



# Accommodators or non-accommodators? A typology of hotel frontline employees' attitude towards guests with disabilities

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## ABSTRACT

Though studies on the experiences of travellers with disabilities abound, little is known on the attitude and attitudinal functions of frontline employees towards guests with disabilities. Using data from 825 hotel frontline employees in Ghana, this study applies the functional theory of attitude to understand their attitude and attitudinal functions towards guests with disabilities. Employing the two-step cluster, Kruskal-Wallis test and Chi-square test of independence, this study established that there are four segments of hotel frontline employees based on their attitude, and attitudinal functions towards guests with disabilities: pretending accommodators, empathetic accommodators, apathetic non-accommodators, and egoistic non-accommodators. As theoretically anticipated, each of the attitudinal segments is cultured to serve specific function and behaviour. Meanwhile, the attitudinal segments differed by sex, formal educational attainment and hotel category. The service and managerial implications on accessible tourism are discussed.

## 1. Introduction

Aside from being an industry with the potential to offer socio-psychological and physiological benefits to People with Disabilities (PwDs), the tourism industry stands to economically benefit by putting in measures to cater for their needs. Together with their family and friends who accompany them on tourism related trips, PwDs are an important tourism market segment both in volume and value (McKercher et al., 2003; Buhalis et al., 2005; Dwyer and Darcy, 2008; Van Horn, 2007). Estimates by Darcy et al. (2008) suggests that overnight expenditure of domestic tourists with disabilities in Australia in 2003 amounts to A\$4822.390 million while day trippers with disabilities spent A\$1 596 931 400. It is equally estimated that Australian outbound tourists with disabilities spent A\$222.92 million while their inbound counterparts spent \$1.394 billion in 2003 (Darcy et al., 2008). Nonetheless, tourism service providers including accommodation operators are yet to fully embrace the increasing relevance of the accessible tourism segment. Due to the overnight stay requirement of tourism, accommodation is an essential supply product for all categories of tourists especially PwDs. While non-disabled people can settle for varied kinds of accommodation facilities, PwDs need to ensure that they have accommodation that meet their needs before deciding on their

trips (Darcy and Pegg, 2011). In instances where such accessible accommodation is not found, they are compelled to substitute the destination or cancel their trips (Bi et al., 2007; Darcy, 2003; 2010; Stumbo and Pegg, 2010).

Though some efforts have been made to ensure the accessibility of accommodation services to PwDs, little success has been achieved in the service dimension. The literature (eg. Darcy, 2010; Stumbo and Pegg, 2010; Darcy and Pegg, 2011) suggests that Guest with Disabilities (GwDs) continue to encounter unfavourable attitude from accommodation service providers which impinges on their ability to consume accommodation services in dignified manner. Plethora of demand side studies on travel experiences of PwDs (Daniels et al., 2005; Grady and Ohlin, 2009; Darcy, 2010; Kim et al., 2012; Kim and Lehto, 2013) point to unwelcoming attitude of hotel frontline staff as a major barrier. Nevertheless, little research has been dedicated to understanding the nature and functions of hotel frontline employees' attitude towards GwDs. Much of the demand side studies have only acknowledged the negative attitude of hotel frontline staff towards GwDs with little supply-side studies that unearth the nature and functions of such attitude. Attitude is described as an individual's predisposition in evaluating a symbol or an object either in a favourable or unfavourable way while the function of attitude is the purpose or reason(s) underpinning an at-

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titude (Katz, 1960). Consequently, the objectives of this paper are to: examine the attitude of hotel frontline employees towards GwDs, assess the functions of their attitude and characterise the hotel frontline employees based on their attitude towards GwDs.

Understanding the attitude and attitudinal functions of hotel frontline employees stands to inform both knowledge and practice. Regarding knowledge, the focus of this study on the functions served by the attitude held towards GwDs departs from previous studies on GwDs in the accommodation sector. Additionally, this study adds to knowledge by unearthing frontline employees' attitude towards GwDs from the perspective of an under-researched region (Africa). This addition is valuable given the fact that disability is shaped by socio-cultural beliefs which invariably informs hotel frontline employees' attitude towards GwDs. In terms of practice, knowledge on the functions of frontline employees' attitude towards GwDs can serve as a foundation for designing strategies to positively influence attitude towards GwDs.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Disability in Ghana

Disability is a concept laden with socio-cultural connotations which underpins the attitude of non-disabled people towards PwDs (Adam, 2018a). In Ghana, disability is dominantly conceived from two perspectives. First, PwDs are perceived as people who are morally decadent and have wronged God/deity or have their relatives (whether dead or alive) do same (Kassah, 2008). Therefore, the impairment suffered by an individual is considered a punishment from God/deity for committing an offence (Kassah et al., 2012). Children born with impairment are considered spirit children who are evil and need to be exorcised or killed to be returned to the spirit world (Kassah, 2008). Further, it is believed that a non-disabled person can incur the wrath of God/deity and inflicted with similar impairment as a punishment for fraternising with a PwD (Kuyini et al., 2011). As a result, PwDs are mostly shunned and considered inferior by non-disabled people (Adam, 2018b). The other socio-cultural construction of disability projects PwDs as people with little or no abilities (Kassah, 2008). This conception of PwDs simply equates disability to inability and thus consider them as incapable of constructing meaningful lives for themselves except to rely on non-disabled people for their needs. People with disabilities are perceived as subjects of charity and represent ideal opportunity for non-disabled people to serve God by being charitable to them (Adam, 2018b).

Ghana as a stable democracy has adopted a number of global conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) and also passed the Persons with Disability Act (Act 715) in 2006 in order to improve on the attitude of non-disabled people towards PwDs and ultimately the lives of PwDs. The law provides for accessibility of PwDs to public places and also demand that they be treated in dignified manner. The effort of the state is being complemented by disability based organisations such as the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations (GFD), Ghana Society of the Physically Disabled (GSPD), the Ghana Blind Union (GBU), and the Ghana National Association of the Deaf (GNAD), and civil society organisations. Consequently, there is general improvements in the attitude of non-disabled people towards PwDs but the pace of progress remains slow due to the poor implementation of the disability law and the entrenched conservative beliefs on disability (Ghana Statistical Service [GSS], 2014).

### 2.2. Attitude towards people with disabilities

Attitude is conceived as a latent psychological process that is concealed within the 'self' and evoked by specific referent (Rao, 2004). Attitude is mostly believed to be a product of the socialisation process

and tend to define an individual's relationship with other symbols, objects or even world views (Daruwalla and Darcy, 2005). It is a tripartite concept consisting of the cognitive, affective and behavioural components (Antonak and Livneh, 2000; Findler et al., 2007). The cognitive component relates to the beliefs that an individual hold in relation to a referent while the affective component measures the emotional reaction or feeling that one has towards a referent and the behavioural dimension is the overt conduct that one exhibits towards a referent. These three components are linked such that the cognitive influences the affective, which ultimately influences behaviour (Katz, 1960).

The literature generally associates PwDs with negative attitude (Bowtell, 2015). The negative attitude towards PwDs is pervasive across all sectors including economic, social, political and hospitality/tourism. In terms of economic life, PwDs are mostly construed as lacking the necessary ability, and skills to be economically engaged and thus perceived as being unproductive (Buhalis et al., 2012; Houtenville and Kalargyrou, 2012; Domínguez et al., 2013; Houtenville and Kalargyrou, 2015). In most societies, PwDs lack access to structural power to enable them participate in decision making (Buhalis et al., 2012). Based on similar perceptions, health service providers have been reported to harbour negative attitude towards PwDs (Trani et al., 2011), further marginalising them. In terms of hospitality and tourism, there is evidence (McKercher et al., 2003; Buhalis et al., 2005; Dwyer and Darcy, 2008; Van Horn, 2007; Kim and Lehto, 2013) chronicling the negative attitude of service providers towards PwDs. In most instances, the unfavourable attitude experienced by PwDs include negative stereotypes, belief and feeling that they are inferior, unwillingness to associate with them, reluctance to serve them, serving them in demeaning ways, use of demeaning words on them and in some cases outright refusal to serve them.

Nevertheless, recent evidence (Buhalis et al., 2012; Adam, 2018a) points to an evolution in attitude towards PwDs from a conservative, judgemental and non-inclusive view to more progressive, less judgemental and inclusive view. However, there is wide variation in this evolution between developed and less developed countries. Though not completely inclusive, western societies have fairly favourable attitude than societies in developing regions of Africa and Asia (Kassah et al., 2012). While such attitude is largely woven around the social model of disability in the former, it is mainly based on the moral and medical models of disability in the latter (Adam, 2018a; 2018b). The moral model of disability carves disability as a socio-cultural issue and stereotype PwDs as people who are morally decadent (Adam, 2018a) and hence breeds disaffection for PwDs (Adam, 2018b). While the medical model eschews the moral explanation to disability, it is underpinned by the thought that disability is a medical abnormality that makes an individual with impairment a dysfunctional member of society (Darcy, 2010). The emphasis of the medical model on the individual with impairment results in a less inclusive attitude towards PwDs. In contrast, the social model of disability is grounded on the thought that people are not disabled by their impairments but rather the negative societal conceptions of disability (Darcy, 2010). The social model abjures the medical emphasis on impairment but rather emphasises negative social perceptions of impairment as the bane of disability, hence the nurturing of positive attitude towards PwDs. However, the social model has been critiqued for its passive treatment of PwDs as 'victims' of inaccessible environment and social neglect (Zajadacz, 2015). Also, it has been argued that the social model disregards the idea that disability is not just a social issue but rather, a complex one intersecting with different dimensions of life (Zajadacz, 2015). Zajadacz (2015) notes that some PwDs will experience physical or mental conditions that will continue to exist even if all the necessary social enabling environment is provided. In her view, it is best to acknowledge disability as a complex bio-psycho-social issue requiring multifaceted attitude and action.

### 2.3. Attitude of accommodation service providers towards guests with disabilities

The attitude of accommodation service providers towards PwDs is a determinant of their ability to demand tourism services, yet has received little attention by service providers and researchers alike. However, evidence from two perspectives: accommodation supply and challenges encountered by travellers with disabilities points to unsatisfactory situation concerning hotel employees' attitude towards GwDs. The few and notable studies (eg. Darcy, 2010; Stumbo and Pegg, 2010; Darcy et al., 2011; Darcy and Pegg, 2011) that have attempted supply-side analysis of the attitude of accommodation service providers towards GwDs are either limited in scope or heavily leaned on managerial policies as lenses to understanding the attitude of accommodation service providers towards GwDs. While managers are important policies drivers, and ensure the provision of disable friendly facilities, their initiatives are complemented by frontline employees who represent the accommodation firms and directly deal with GwDs. Thus, to gain a holistic understanding of the attitude of accommodation service providers towards GwDs, there is the need to equally focus on frontline employees with whom GwDs interact on daily basis.

Extant literature (Darcy, 2010; Kim et al., 2012; Small et al., 2012; Kim and Lehto, 2013) highlights the negative attitude of accommodation and tourism service providers towards GwDs. Chronicles on the experiences of travellers with disabilities detail how they are met with stereotypes and consequently expected to accept such attitude from service providers. For instance, Miller and Kirk (2002) evaluated United Kingdom's tourism industry adoption of the 'access to all' standards as contained in the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act and found that most tourism industry professionals have negative prejudice towards GwDs and as such do not understand their travel needs. In an online review of complaints lodged by customers with disabilities, Kim and Lehto (2012) catalogued the unwelcoming attitude of service providers as a key complaint. This is consistent with Poria, Reichel and Brandt's (2011) earlier observation that negative attitude of hotel frontline employees is critical to the travel experience of GwDs. Earlier, Smith (1987) had identified barriers that characterise the travel expedition of PwDs including attitudinal, architectural, ecological, interactive and communication barriers, as well as intrinsic barriers related to each participant's own physical or cognitive functioning ability.

The negative attitude of service providers is ubiquitous and experienced by all GwDs regardless of their type of impairment (Lyu, 2017). Nonetheless, recent evidence suggests that the attitude of accommodation and other tourism service providers towards GwDs is evolving with a number of service providers increasingly responding to the needs of GwDs (Zajadacz, 2017). The evolution of the conception of disability from medical to social models in western societies is largely credited with this positive attitudinal change (Zajadacz, 2017). Relatedly, legislations and adoption of accessible tourism principles and frameworks by international and national tourism organisations have further spurred positive attitudinal change among hospitality/tourism service providers (Darcy and Pegg, 2011). Though service accessibility is far from being achieved, evidence from Poland and Russia suggest that tourism service providers' attitude towards PwDs is changing for the best (Domínguez et al., 2013). However, this trend is nuanced between developed and developing countries with the latter yet to make significant strides mainly due to the conservative conceptualisation of disability which largely dehumanises PwDs.

### 2.4. Measurement of attitude

Attitude is a complex psychological concept, measurement of which entails the conversion of an individual's observation towards a referent

into an index which indicates the presence, strength and direction of the attitude that underlies the observed conduct (Cervellon and Dubé, 2002). Attitude measurement methods have generally been decoupled into two, namely direct and indirect (Cervellon and Dubé, 2002; Findler et al., 2007). Direct method involves measures that make the respondents aware that their attitude is being measured either openly or by the nature of the measurement technique (Findler et al., 2007). Several approaches are employed under the direct method including ratings (respondents are asked to rate or indicate their extent of agreement with a number of attitudinal statements), opinion surveys (respondents are asked to express their attitude on a list of questions about the referent; maybe closed or open), opinion rankings (request respondents to arrange a number of items into an ordered sequence based on a specific criterion) and Q methodology (engages respondents to sort a set of statements about the attitude referent into heaps based on some criterion such as favourability or descriptiveness).

Despite its wide acceptance and usage, the direct method is subject of some validity threats. First, it is argued that the process of responding can transform a non-existent attitude into an existing one or create a transient attitude in the respondent which may be erroneously interpreted by the researcher (Antonak and Livneh, 2000). Another validity threat pertains to the issue of respondent reactivity and this relates to a respondent's realisation that his/her attitude is being measured and hence the attempt to modify it. In this regard, seven possible threats may mar the validity of the data (Antonak and Livneh, 2000): 1) respondents may try to please the researcher by providing responses that he/she thinks will confirm the study's hypothesis (experimenter demand effect); 2) respondent's attempt to create a good impression of oneself as being open minded, sophisticated or enlightened (evaluation apprehension effect); 3) give the referent the benefit of the doubt (the generosity effect); 4) deny socially undesirable traits by providing socially appropriate responses (social desirability bias); 5) purposefully sabotage the study by deliberately providing inappropriate responses (sabotage effect); 6) fail to give discerning responses because of lack of interest in the measurement task (thoroughness effect); and 7) refuse to provide responses for fear of revealing nontypical and contentious opinions (refusal bias). Also, direct methods can suffer from the halo effect where the respondent rates items perceived to be similar in the same way.

Indirect method involves approaches that do not reveal to the respondent that his/her attitude is being measured (Findler et al., 2007). Indirect method may entail non-obtrusive behavioural observation (respondent is unaware that he/she is being observed), projective techniques (respondent is aware that he/she is being observed but is unaware of the purpose of observation), disguised techniques (respondent is deliberately deceived as to the true purpose of the measurement) or psychological method (respondent is aware of being measured but is an inactive participant in the measurement process). Regardless of its intent to address the validity threats in the measurement of attitude, there are a number of challenges that limit the regular use of the indirect method. The methodology is expensive especially the non-obtrusive behavioural observation where video and recording devices are needed. Further, it is daunting and expensive to set up experimental situations as mostly required in indirect method. Additionally, context specific variables innate in the experimental environment (such as noise, temperature) as well as the psychological (stress, motivation) and physiological (hunger, fatigue) state of the respondent could affect the validity of responses from indirect method (Antonak and Livneh, 2000). Meanwhile, the ethical debate surrounding the use of the indirect method (which involves disguising the intent and measurement procedures) taints its heralded validity claim. Additionally, the indirect method, though expensive and time consuming, has not yielded significantly different findings from what has been reported in most studies that employed direct method as pertaining to the gap between the cog-

nitive, affective and behavioural components of attitude (Antonak and Livneh, 2000; Findler et al., 2007).

Comparing the limitations of both direct and indirect methods, the direct method (opinion rating) has been chosen for this study due to a number of reasons. First, the direct method of measuring attitude is appropriate for non-experimental cross sectional study like this one. Second, direct method does not lend itself to ethical conundrums as in the case of indirect method. Indirect method involves 'spying' on the respondents and thus associated with ethical challenges. Further, direct method provides avenue to verify and correct for potential biases while at the same time serving as a cost-effect approach to gathering large and timely data on attitude. Direct method has also proven to be reliable and valid once administered within the right context with strict face and content validity measures including anonymity and confidentiality (Findler et al., 2007). A non-disabled service provider is likely to reply favourably when asked questions on his/her attitude towards GwDs in one-on-one interaction but may respond in unfavourable manner on a written scale when anonymity and confidentiality are observed. Also, direct method is able to account for all three dimensions of attitude namely cognitive, affective and behavioural which indirect method is unable to reveal since it only focuses on measuring the behavioural component. Lastly, direct method is the most widely used in the measurement of attitude towards PwDs (see Yucker et al., 1960; Cowen et al., 1967; Taylor and Dear, 1981; Mitchell and Kemp, 1996).

### 2.5. Theoretical framework

The functional theory by Katz (1960) was chosen to serve as the theoretical foundation for this study. This theory is preferred over others such as the protection motivation theory of fear and the integration theory due to its suitability to cross sectional analysis without limiting the analysis to specific context such as fear or information source(s) (Shavitt, 1989). It allows for a less-restrictive and multi-dimensional understanding of the functions of attitude. The functional theory assumes that attitude performs four psychological functions including utilitarian, ego-defensive, value expressive and knowledge functions. The utilitarian function deals with maximisation of rewards and minimisation of punishment by either conforming or completing endorsed tasks (Katz, 1960; Antonak and Livneh, 2000). This function allows an individual to identify with, or gain the approval of reference groups (Antonak and Livneh, 2000). In this scenario, the individual constructs his/her attitude towards a referent based on the potential gains or pains that such attitude may incur or avoid.

Ego-defensive function relates to the cultivation of attitudinal values that tend to protect an individual from acknowledging the fundamental truth about his/her personality (Katz, 1960). Specific attitudinal values are held with the primary aim of protecting one's ego. An individual may employ mechanisms to either deny the inner reality of the kind of person he/she is or the realities of the dangers of the world in relation his/her person and therefore helps to deal with an internal conflict (Antonak and Livneh, 2000). On the other hand, value-expressive function relates to the idea that people hold certain attitude because it represents expressions of their self-image (Katz, 1960). The attitude exhibited towards a referent is supposed to communicate the values of the individual in relation to the referent. For instance, an individual who harbours positive values towards marginalised people will hold positive attitude towards GwDs and vice versa. Meanwhile, the knowledge function pertains to the idea that an attitude is developed to help learn and enlighten oneself about an attitude referent (Katz, 1960; Antonak and Livneh, 2000). Despite the distinctiveness of the functions, an attitude can be held for either one or multiple functions.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Study setting

The study area is the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana. The rich Asante (indigenous tribe) culture, coupled with flagship attractions such as the Komfo Anokye Sword, Ghana National Cultural Centre, Manhyia Palace, Rattray Park, Kumasi Zoological Gardens, and Armed Forces Museum have endeared the metropolis to tourists. The conservative nature of the metropolis fixated on the traditions of its indigenous Asante culture has been noted to provide an impetus for stigmatisation of PwDs (Adam, 2018a). Given that disability is socio-culturally constructed, the metropolis therefore serves as an ideal setting to understand whether such negative constructions of disability affect the attitude and attitudinal functions of hotel frontline employees towards GwDs.

### 3.2. Research instrument design

Questionnaire was used to solicit data from hotel frontline employees. The questionnaire was designed using a three-step approach. The first step involved the drawing of items from the literature (Table 1). Consistent with the tripartite attitude model (Katz, 1960; Antonak and Livneh, 2000), attitude towards GwDs was measured with three constructs namely cognitive, affective and behavioural. In line with the functional theory, the functions of attitude were measured with four constructs including utilitarian, value expressive, ego-defensive and knowledge dimensions. The second step involved the use of expert panel to assess the face and content validity of the items. The expert panel included two university lecturers on disability studies, two university lecturers on hotel operations, and two front office employees (receptionists) with a minimum of 5 years of experience. Based on their recommendations, 3 items were deleted; 1 under the cognitive dimension and 2 under the behavioural dimension. For an item to be dropped, at least half of the experts must agree to its redundancy. The experts also recommended the re-wording of the items measuring the attitudinal functions to ensure clarity and reduce attribution bias so that the respondents will clearly understand that the function of their attitude is being measured. The final stage involved the pre-testing of the questionnaire in the Cape Coast metropolis to assess its reliability. The pre-testing exercise engaged 101 hotel frontline employees. The Cronbach alpha was used to assess the reliability of the measurement items. Based on the outcome of the pre-testing exercise, two items under the cognitive dimension, one item under the affective dimension, one item under the utilitarian function, and one item under the ego-defensive function with Cronbach alpha loadings below the 0.70 threshold (Cronbach, 1951) were dropped. Ultimately, the final version of the questionnaire contained 4-item cognitive, 3-item affective, 5-item behavioural, 4-item utilitarian function, 3-item value expressive function, 3-item ego-defensive function, and 4-item knowledge function sub-scales (Supplementary material).

The final questionnaire was structured into three sections (Supplementary material). The first section measured the attitude of hotel frontline employees towards GwDs, while the second section measured the attitudinal functions of the frontline employees. In both sections, respondents were asked to rate their attitude and attitudinal functions on a scale of 1–10 based on their agreement with a statement as a reflection of their attitude or attitudinal function. The choice of the 10-point scale is informed by the fact that it has been found to be preferred by respondents and also of high validity, reliability and discriminating power (Preston and Colman, 2000). The last section of the questionnaire centred on the socio-demographic profile of the employees.

**Table 1**  
Measurement items generated from the literature.

Attitude/attitudinal function dimension	Items	Source
Cognitive	I believe frontline employees must not discriminate against GwDs I believe frontline employees must be nice to GwDs I believe frontline employees must provide special attention to GwDs <i>I believe frontline employees must treat GwDs in same manner as non-disabled guests*</i> <i>I believe frontline employees should not look down on GwDs*</i>	Antonak (1981), 1982; Antonak and Livneh (2000); Darcy (2003); Darcy et al. (2008), 2011; Adam (2018b), a,
Affective	I feel GwDs are special guests I feel the need to readily assist GwDs I feel GwDs are just as normal as other non-disabled guests <i>I feel GwDs are need our love*</i>	Cervellon and Dubé (2002); Darcy (2003); Buhalis et al. (2005); Bi et al. (2007); Darcy and Pegg (2011)
Behavioural	I am nice to GwDs I serve GwDs with pride I treat GwDs as normal as non-disabled guests I pay special attention to GwDs' request I readily assist GwDs with their requests	Gething (1994); Daniels et al. (2005); Darcy (2003); Buhalis et al. (2005); Bi et al. (2007); Findler et al. (2007); Dwyer and Darcy (2008); Grady and Ohlin (2009); Darcy (2010); Darcy and Pegg (2011)
Utilitarian function	My attitude on GwDs is make people think i am empathetic My attitude on GwDs enables me to get favour from family and friends My attitude on GwDs makes me get favour from employers My attitude on GwDs helps me get tips from guests <i>My attitude on GwDs helps me to get good image*</i>	Daruwalla and Darcy (2005); Darcy et al. (2008), 2011; Adam (2018a), b

**Table 1 (Continued)**

Attitude/attitudinal function dimension	Items	Source
Value Expressive Function	My attitude on GwDs is because I believe they are cursed My attitude on GwDs reflects my belief that they are of lower social class My attitude towards GwDs reflects my belief that they are social deviants	Gething (1994); Findler et al. (2007); Dwyer and Darcy (2008); Grady and Ohlin (2009); Darcy et al. (2011); Adam (2018a), b
Ego-defensive function	My attitude towards GwDs aligns with my conservative personality My attitude towards GwDs reflects my image as being morally upright My attitude on GwDs aligns with my image as not condoning social deviants <i>My attitude towards GwDs help me to protect my ego*</i>	Darcy (2003); Mc Kercher et al. (2003); Kim and Lehto (2012); Stonesifer and Han (2012), Kim and Lehto (2013); Lyu (2017); Adam (2018a), b
Knowledge function	My attitude towards GwDs is based on my curiosity My attitude towards GwDs is based on my desire to know about them My attitude towards GwDs is to enable me understand their needs My attitude towards GwDs is to help clarify my doubts about them	Taylor and Dear (1981); Smith (1987), Kemp (1996), Rao (2004); Shaw and Coles (2004); Van Horn (2007); Poria et al. (2010), 2011; Small et al. (2012); Adam (2018a), b

\* Item were dropped from final questionnaire due to poor Cronbach alphas loadings (<0.70) after pre-testing.

The questionnaire was designed and administered in English language since it is the official language in Ghana.

### 3.3. Data collection

To aid in the data collection exercise, the list of hotels in the metropolis was obtained from the regional branch of the Ghana Tourism Authority (the hotel regulator and licensing authority in Ghana). There were 278 hotels in the metropolis of various categories ranging from budget, guest house, 1-star, 2-star, 3-star to 4-star. Based on the quantitative philosophy of the study, all the hotels were considered. Nonetheless, the target population was restricted to only front office employees including front desk agents/receptionists, concierge, and bell boys among others. Also, given the similarities in the size and service offerings of the guest houses and budget hotels, these two categories were collapsed to form the budget hotel category.

A census of all hotel frontline employees in the metropolis was considered. In all, 1021 questionnaires were sent out over a three-month period (April to June, 2017). The questionnaires were handed to individuals whose names were submitted by either the front office manager or general manager as being frontline employees. The respondents were then introduced to the study by explaining the rationale of the study to them, those who agreed were given paper copies of the questionnaire to fill at their own convenience and deposit them in a specially designated box at the hotel lobby. This was meant to guarantee the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents and thus enhance the validity of their responses (Antonak and Livneh, 2000) since a direct attitude measure was adopted. Out of the 1021 questionnaires sent out, 862 were retrieved (representing a response rate of 84.4%).

The high response rate was based on the fact that the questionnaires were only given to those who accepted to be part of the study. Also, the constant reminders through phone calls and text messages over the period of three months aided in recoding high response rate. For all those who agreed to participate in the study, their contact numbers were taken at the point of handing over the questionnaire to them. The contact numbers were subsequently used to call and send text messages to remind them of the need to complete the questionnaire, if they have already not done so. During the first round of calls and text messages, respondents who indicated they have already completed their questionnaire were dropped from the second round of calls and text messaging. This process was iterated for a third and fourth time. Meanwhile, the front office manager or general manager as well as any other member of the hotel management were not allowed to be present when the study was introduced to the respondents and thus could have aided in getting high response rate. This was also to ensure that respondents were free to participate in the study without the fear of being identified by their superiors. Nonetheless, of the total number of questionnaires retrieved, 825 of them were useful for analysis based on completeness.

### 3.4. Sample characteristics

There were more (53.6%) females in the sample. Over two-third of the respondents (84.9%) were single, while about half of them (57.5%) were within the age cohort of 20–25 years. More than half (60.3%) of the respondents were senior high school certificate holders with about one-third of them (33.5%) being tertiary leavers. Over half (62.0%) of them have working experience of between one to five years in the accommodation sector. About 30 percent of the respondents were working in budget hotels while 22.5 percent, 25.8 percent and 19.7 percent worked in 1-star, 2-star and 3-star hotels respectively. The high response rate from the 1-star and 2-star categories could be explained by the fact they employ more frontline employees than budget hotels. Most budget hotels in the Kumasi metropolis have one frontline em-

ployee in charge of all front office functions while the number is higher in the star rated hotels (Wireko-Gyebi et al., 2017). Less than three percent (2.4%) of the respondents were working in the only 4-star hotel in the metropolis.

### 3.5. Data analysis

A segmentation analysis was done using the six items measuring the cognitive and affective dimensions of attitude. While behaviour is considered as the third component of attitude, it is a manifestation of the first two components and as such influenced by those components (Antonak and Livneh, 2000). However, before the segmentation analysis, the responses were binarized into positive and negative attitude. Positive attitude consisted of ratings of 6–10 while negative attitude was made of responses from 1 to 5. Consequently, the six items measuring the cognitive and affective aspects of attitude with a sample of 825 proved sufficient for the segmentation analysis. The data was clustered with the two-step cluster technique using the log-likelihood distance measure with the Schwarz Bayesian Criterion (BIC) using the SPSS version 21. The suitability of the two-step clustering technique was informed by the fact it allows for the clustering of both continuous and categorical variables unlike other traditional clustering techniques which are only suitable for continuous variables. The two-step clustering algorithm with the log-likelihood estimation computes the probability of cluster membership based on one or more probability distribution and therefore help to reveal natural groupings in a dataset that would otherwise not be obvious. The algorithm was allowed to automatically determine the optimal number of clusters as would naturally exist in the sample by comparing the values of model-choice criterion across different clustering solutions.

To determine the cluster characteristics in relation to attitudinal functions, the Kruskal-Wallis rank sum test for means of several groups was used. The same test was used to determine the differences between the clusters and behaviour exhibited by the frontline employees. The Kruskal-Wallis test is a non-parametric test which allows for comparison of three or more groups. Unlike other parametric alternatives (ANOVA, MANOVA), the Kruskal-Wallis test does not assume the normality of the data and also work with uneven and small samples hence its suitability for this study. Lastly, the Chi-square test of independence was used to profile the clusters by socio-demographic characteristics in order to understand the cluster background identities.

## 4. Results

Four clusters emerged from the analysis based on the responses on the cognitive and affective aspects of attitude (Table 2). The characteristics of each segment is based on a comparison between the response on each of the attitude statement at the sample level with the response

**Table 2**  
Attitude-based clusters (n = 825).

Attitude element	Sample (n = 825)		Cluster 1: 31.9% (n = 263)		Cluster 2: 19.5% (n = 161)		Cluster 3: 30.9% (n = 255)		Cluster 4: 17.7% (n = 146)	
	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive
I believe frontline employees must not discriminate against GwDs	51.2	48.4	0.0	100.0	0.0	93.1	95.1	4.9	97.3	5.7
I believe frontline employees must be nice to GwDs	50.9	49.1	0.0	100.0	1.7	96.6	99.1	0.9	98.6	1.4
I believe frontline employees must provide special attention to GwDs	55.6	44.4	0.0	100.0	8.6	87.3	97.6	2.4	96.6	16.4
I feel GwDs are special guests	55.9	44.1	11.5	93.5	0.0	100.0	98.7	2.3	62.2	37.8
I feel the need to readily assist GwDs	54.8	45.2	10.5	96.2	0.0	99.7	97.3	2.7	58.7	41.3
I feel GwDs are just as normal as other non-disabled guests	56.7	43.3	12.5	97.5	0.3	100.0	97.8	2.2	65.9	34.1

at the segment/cluster level. For instance, in Cluster 1, the response at the cluster level is 100% for those who believe that frontline employees must not discriminate against GwDs while the response at the sample level for this variable is 48.4%, therefore making it a feature of the cluster. The difference between the cluster and sample percentages formed the basis of the profiling. A variable that make a cluster distinct is called a marker variable (Dolnicar & Leisch, 2013). A marker variable is a variable whose absolute deviation from the overall mean is 25% of the maximum value or if the relative deviation is 50% (Dolnicar & Leisch, 2013). Marker variables are used to label and understand the cluster while non-marker variables offer less insights into the cluster. Consequently, all six variables are marker variables for Clusters 1 and 2. However, the difference between the two clusters pertains to the fact the members of Cluster 1 have stronger positive cognitive attitude while Cluster 2 has stronger affective attitude. Though all six cognitive and affective elements are marker variables to Cluster 3, only the three cognitive elements are marker variables for Cluster 4 (Table 2). Members of Cluster 3 have negative cognitive and affective attitude towards GwDs while members of Cluster 4 have negative cognitive attitude towards GwDs.

#### 4.1. Behavioural traits of attitudinal segments

To gain holistic understanding of the hotel frontline employees' attitude towards GwDs, there is the need to juxtapose the cognitive and

**Table 3**  
Behavioural traits of attitudinal segments (n = 825).

Behaviour	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Egocentrics	$\chi^2(\rho \text{ value})$
I am nice to GwDs	98.16	120.34	51.50	51.22	32.52(0.000)
I serve GwDs with pride	103.57	104.74	53.41	57.23	18.10(0.005)
I treat GwDs as normal as non-disabled guests	99.08	106.74	46.41	46.12	20.80(0.000)
I pay special attention to GwDs' requests	98.91	117.72	42.14	49.10	47.89(0.000)
I readily assist GwDs with their requests	99.91	105.88	51.50	50.19	27.88(0.000)
Overall behaviour	99.37	118.08	41.07	51.02	46.38(0.000)

**Table 4**  
Functional characteristics of attitudinal segments (n = 825).

Functions	Pretenders	Empathetics	Apathetics	Egocentrics	$\chi^2(\rho \text{ value})$
<i>Utilitarian function</i>					
My attitude on GwDs is make people think i am empathetic	109.42	75.87	43.42	45.87	21.55(0.000)
My attitude on GwDs enables me to get favour from family and friends	92.51	82.60	32.51	42.60	15.21(0.002)
My attitude on GwDs makes me get favour from my employers	99.94	68.36	49.94	38.36	18.87(0.000)
My attitude on GwDs helps me get tips from guests	103.43	67.26	43.43	47.26	23.25(0.000)
<i>Value Expressive Function</i>					
My attitude on GwDs is because I believe they are cursed	43.90	23.78	100.78	53.90	14.74(0.029)
My attitude on GwDs reflects my belief that they are of lower social class	44.89	23.26	98.26	54.89	17.19(0.001)
My attitude towards GwDs reflects my belief that they are social deviants	46.30	25.03	105.03	56.30	22.20(0.000)
<i>Ego-defensive function</i>					
My attitude towards GwDs aligns with my conservative personality	42.44	26.74	52.44	96.74	10.98(0.017)
My attitude towards GwDs reflects my image as being morally upright	43.72	26.74	43.72	108.74	13.75(0.008)
My attitude on GwDs aligns with my image as not condoning social deviants	41.95	29.03	51.95	99.03	10.28(0.016)
<i>Knowledge function</i>					
My attitude towards GwDs is based on my curiosity	76.52	92.11	42.11	54.53	15.76(0.011)
My attitude towards GwDs is based on my desire to know about them	76.52	103.81	43.81	42.47	24.80(0.000)
My attitude towards GwDs is to enable me understand their needs	73.36	102.19	42.19	43.16	21.56(0.000)
My attitude towards GwDs is to help clarify my doubts about them	79.55	103.26	43.26	42.26	21.57(0.000)

affective features on the behavioural outcome (Table 3). Clusters 1 and 2 exhibit positive behaviour on all five behavioural indicators and therefore indicating that they have positive service behaviour towards GwDs while Clusters 3 and 4 are characterised by unfavourable behaviour towards GwDs as indicated by the low scores on the five behavioural indicators (Table 3).

#### 4.2. Segments of pretending, empathetic, egocentric and apathetic attitudes

Table 4 shows the functions underlying the four attitudinal segments. The results indicate that the attitude and behaviour of the members of Cluster 1 is meant to serve utilitarian value. For members of this segment, they obtained high scores on all the four elements measuring the utilitarian function. Thus, the positive attitude and behaviour of the members of this segment is meant to deceive the public in order to gain certain favours from them. Consequently, this segment is labelled as *pretending accommodators*. Cluster 2 is underlined by low negative value expressive and ego-defensive functions, and high positive knowledge function. This suggests that members of this cluster do not possess negative socio-cultural beliefs on disability and neither do they feel GwDs are inferior to them. Naturally, people don't entertain the quest to learn about issues and phenomenon they detest (Katz, 1960). Consequently, the low scores on the negative value expressive and ego-defensive functions coupled with high scores on knowledge function, and positive attitude and behaviour connotes genuine empathetic accommodating interest towards GwDs and therefore labelled as *empathetic accommodators*.

Cluster 3 has high scores on the value expressive function and low scores on all other functions indicating that the negative attitude and behaviour of this segment is borne out of the need to reinforce its members' negative socio-cultural beliefs on disability. The attitude of this segment is defined by their core values that dehumanise GwDs as reflected in the items measuring the value expressive function and thus named as *apathetic non-accommodators*. Meanwhile, Cluster 4 has high scores on the ego-defensive function suggesting that the negative attitude and behaviour of its members is cultivated to protect their egos of feeling superior to GwDs. Primarily, this segment's attitude and behaviour is centred on their egos and thus named as *egocentric non-accommodators*.

#### 4.3. Characteristics of attitudinal segments

The four attitudinal segments were profiled across the socio-demographic characteristics of the frontline employees (Table 5). The results

**Table 5**  
Background profile of attitudinal segments (n = 825).

Socio-demographics	Pretenders (%)	Empathetics (%)	Apathetics (%)	Egocentrics (%)	$\chi^2(\rho$ value)
Sex					
Male	10.5	11.6	60.8	17.1	6.193(0.013)
Female	65.8	10.5	8.4	15.3	
Age (years)					
20-25	52.4	22.3	10.7	14.6	6.18(0.403)
26-30	40.0	26.7	11.7	21.7	
31 +	43.8	25.0	25.0	6.34	
Educational attainment					
Basic education	12.3	15.4	66.4	6.0	10.74(0.010)
Senior high education	10.0	16.7	13.3	60.0	
Tertiary education	62.9	11.3	9.3	16.5	
Marital status					
Single	49.3	21.7	11.2	17.8	4.49(0.139)
Married	37.0	37.0	18.5	7.4	
Industry experience (years)					
1-5	51.4	23.4	9.9	15.3	2.45(0.484)
6-10	41.2	25.0	16.2	17.6	
Hotel category					
Budget	7.5	18.3	64.1	10.1	27.39(0.007)
1-Star	33.3	23.1	15.4	28.2	
2-Star	61.1	19.4	4.9	14.6	
3-Star	61.8	16.6	13.5	8.1	
4-Star	62.6	11.1	11.1	15.2	

suggest that the four attitudinal segments were statistically unique in relation to three socio-demographic characteristics namely, sex, formal educational attainment and hotel category. With regard to sex, while majority of female employees (65.8%) have empathetic accommodating attitude, majority of their male colleagues (60.8%) hold apathetic non-accommodating attitude. Meanwhile, majority of employees with basic education (66.4%) have apathetic non-accommodating attitude though majority of their colleagues who are senior high school graduates (60.0%) have pretending accommodating attitude and majority of tertiary education alumnae (62.9%) have empathetic accommodating attitude. On hotel category, majority of employees in 2-star (61.1%), 3-star (61.8%) and 4-star (62.6%) facilities have pretending accommodating attitude whereas majority of those in budget hotels (64.1%) have apathetic non-accommodating attitude.

## 5. Discussion

Though demand side studies on accommodation service provision have highlighted the negative attitude of frontline employees towards GwDs, there has been little supply side research to unearth the nature and functions of such negative attitude, hence the need for this study. The findings of this study points to different shades of attitudinal segment and further reveal that not all frontline employees have negative attitude towards GwDs. Specifically, four segments of attitude emerged from the analysis and relate to both positive and negative attitude with different gradations. The results indicate that there are genuine positive attitude holders and pretending positive attitude holders. Yet, there are those with outright dislike and negative attitude (apathetic) and those with negative attitude based on parochial egoistic interests. This finding makes valuable contribution to the literature by indicating that there are segments of both positive and negative attitude among hotel frontline employees towards GwDs and thus challenges the dominant view in the literature that frontline employees' attitude towards PwDs has been traditionally negative.

The cultivation and harbouring of specific attitude are underlined by some inherent reasons (Katz, 1960). Katz (1960) describes this as the essence for studying attitude as it provides a basis for attitudinal change. The function(s) underlining each attitude provide insights into

the nature of the attitude as well as the reasons why such an attitude is deemed necessary by the frontline employee. In specific terms, the pretending accommodators' attitude and behaviour though positive, was meant to serve utilitarian value. For members of this segment, their positive attitude is held due to the fact that it provides them with some benefits/satisfaction either by projecting them as being empathetic to GwDs or help them get tips from guests. In the view of Antonak and Livneh (2000), the sustenance of the favourable attitude of such a segment is dependent on the continuous provision of the incentives. For empathetic accommodators, their positive attitude is genuinely based on their interest in the welfare of GwDs and thus are not prejudiced by the negative socio-cultural construction of disability. Their behaviour is therefore not faked unlike the pretenders but hinged on their desire to learn and understand the needs of GwDs. Antonak and Livneh (2000) note that without sincere and empathetic feeling for a referent, an attitude is not likely to be held for the reason of knowing more about the attitude referent. Similarly, an attitude that is based on the need to discover the referent is considered to be enduring (Darcy and Pegg, 2011). On the other hand, the negative and unwelcoming attitude of apathetic non-accommodators serve value expressive function. However, the nature of the values served suggests that their negative attitude is meant to reinforce their negative socio-cultural beliefs that PwDs are social deviants and as such their impairment is a punishment from God/deity (Adam, 2018a). Meanwhile, the egocentric non-accommodators' negative attitude and behaviour serve an ego-defensive function suggesting that its members cultivate this attitude to protect their egos of feeling that they are superior to GwDs. This attitude performs a tension reducing function and thereby clouding the judgment of the frontline employees in accepting that GwDs are not inferior and hence the need to behave well towards them (Antonak and Livneh, 2000).

The findings further suggest that the four attitudinal segments vary across sex, formal education attainment and hotel category. Regarding sex, though empathy can be learned and internalised through one's engagement with a subject (Davis, 2018), it is equally argued that empathy is an innate characteristic (Zavella, 2018). Generally, females have been found to be more concerned towards vulnerable people than their male counterparts (Zavella, 2018). Within the Ghanaian setting, women are socialised to be 'soft', tender and caring while men are so-



cialised along masculine identities which require one to be strong, and show little sign of tenderness (Essiam, 2013). Consistent with this socialisation values, men who show strong emotions are generally considered weak while women who do not show strong emotions are considered wicked (Essiam, 2013).

Formal education provides the opportunity for enlightenment and exposure. Through formal education, misconceptions surrounding disability as couched within the socio-cultural belief that PwDs are deviants and cursed are challenged and hence educated people are expected to hold favourable attitude towards GwDs (Kassah et al., 2012). On the other hand, basic school leavers would have received little or no education on disability (based on the current Ghanaian educational curriculum) and therefore may be influenced by the negative socio-cultural conception of disability. On hotel category, clients of higher rated hotels are more likely to offer tips to employees for good behaviour than those in budget hotels. Higher rated facilities mostly attract people in the middle to upper class who are likely to show appreciation to their service providers upon being impressed by their service attitude and behaviour. For this reason, frontline employees in such facilities are likely to adopt a pretending accommodating attitude to gain such favours from clients and their employers.

## 6. Conclusion and practical implications

Based on the findings, the following conclusions and implications are proffered. The study concludes that there are segments of both positive and negative attitude holders among hotel frontline employees. This is contrary to the dominant view in the literature that hotel frontline employees' attitude towards GwDs is mainly negative. Further, it is concluded that the kind of attitude held by a frontline employee towards GwD is shaped by the specific utility that the attitude provides him/her. Empathetic accommodating attitude helps to understand the needs of GwDs while pretending accommodating attitude is cultivated for material gains, apathetic non-accommodating attitude is held to reinforce the negative socio-cultural beliefs on disability and egocentric non-accommodating attitude is meant to protect the egos of the frontline employees as being superior to GwDs. This implies that specific attitudinal change initiatives can be targeted at the functions of the attitude. In this regard, formal and informal orientation programmes as well as disability-based service etiquettes can be adopted by the Ghana Hoteliers Association (GHA) to target the negative socio-cultural values on disability as a means of changing the apathetic and egocentric non-accommodating attitude of their employees. Similarly, hotels can institute attitudinal-based reward schemes aimed at incentivising frontline employees with pretending accommodating attitude in order to sustain their accommodating attitude. Additionally, the hotel industry together with the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) can employ behavioural communication change strategies using the attitudinal functions of each segment as a base to develop the content of such messaging. For apathetic and egocentric non-accommodators, the communication behavioural change programmes should be aimed at positively influencing their socio-cultural values on disability while the positive behaviour of pretending accommodators can be sustained by highlighting the various social and economic rewards associated with such behaviour. Finally, the study concludes that the four attitudinal segments vary by sex, formal education and hotel category hence the communication behavioural change intervention can be tailored along sex, formal educational status and hotel category.

## 7. Limitations and theoretical implications

Despite the rigorous scientific approach followed and the associated trust in the validity of the findings, there are some notable limitations. Disability is a fluid concept and largely shaped by socio-cultural conno-

tations (Adam, 2018). The conception of disability in Ghana is different from that of other societies especially those in developed countries. This specific socio-cultural conception of disability could have impacted on the findings. Theoretically, this implies that the segments of attitude established in this study may differ in other contexts where the conception of disability is different from Ghana. Therefore, there is the need to further research in other contexts to fully understand how differences in the conception of disability may or may not result in different attitudinal segments among frontline employees. Further, the limitation of the direct method in measuring the behavioural component of attitude is acknowledged. While the indirect method cannot measure the cognitive and affective aspects of attitude (Findler et al., 2007), it is better suited for the measurement of the behavioural component. This implies that methodologically, a study of this nature can profit from the application of both direct and indirect methods. Further, the reliance on the Katz's (1960) functional theory could have set the agenda for the findings observed in this study. Therefore, future works could employ alternative theorisations in order to introduce different perspectives into the study of hotel frontline employees' attitude towards GwDs.

## Appendix A. Supplementary material

Supplementary material related to this article can be found, in the online version, at doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.03.010>.

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