the U.S., 58 million adults have a permanent physical disability, 70% of which are not visible, while 36 million adults have impaired mobility (Brettapproved.com, 2019). In 2008, the *UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities* came into force, consisting of 165 Parties and 160 Signatories who recognized the right of PWDs to participate on an equal basis with non-disabled people within leisure, recreation, and tourism (Cloquet et al., 2018). However, it is contingent upon the priorities of governments and states to provide services and resources to PWDs, which, according to Cloquet et al. (2018), "comes with a risk of misrepresenting the higher complexity of developing inclusive tourism practices" (p. 223). While most aspects of American society have been, and still remain, organized around non-disabled citizenship, travel has been especially challenging for PWDs. Yet, with recent technological and legal innovations, more PWDs are traveling than ever before.

Challenges facing PWDs while traveling include untrained professional staff, inaccessible booking services and related websites, lack of inclusive and accessible airports, restaurants, hotel rooms, shops, public spaces, and unavailable information on accessible facilities, services, equipment rentals and tourist attractions (United Nations, 2019). Furthermore, according to Bill Forrester (2016) of TravAbility:

> Accessible tourism is no longer about building ramps and accessible bathrooms. It's
>
> about building products and services for a larger and rapidly growing market. This is no
>
> longer a niche but rather a segment that is approaching 25% of total tourism spending.

The significant growth of PWDs in tourism is beginning to be reflected in calls for tourist sites to move beyond being *accessible* or *compliant* toward *including* PWDs more directly in enjoying tourism's benefits. For instance, the United Nations recently begun working towards 'accessible tourism for all,' advocating for increasingly accessible cities and tourism provisions. Their push for accessible tourism calls on service providers and destination managers to 'go beyond the principle of universal design' (i.e., one-size fits all tourists) and ensure that "all persons, regardless of their physical or cognitive needs, are able to use and enjoy the available amenities in an equitable and sustainable manner" (United Nations, 2019, paragraph 11). However, as demonstrated further below, non-disabled-bodiness and its associated privileges remain deeply embedded in the institutional bedrock of touristic practices, environments, landscapes, and promotional materials, including travel brochures.

Critical disability theory and inclusive tourism

PWDs have been denied full inclusion in most nations around the world, a phenomenon that has been particularly documented in Western societies (Oliver, 1990; Oliver & Barnes, 2012). From this recognition of marginalization came the social model of disability that was first developed in the mid-1970s (UPIAS (Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation), 1976). This model maintains that disability is not a medical impairment, but a socially constructed barrier category used to other and exclude PWDs, leading to their systemic discrimination and oppression (Lang, 2001; Oliver, 1983). As such, "the social model gives precedence to the importance

[of] politics, empowerment, citizenship and choice" within the 'disabled' community (Lang, 2001, p. 4). Consequently, Devlin and Pothier (2006) developed an approach to critical disability theory, positing that "a system of deep structural economic, social, political, legal, and cultural inequality in which persons with disabilities experience unequal citizenship, a regime of dis-citizenship," exists within society today (p. 1). This idea of citizenship, which they define as the "capacity to participate fully in all the institutions of society - not just those that fit the conventional definitions of the political, but also the social and cultural," sits at the core of their critical approach (Devlin & Pothier, 2006, p. 1).

Due to its overarching nature, citizenship is a "practice that locates individuals in the larger community," creating a united and interconnected populace (Devlin & Pothier, 2006, p. 1-2). However, since many PWDs are "denied formal and/or substantive citizenship" as a result of their unequal access to everyday legal and social institutions, "they are assigned the status of 'dis-citizens,' a form of citizenship minus, a disabling citizenship" (Devlin & Pothier, 2006, p. 2). Supporting this view of 'dis-citizenship,' Kitchin (1998) asserted that "the dominant [non-disabled] group's cultural practices are promoted as the norm and the cultural practices of others [PWDs] are portrayed as deviant" (p. 346). Kitchin (1998) further argued that space is socially constructed and produced through social and spatial processes to ignore and discount PWDs in two main ways: by being organized to keep 'disabled people' "in their place" and through "social texts that convey to disabled people that they are 'out of place'" (p. 345). Space, and the society that utilizes it, then becomes actively situated against PWDs, further denying them access to full, inclusive citizenship.

Despite needed legal interventions like the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the social inertia against the inclusion of PWDs remains in many aspects of daily life. It follows that to create a more just and equal tourism industry for PWDs requires not just accessibility, but also *meaningful* inclusion of PWDs in the landscape of travel and tourism. Tourism promotional materials, in particular, reproduce socially constructed inaccessible spaces by, respectively, a) presenting images that depict inaccessible spaces (i.e. no ramps) and b) not including images showing PWDs enjoying American Southeastern tourism destinations or touristic activities (e.g., dining at a restaurant). Devlin and Pothier (2006) above noted notion of *substantive citizenship* is helpful here as it includes the capacity to fully participate in all institutions of society. It offers a lens through which PWDs can be included in everyday life and the pursuit of travel.

An inclusive tourism framework for PWDs

One way to combat the exclusion of PWDs in tourism and promotional tourism literature is to advocate for inclusive tourism, which enables not merely access but also encourages the involvement of PWDs in travel and tourism. Inclusive tourism overcomes barriers to enable marginalized groups (PWDs in this instance) to participate meaningfully in tourism as producers or consumers (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). It challenges stereotypes and calls for appropriate representations, as well as facilitating mutual understanding and respect. According to Scheyvens and Biddulph (2018), inclusive tourism builds upon two sets of crucial questions: (1) who is included (and excluded) and (2) on what terms are they included? (p. 593).

Incorporating inclusive language in such a framework, like Person-First Language, is essential because these words directly describe the inclusion of PWDs within the tourism industry, providing access to the same opportunities and benefits that tourism provides to non-disabled individuals. Outdated, inaccurate, or hurtful terms perpetuate negative stereotypes, feelings, or attitudes toward marginalized groups, like PWDs (Haller et al., 2006). Thus, the National Disability Authority (2019) argues for adopting Person-First Language when writing or speaking about PWDs in order to reflect the 'individuality, equality, or dignity' of PWDs. It is imperative that terms like 'the disabled', 'wheelchair-bound', 'cripple, spastic, victim', 'the handicapped', 'able-

bodied' and 'normal' are no longer used. Instead, they suggest using language like 'people with disabilities', 'persons who use a wheelchair', 'wheelchair user', or 'non-disabled'. Person-First Language emphasizes the person, not the disability (The Arc, 2019) and fosters positive attitudes toward PWDs.

Informed by these frameworks of critical disability theory and inclusive tourism, we explore below not only how PWDs are situated in tourism promotional materials in the American Southeast, but how those in positions of authority, including marketing directors, address their ability to create inclusive tourism - understood as a space and environment where people of all abilities are accepted and welcomed as customers and guests (TravAbility.com, 2019). In unpacking how the American Southeast uses verbiage to talk about PWDs, we also explored the language used to describe accessible touristic spaces, places, and activities within our methodology.

A critical study of American Southeastern tourism brochures

Tourism promotional materials exist in diverse forms, including travel brochures, rack cards, websites, and online booking platforms, that influence a visitor's perception of a destination. These advertising and promotional materials are used by visitors for a variety of reasons, ranging from finding activities to learning about the culture of their destination (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000a). As texts interspersed with images, they can also perform a social role by shaping the tourist imaginary–they provide their readers an opportunity to escape their own everyday life and imagine life as a tourist in an exotic destination (Burton & Klemm, 2011; Francesconi, 2011).

These promotional images are not just about displaying products and attractions, they also convey representations of social groups and societies. Some rely on racial representations and cultural norms to attract particular tourist markets to specific locations (Seiver & Matthews, 2016), and may reinforce stereotypes and exclude populations of difference (Buzinde et al., 2006). Extensive research shows that these representations favor non-disabled, White, cis-gendered, heterosexual people in the U.S. context (e.g., Alderman, 2013; Cloquet et al., 2018; Pritchard, 2001). Multiple studies have found that marginalized groups like PWDs are not well represented in travel brochures (Alderman, 2013; Burton & Klemm, 2011). Furthermore, analysis by Johan Edelheim (2007) shows the invisibility of PWDs within these materials, perpetuating a sense of an 'invisible minority.'

The American Southeast has captured the minds of many in the academy and the general public because of its unique cultural identity, rich and troubled history, and its diverse physical landscapes. The development of the region's tourism industry, resulting from economic shifts after the devastation of the American Civil War, has further entrenched the idea of the Southeast as an exotic location worthy of visiting (Stanonis, 2008). Since the mid-twentieth century, tourism has become a "multibillion-dollar-a-year industry, creating jobs, spawning new businesses, and generating much needed revenue," and developing into a "greater economic force than agriculture or manufacturing and … one of the top three economic activities in every state of the former Confederacy" (Starnes, 2003, p. 1). Presently, according to a study conducted by a hotel booking company, four of the top ten most visited states by domestic tourists are located in the Southeast, and three more are found in the top 20, evidencing the continuing importance of tourism to the region (Polland, 2014). A governmental study also revealed the dominance of the American Southeast as a destination for international tourists, with the South Atlantic census region, centered along the southeast coast of the U.S., welcoming one-third of overseas visitors to the country (National Travel & Tourism Office, 2015). These visitors, both foreign and domestic, are influenced by representations found in popular culture and promotional tourism literature that depicts the South as steeped in sunshine, history, and hospitality, representations that

produce ideas and landscapes that have permanently shaped the region's tourism industry (Cox, 2012; Stanonis, 2008).

Despite the importance of tourism to the economy and life of the American Southeast, research on how the region is represented in tourism promotional literature is sparse. Researchers have produced several edited volumes that provide brief glimpses into specific sectors of the South that recognize the region as complex and multifaceted (Cox, 2012; Stanonis, 2008). These anthologies reflect the importance of understanding the region's history, which has situated the American Southeast as unique and 'other' from the rest of the U.S. The continuing legacy of the Antebellum South and the Civil War, embodied in many tourism destinations across the region, plays perhaps the largest role in this othering process, also described as 'southering' by David Jansson (2017). Of course, much of this 'southering' is rooted in the exploitation and discrimination of marginalized populations, most notably Blacks/African-Americans.[1] Though overall a marginalized group in the U.S., comprising about 14% of the national population, Blacks/African-Americans disproportionately live in the American Southeast, accounting for 20% of the population in this region (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Given the similarities between these two marginalized populations in the American Southeast, we believe that PWDs are likely excluded and alienated within this region, which has historically ignored and/or exploited its most vulnerable communities. For instance, seven of the nine states sampled in our study contain more PWDs than the national average of 12.7% (Erickson et al., 2017) yet, are not proportionality represented mirroring the lack of representation of Blacks/African-Americans in tourism promotional material (Alderman & Modlin, 2013).

Methodology

According to Saldaña (2015), analyzing visual data is a "holistic, interpretive lens guided by intuitive inquiry and strategic questions" (p. 57). Thus, we conducted a qualitative content analysis (Saldaña, 2015) of tourism brochures from nine states located in the southeastern United States, including: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia (See Figure 1).

Our research team analyzed 211 physical and/or online travel brochures, which promoted the tourism destinations of 228 counties in the above nine states, consisting of an estimated number of 6,462 pages, 13,600 images (including photographs, illustrations, and advertisements, with 9,427 of those images displaying people) published between January 2018–August 2018. While there were 228 total counties included in this study, twelve brochures (one from Mississippi, 11 from Virginia) featured multiple counties within the same publication, leading to the discrepancy between the number of brochures analyzed (211) and counties included (228) in this study. The second author reached out to the study counties via their official Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) websites to obtain the official county-level travel brochures which were mailed to his address in 2018. Each county produced their brochures differently - either through in-house publications or out-sourced companies. Consequently, when the first author contacted the state-level DMOs, she received many conflicting responses as to how and where the brochures were produced and content was decided. From our understanding, the state level provides their own promotional material compared to the county-level DMOs. Thus, each county has their own budget and resources that are not aligned with the state level.

Before we started the analysis, the first author held two coding workshops to help train our research team with the content analysis. For the purposes of this paper, our analysis focused on tourism promotional materials exploring people with *physical* disabilities. We understand that this limits the inclusion of people with disabilities that are not visible; however, as researchers, we could not decipher whether the person pictured had a disability that was not visible. Thus, only visible physical disabilities were counted, including people using wheelchairs, prostheses,
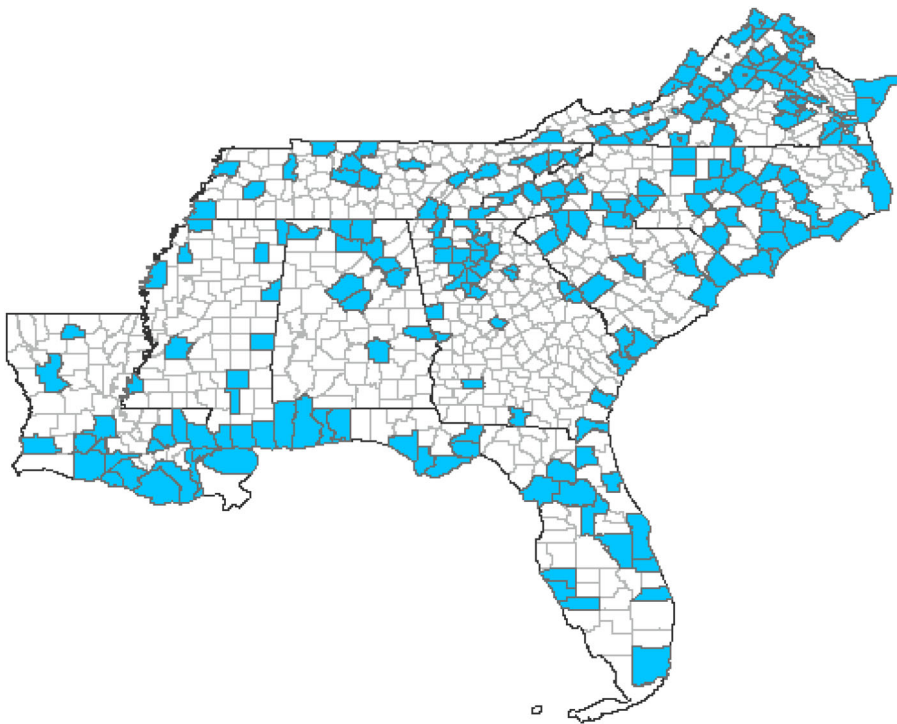
Figure 1. Map of counties analyzed.
This map illustrates the 228 counties (in blue) that were analyzed for this study.

Table 1. Example of code book for analysis of brochures.

County Name/Brochure Title	Number	Notes
Images		
Images of Physical Disabilities		
Images Depicting Accessible Spaces		
Text		
ADA Accessible or other mention of ADA		
Mentions of Accessible Ramps or parking		
Usage of Disabled vs. Handicapped		

and/or canes/walkers. Additionally, we coded for disability language and text to unpack how PWDs were represented or included in the touristic space.

During the second workshop, we created a code book where we individually counted the number of images with visible physical PWDs and analyzed text in a shared Google-drive Excel sheet with each tab correlating to the county examined. Within the code book, field notes and analytic memos were used to generate 'language-based data' that accompanied the visual data (Saldaña, 2015, p. 57). This process allowed for intercoder-reliability, generated dialogue, and confirmed the number of images consisting of people with visible physical disabilities in addition to any issues or concerns with the data (see Table 1). Lastly, as a research team, we relied on intensive group discussion, dialogical intersubjectivity, coder adjudication, and group consensuses as an agreement goal (Benjamin et al., 2017; Saldaña, 2015) via emails and face-to-face conversations to resolve any discrepancy with our coding.

Additionally, the first author invited a representative within each of the nine Southeastern state-level DMOs to participate in a semi-structured questionnaire in 2019. We were interested in understanding each state-level DMO's decision-making process and awareness regarding

promotional collateral involving diversity, including efforts made toward representation of PWDs. The first author emailed and called each office several times (from January 2019 to May 2019), resulting in responses from South Carolina, Louisiana, and Tennessee. North Carolina and Florida declined to participate in the study, whereas the rest of the states never returned emails or phone calls. However, due to limited time from each representative, two state representatives asked to respond via email in May 2019 (Louisiana and Tennessee) and one over the phone (South Carolina). The questions asked during the interview and via email were as follows: Tell me about yourself (current role/position); Tell me about your promotional/advertising team; In what ways do you feel like your promotional collateral involves diversity or inclusion?; In what ways are you making any efforts with including PWDs in your tourism promotional material?; How do you feel like your state is accepting or willing to include more diverse advertisement campaigns around PWDs?; Is there anything else you would like to add about your tourism promotional efforts around the inclusion of PWDs?

We transcribed and coded the interviews with in-vivo and value coding, resulting in a thematic analysis (Saldaña, 2015). For our analysis, we blended together the results of the content analysis and semi-structured questionnaires with the DMOs, which yielded three major themes: American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant is good enough; 'Diversity' means including more 'ethnic' groups; and Pets are welcomed but what about PWDs? Lastly, we would like to note that none of us, as authors, have a physical disability, but have hidden disabilities (i.e. anxiety disorder, depression disorder). Thus, as non-disabled scholars, we cannot truly understand what it is like to physically travel as someone with a physical disability. Furthermore, if one of us were to have a physical disability, we would be careful as to not be the 'token' representative of all PWDs. With this study, our hope is to be allies and advocates for PWDs in order to help highlight the absence of these voices within our scholastic literature and industry promotional collateral.

Findings

Partaking in tourism not only provides PWDs with the option to escape their usual roles as 'objects of care', but also improves their self-worth and increases confidence (Blichfeldt & Nicolaisen, 2011). However, historically, PWDs have not been widely embraced as a target market by the private sector (Hastings, 2009) and unfortunately, our findings confirm this statement. Out of the 211 brochures consisting of roughly 9,427 images of people (photographs, illustrations, and advertisements), there were twelve images depicting a person with a physical disability (see Table 2): One in Florida, one in Georgia, two in Mississippi, two in North Carolina, two in Tennessee, and four in Virginia.

Out of the twelve images depicting PWDs, seven portrayed elderly individuals who were either out of focus or not the main focal point of the photograph or image; in addition, all PWDs were White. These images suggest that the majority of PWDs are senior citizens/elderly, not active tourists capable of participating in touristic activities, and not diverse in terms of ethnic or racial identities. These findings are also supportive of critical disability theory's tenant that PWDs are not important enough to be included as part of the travel group or as a tourist (Devlin & Pothier, 2006).

In terms of language, our content analysis revealed that inclusion of and terminology about PWDs is still a contested issue. Of the 228 counties included in this study, brochures for only 114 (50%) mentioned disability in some manner (see Figure 2). This count includes terms directly relating to PWDs (e.g. "disabled," "handicapped") and language that promoted accessibility or inclusion (e.g. "accessible," "ADA-compliant," "wheelchair," "special needs"). Although there was mention of disability in half of the brochures analyzed, outdated words and verbiage were still the norm (see Figure 3). In those counties where PWDs were directly referred to (63, or 27.6%), only eight used the term "disabled." The majority of brochures that directly addressed PWDs (53, or 23.2%) used language that is considered harmful to the cause of disabled rights' (Haller et al.,

Table 2. List of PWDs in travel brochures.

County Name/ Brochure Title	Description of PWD	Notes
Escambia, FL	White, senior citizen (gender unknown) in a wheelchair	Blurred image at the right back
Clayton, GA	White, senior citizen female with cane	Part of a tourist group from a bus tour
Lee, MS	White, male (undisclosed age) in a wheelchair with his back turned to the camera	About to participate in a large running race in a large crowd at the center front
Lee, MS	White, senior citizen female with a cane	Pictured with a small group at a heritage site to the far right
Duplin, NC	White, senior citizen female with a walking cane	Blurred photo of a woman at the farmer's market to the left of the table
Wake, NC	White, senior citizen male in wheelchair	Being pushed in a wheelchair by a person at the Garner Veterans Memorial
Sumner, TN	White, female child in a wheelchair	One cartoon image for a park for children with disabilities
Sumner, TN	White, female child in a wheelchair	Photograph for a park for children with disabilities
Bristol, VA	White, male (age unknown) being pushed in a wheelchair in a large crowd	Blurred photo in a large crowd to the left
Bedford, VA	White, senior citizen female with a walking cane with her nurse	Advertisement for an assisted living facility
Prince William, VA	White, senior citizen male with a cane	Walking into a retail store in a crowd at the front left
Williamsburg, VA	Wheelchair at a venue	Unaccompanied wheelchair to the far back left at an event venue
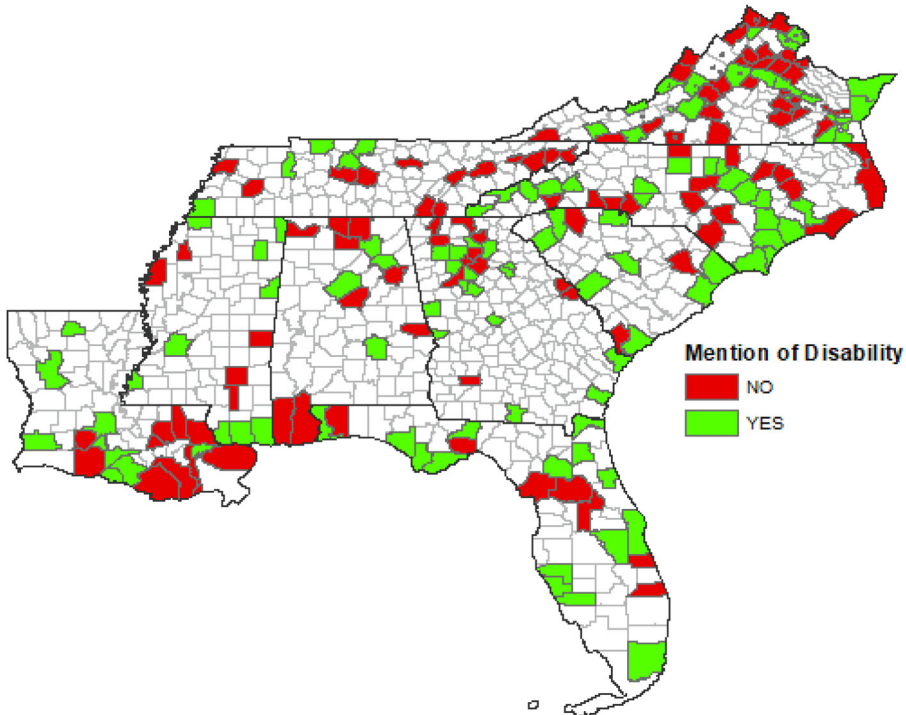
Figure 2. Mention of language of 'disability' in brochures.
This map illustrates the mention of disability within the text of the brochures.
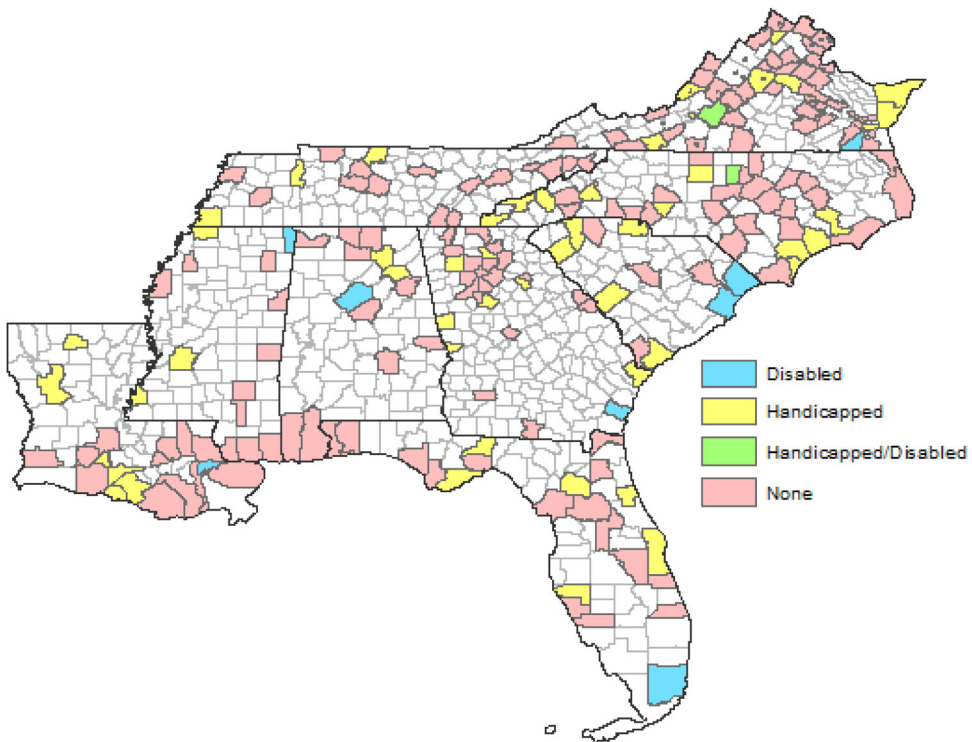
Figure 3. Mention of 'disabled' vs. 'handicap' language in tourism brochures.
This map illustrates how often the words 'disabled' vs. 'handicap' were used in the brochures.

2006), employing the words "handicap" or "handicapped" to describe PWDs. Two brochures, Orange County, NC and Bedford County, VA, used "disabled" and "handicapped" interchangeably throughout their publications; though the use of "disabled" by these DMOs is encouraging, the fact that the outdated term "handicapped" is found alongside more modern language gives the appearance that these tourist organizations are out of touch with the community. The overall trend towards the obsolete term "handicapped" found in our analysis demonstrates that the Southeastern tourism and hospitality industry remains far from inclusive towards PWDs.

Conversely, PWDs are not a solitary market, meaning they are surrounded by family members and friends who also understand the value in services, destinations, and attractions that accommodate all people in society (Yin et al., 2018). Within retail, in terms of economics and social justice, some businesses have recognized the market value of PWDs, including Walgreens, T.J. Maxx, Target, and SunTrust – all running advertisements showing people with physical disabilities engaging in everyday activities (Diament, 2017). Yet, the Southeastern tourism industry is slow to include or incorporate this market within their county-level brochures. What might the constraints, barriers, or hesitations causing this absence of PWDs be? After speaking with several representatives at the state-level DMO and analyzing 'disability' language within the brochures, it appears that being 'ADA' compliant is '*good enough*' for these institutions.

ADA compliant is 'good enough'

Our analysis revealed the noted usage of ADA-related terms, as well as direct mentions of the ADA within Southeastern tourism brochures. Of the 228 counties included in this study, 24 (10.5%) made some mention of the ADA. While this is a low number, these mentions were

notable due to the stark and legal-sounding phrases that accompanied them. For instance, phrases such as "ADA compliant" and "ADA accessible" were found regularly in brochures, identifying to audiences that these locations meet the legal accommodations laid out by the federal government. Likewise, the brochure for Miami-Dade County, FL, referenced the ADA in a small section of fine print notifying PWDs to contact the Miami-Dade Office of ADA Coordination for information concerning travel to their area. Mentions of the ADA usually appeared in inventories of a county's attractions (i.e. trails and docks) or hotels, but were rarely expanded upon outside of the "compliant" and "accessible" phrases described above. Combined with the results demonstrating the extensive use of outdated language, our content analysis elucidates that American Southeastern tourism brochures do not promote an inclusive, or even accessible, image of their destinations.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) published the Americans with Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design in September 2010. These benchmarks indicated that all electronic and information technology must be accessible to PWDs. Adhering to this statement, the Tennessee DMO representative shared that the state is working toward achieving these standards:

> TNvacation.com meets or exceeds federal guidelines for ADA accessibility compliance as well … As noted, TNvacation.com meets or exceeded federal guidelines for accessibility. We are also planning educational workshops for our partners to assist them in navigating accessibility laws and how to accommodate the differently abled … We are currently working on content that provides travel information for the differently abled such as including closed caption subtitles on videos and travel itineraries featuring hotels and attractions that meet ADA accessible requirements. – Tennessee DMO Representative

Although it is essential and necessary to have ADA compliant websites and inventory, there is still an absence of PWDs within touristic promotional materials. Excluding PWDs perpetuates the stigma that this group does not travel, does not participate in dining or shopping, and that they are instead completely incapable or unable of being a tourist and belonging in a touristic setting. Even though imagery has the power to influence people's assumptions, opinions, and change mindsets (Cloquet et al., 2018), the argument surrounding ADA compliance as 'good enough' seems to be evident throughout this study:

> [Our] consumer website meets regulations with PWDs … print or digital or television we stress diversity through ethnic diversity and geographic diversity across the state mountain areas to the coast … representing PWDs in advertising … we have not done that in the past and not doing it currently. - South Carolina DMO Representative

Being ADA compliant is the basic – low hanging fruit – accessibility standard, helping to alleviate any legal concerns or issues. Furthermore, the argument around not 'selling' or promising a 'product' that cannot be sold can also be seen as an *argument* for not including PWDs in tourism promotional material. For instance, the Louisiana state DMO representative explained:

> We feel we must first inventory which attractions can totally accommodate folks with a disability. You never want to promise something you cannot deliver! We need to make sure we have the product in-state … getting inventory from all 64 parishes in Louisiana … . BUDGET restraints, learning more about this segment (What are they looking for? How do they travel? Etc.). Right now our money must go to 'the middle of the bell curve.' Same reason we don't market for destination weddings. – Louisiana DMO Representative

'Getting inventory' for accessible spaces, places, and attractions is essential for explaining and showcasing how a destination may be accessible, and the Louisiana DMO representative, through our ongoing email communications, expressed a passion and persistence toward working on gaining inventory for PWDs in their state. However, referring back to the crucial questions of the inclusive tourism framework (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018) – (1) who is included (excluded) and (2) on what terms – it is evident, through our study, that PWDs are excluded from the dissemination of inclusive touristic opportunities that welcome and attract this group to destinations. If PWDs are not being included currently, then who is?

'Diversity' means including more people of color or 'ethnic' groups

The term 'diversity' is perhaps one of the most popular buzzwords in both industry and academic settings today, resulting from the increased attention given to uplifting marginalized populations. However, despite its popularity, what 'diversity' actually entails is a contested subject. For PWDs, inclusion in diversity has been an often-neglected struggle, particularly in the academy, which informs decisions made by industry operators (Linton et al., 1995; Olkin, 2002; Taub & Fanflik, 2000). Our content analysis supported this finding, as PWDs were largely excluded in both visual and textual conditions from American Southeastern tourism marketing. Yet, increasing 'diversity,' in terms of diverse ethnicities and racial representation, appears to be a goal for many DMOs. When asked about the level of increasing diversity within their promotional material, disability was not mentioned:

> It is something that we consider …. I can bring it up …. But it is not a subject that has been approached. We focus attention around the ethnic diversity across our advertising … [disability] is not a subject that has come up with advertising other than the compliance online with websites. – South Carolina DMO Representative

> I feel strongly that our marketing collateral, especially in recent years, includes diverse offerings representing a wide variety of potential visitors of every background through the photography, video and articles we select to be featured on our website, all digital media platforms and vacation guide. – Tennessee DMO Representative

Globally, travel and tourism has been overwhelmingly White-washed, leaving limited room to highlight the experiences of traditionally marginalized racial and ethnic groups. As a result, there is a near invisibility of Black/African-American and Latinx people in the travel sphere (Buzinde et al., 2006). Evidenced by promotional material research, the tourism industry has traditionally portrayed leisure vacations with all White faces (Burton & Klemm, 2011). However, Black/African-American travelers spend between $48 to $65 billion per year globally on travel (Dillette et al., 2019) whereas, the Latinx community contributes over $56 billion in leisure travel every year (Morse, 2019). Consequently, our conversations with the DMO representatives were parallel to recent articles and dialogue around including more people of color within the travel and tourism promotional spheres. For instance, Greater Miami's Convention and Visitor's Bureau has its own multicultural department that partners with 30 neighborhood businesses to help embed communities of color into their advertising (Greater Miami CVB, 2019). However, this definition of 'diversity' within travel and advertising is void of PWDs. For example, when a global hotel brand's head of diversity recently contacted Mandala Research to explore the possibilities of including certain 'diverse' groups in their promotion and advertising, they included African-American, Latinx, Muslim, and female travelers (Peltier, 2016), but there was no mention of PWDs.[2] Diversity, however, means more than just 'including people of color'; it also means including PWDs.

In 2050, it is projected that the majority of Americans will no longer be White, whereas Latinx and Asian populations are expected to nearly triple (Kotkin, 2010). Today in the U.S., 25% of children under age five are Latinx; by 2050, that percentage will be almost 40% (Kotkin, 2010). Despite these increasing racial and ethnic demographics, we found that when PWDs were included in images of Southeastern tourism, diversity was not represented. The twelve PWDs pictured in brochures were all White. However, the true intersectionality of a disability cuts through race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, socioeconomic status, etc. Thus, showcasing PWDs as multi-ethnic and from various age-groups is necessary in order to highlight that PWDs are not one race/ethnicity, one gender, or one age group. By doing so, this disrupts the predominantly White male, heteronormative, cis-gendered lens that informs and dominates the tourism promotional literature. Such an intersectional approach can foster a deeper, more socially inclusive representation of the changing demographics within the U.S.

This lack of inclusion reflects Harlan Hahn's (1987) seminal work around the role of advertising in disabilities studies. He argued that traditionally, advertising's emphasis on 'beauty and bodily

perfection' has led to the total exclusion of PWDs (Hahn, 1987). Furthermore, he posited that non-disabled people feared becoming a person with a disability, which in turn, caused issues and hesitation to include PWDs within advertising. Consequently, PWDs 'inability' to ever fit within the context of beautiful bodies has caused their invisibility. However, the diversity argument does not compare to the amount of attention and acceptance of one special target audience that emerged from our analysis. This *more important* target market group has infiltrated not only the inventory of appendices of hospitality and tourism spaces and places, but visually dominated the promotional brochures – the special niche group of 'pets.'

Pets are welcomed but how about PWDs?

The 'welcoming of pets' while traveling is currently an upward trend within the tourism and hospitality industry. A recent article from *Skift* (Sheivachman, 2017) mentioned the increase of hotels *actively welcoming* pets through allowing boarding in rooms and providing small services including pet beds, feeding bowls, and dog treats. According to *Travelers Today*, pet owners can enjoy their vacations "without worrying about their pets" since so many destinations offer facilities such as pet-sitting and special pet themed events (Ara Lasco, 2017, paragraph 4). For example, being one of the first hotel chains to allow pets on their property, Kimpton Hotel Monaco in Colorado, announced that in August 2019 guests can book a private party with puppies and prosecco (Yasharoff, 2019). This package retails at $1,262 per night, and part of the proceeds go toward supporting a local no-kill puppy rescue facility.

Although we were not actively seeking this trend, throughout our analysis, the increase of inclusion and mention of pets (i.e. dogs) while traveling was outstanding compared to the lack of representation of PWDs. We noted whole sections devoted to 'pet friendly' touristic sites including hotels, restaurants, recreational sites, and tourism activities (ranging from pet friendly breweries to dog-friendly festivals). Our content analysis revealed that 109 (47.8%) counties included the mention of pets, such as "Pet Friendly" in hotel listings, but no mention of accessibility (even ADA) in said hotel listings. Furthermore, 36 (33%) of those counties did not mention disability in any form. However, while this study specifically focuses on American Southeastern tourism, we believe this disparity in inclusion is both a nationwide and global phenomenon.

Pets are now seen as 'part of the family' and leaving them behind is no longer an option when vacationing (Ara Lasco, 2017). DMOs, in addition to hospitality and tourism companies, are tapping into this target market. For instance, the Visit North Carolina DMO (2019) placed a call out for the 'first dog travel agent' in August 2019 in order to:

> Help tell the world about our state's woof-worthy destinations – as only a pupper can … No matter which trip you choose, Visit North Carolina believes vacations should be experienced with the pure, unbridled joy that our best friends bring to every moment.

In our analysis, we noticed a shift from 'family friendly' places and spaces to 'pet friendly' attractions, hotels, and touristic activities. This could be a consequence of declining fertility rates coupled with the increase of delaying marriage (Stone, 2017). This delay has influenced a boost in single people and child-free couples adopting pets, viewing them as 'family members' or 'fur-babies', and self-identifying as 'pet-parents' (Stone, 2017). As such, pets seem to be replacing 'family friendly' promotional materials within brochures and contributing toward a niche market focused on advocating for animal rights, thus creating an inclusive environment for the *whole* family. However, there was no significant contribution toward creating an inclusive framework for the wellbeing and welcoming of PWDs. Therefore, pets were 'represented' and deemed as important or more valuable than PWDs. This finding aligns with the critical disability framework in that PWDs are denied substantive citizenship, or inclusion into society at large.

The exclusion of PWDs in both textual and visual aspects of tourism promotional literature reveals the "dis-citizenship" that many PWDs experience and demonstrates the banal nature that these forms of exclusion take on. The observation of animals as more 'important' than the mention or

representation of PWDs is what emerged from our analysis. These brochures showed that pets are being humanized through their inclusion as part of the family, while PWDs are seen as less than human through their exclusion from the family unit. Currently, we argue that American society has shifted their attention and focus toward traveling with pets instead of traveling with a disability.

Discussion

Reflecting the economic bias in tourism, much of the past research in this field, especially before the mid-to-late-1990s and early 2000s, focused on increasing the bottom line of tourism-related businesses (Walle, 1997). An increasing tide of research being conducted through critical episte-mologies seeks to "stimulate their audience to transform society and thereby to liberate them-selves and others" (Bramwell & Lane, 2014, p. 2). In order to seek this 'just transformation' in tourism studies, tourism researchers have to recognize tourism as more than an industry – as a social force that has positive impacts (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006).

Promotional tourism literature, such as we studied above, has the power to uplift people as both traveler and tourism provider, but it can also marginalize social and cultural groups. Our investigation into American Southeastern tourism promotion reveals this two-faced Janus of the industry where PWDs are remarkably absent from county-level brochures and the inner machina-tions of state-level DMOs. Through the use of outdated language such as "handicapped", the complete exclusion of PWDs from brochures, or the homogenous representation of PWDs as eld-erly and White, large swaths of the United States are portrayed as inaccessible and unwelcoming to this growing sector of the travel market. Moreover, it appears that animals, through pet-friendly hotel listings and abundant mentions of dog parks, are a more attractive and 'safer' mar-ket segment to target than potential travelers with disabilities. If destinations are able to source an inventory for pet-friendly places and spaces, why not source an inventory with accessible spaces and places?

Our study supports arguments for the social model of disability (Lang, 2001; Oliver, 1983) and Devlin and Pothier (2006) critical disability framework, through which PWDs are denied substan-tive citizenship, or inclusion into society at large. The exclusion of PWDs in both textual and vis-ual aspects of tourism promotional literature reveals "dis-citizenship" and demonstrates the banal nature that these forms of exclusion take on. In the American Southeast, our interviews with personnel at state-level DMOs revealed one potential reason for the continuance of ableist tendencies in the region's promotional literature: differing definitions of diversity. Increasing eth-nic and racial diversity was considered the main focus of most diversity campaigns by state DMOs, which conforms to traditional definitions of diversity (Olkin, 2002).

The rise in literature investigating the inclusion of African-Americans/Blacks in American Southeastern tourism over the last decade further reinforces the societal focus on raising aware-ness of racial/ethnic diversity in tourism (Alderman, 2013; Alderman et al., 2016; Dillette et al., 2019). Yet this focus, found in both the industrial and academic tourism communities, obfuscates other aspects of diversity, such as mental and physical disabilities (Linton et al., 1995; Olkin, 2002; Taub & Fanflik, 2000). Constructing diversity as only racially and ethnically based hides the similarities that PWDs share with other marginalized groups, including "prejudice, stigma, dis-crimination, and oppression" (Olkin, 2002, p. 134). Given the exclusion of PWDs demonstrated in this study, we argue that the American Southeastern tourism industry maintains an ableist hegemony through promotional tourism literature that only promotes a racially and ethnically based version of diversity, effectively erasing the disproportionately large community of PWDs that reside and travel within the region. As such, prejudice, discrimination, and oppression char-acterize the relationship that tourism operators in the American Southeast have with PWDs.

Furthermore, the noted humanizing of pets over PWDs as members of the family unit is another process by which the non-disabled hegemony is maintained within the American

Southeastern tourism industry. Through the inclusion of pet-friendly hotel listings and entire sections devoted to traveling with pets (primarily dogs) in lieu of accessibility, PWDs are relegated to the peripheries of tourists' imaginations as they flip through the pages of a selected brochure. Such marginalization is characteristic of the discrimination and oppression that the social model of disability (Lang, 2001; Oliver, 1983) and the critical disability framework (Devlin & Pothier, 2006) recognize as barriers to full societal inclusion for PWDs. By choosing to showcase accommodations for families with pets instead of families with disabilities, tourism spaces within the American Southeast are actively depicted as inaccessible and unwelcoming to a large swath of the region's population. Combined with their exclusion from diversity campaigns, travelers with disabilities are kept "in their place" as social others and portrayed as "out of place" in these tourism spaces (Kitchin, 1998, p. 345). Therefore, tourism promotional literature continues to uphold hegemonic views of disability despite their emancipatory and liberatory potential if informed by the tenets of inclusive tourism.

Thus, to combat the non-disabled hegemony, we argue for an *inclusive tourism* framework that includes involving PWDs in the ethical production and consumption of tourism (see Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018). PWDs should be included in the decision-making processes and marketing of touristic destinations, activities, and spaces (e.g., serving on tourism advisory boards at the state, county, and local levels). Social justice activist Janaya Khan argued for a redefining of privilege, stating that "privilege isn't about what you've gone through, it's about what you haven't had to go through" (MSN. , 2019). Members of tourism marketing organizations must check their non-disabled privilege by including PWDs in their advertising and promotional campaigns. Having the voices of PWDs heard and valued at the decision making and production levels helps to create and foster a sustainable approach of inclusivity that leads the way towards full substantive citizenship and inclusive participation for PWDs in travel and tourism.

Conclusion

This paper contributes significantly to the critical study of PWDs in tourism promotional material. Through a detailed exploration of tourism brochures representing 228 counties in the American Southeast and interviews with personnel at state-level DMOs within the region, we demonstrated that PWDs are excluded from definitions of diversity used by tourism operators; that mentions of disability are couched in the stark institutional terms of the ADA; and that pets are humanized over family members with disabilities. Careful analysis is needed to disclose the structural and pervasive character of non-disabled hegemony, which, through economic and social constructions, influences almost every aspect of the tourism industry. Our findings support the social model of disability and the framework of "dis-citizenship" by displaying the social constructedness of disability and its varying inclusions/exclusions within the American Southeastern tourism industry. By narrowing and obfuscating the nature of disability, through both text and images, tourism promotional literature can create inaccessible and unwelcoming tourism spaces that place PWDs on the outside as potential visitors. Overall, our content analysis of American Southeastern tourism promotional materials revealed intense discrimination of PWDs in tourism promotional literature, evidencing the hegemonic relations that present tourism destinations as largely inaccessible to potential visitors with disabilities.

The study of access and inclusiveness for PWDs therefore advances the growing critical literature on tourism marketing. Our study showcased the dominance of non-disabled perspectives, as a large majority of brochures and travel guides lacked both visual and textual mentions of accessibility and PWDs. Further expansion and elaboration of critical disability theory alongside an inclusive tourism framework can help to bring attention to PWDs, an oft-forgotten community within the U.S. and the global population at large, and a growing market within the tourism

industry (Aitchison, 2009; Cloquet et al., 2018; Darcy, 2002; Michopoulou et al., 2015; Nyanjom et al., 2018; Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2018).

Lastly, representation matters – and it is important to present a diverse and inclusive population of PWDs (including intersectionality of race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and age) in helping to shape tourism advertising and promotional media, ensuring that PWDs are welcomed, accepted, and included in touristic spaces and places. The inclusion of PWDs within the tourism industry aligns with notions of tourism as a positive social force (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006). Through the incorporation of pictures displaying PWDs partaking in touristic activities and the use of text explaining accommodations in Person-First terms, tourists with disabilities can visualize themselves at destinations and plan more easily if they decide to travel, providing the opportunity to engage more fully with society and receive substantive citizenship.

Notes

1. Geographers and tourism scholars have noted troubling trends in African-American representation (or the lack thereof) in images and texts within brochures, websites, and on the grounds of Southeastern tourist destinations associated with slavery and the American Civil Rights Movement (Alderman et al., 2016). Other Southern tourism landscapes not directly related to slavery marginalize African-Americans largely through their absence in promotional materials and tourism development processes (Alderman & Modlin, 2013).
2. Mandala Research is a travel market research firm offering products and services - along with expert analysis - to Fortune 500 companies, non-profit organizations, and government agencies (Mandala Research, 2019).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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