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Accessibility in theme parks: How well are theme parks across America accommodating individuals with disabilities?

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Running head: ACCESSIBILITY IN THEME PARKS

Accessibility in theme parks:

How well are theme parks across America accommodating individuals with disabilities?

by

Audrey Snow-Brine

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Abstract

Tourism for people with disabilities can be difficult, which is why theme parks need to provide the proper accommodations for their guests. A literature review on topics such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), exclusion, and tourism accessibility will be provided. The accessibilities and accommodations available at theme parks in the United States, including Walt Disney World, Disneyland, LEGOLAND Florida Resort, LEGOLAND California Resort, Universal Orlando Resort, and Universal Studios Hollywood, will be discussed. The website pages regarding accessibilities for people with disabilities will be examined, and the accommodation for each theme park will be compared. While there has been research conducted in the area of tourism and disabilities and the available accommodations, it seems that there has not been extensive research in the specific area of theme parks and disability accommodation. This thesis seeks to identify the present accessibilities that are available to people with disabilities at theme parks, as well as how each theme park compares to the others' accommodations and inclusiveness. The goal of this research is to provide insight into how the theme park industry can better provide an accessible and inclusive atmosphere for guests with disabilities and their families, which will benefit all parties involved.

KEY WORDS: disabilities, accessibility, accommodations, theme parks

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“According to the US Census Bureau, the number of persons with disabilities is estimated at 51.2 million, which is 18.1 percent of the US population” (Kim & Lehto, 2012, p. 451). Many Americans are affected by disabilities, and “...they have the same expectations and desires to travel as the rest of the community” (Darcy & Daruwalla, 1999, p. 41). However, “[p]arts of society, particularly those with disabilities, are most excluded from general leisure and tourism activities...” (Kastenholz, Eusébio, & Figueiredo, 2015, p. 1260). People who have disabilities have the right to be accepted and accommodated under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which is an important act that mandates and regulates the accessibilities that must be provided for people with disabilities.

Tourism is an important aspect in the lives of many people, including people with disabilities. “Tourism fulfills human desirable, trans-situational goals, needs and values. Individuals with disabilities are often socially excluded, at home and while visiting or travelling” (Zenko & Sardi, 2014, p. 653). In the theme park industry, it is necessary to provide assistance for people with various disabilities in order to ensure that an inviting and inclusive experience is available to all. Although there is not a way to change the “negative attitudes” that society has in regards to people with disabilities (Darcy & Daruwalla, 1999, p. 42), it is within the theme park industry’s ability to provide accommodations for people with disabilities. However, the lack of accessibility in the tourism industry is a major barrier for individuals with disabilities (Zenko & Sardi, 2014, p. 657). A study by Cook & Shinew (2014) reported that participants felt that the planning that must occur before engaging in leisure activities can be “physically taxing” and stressful, but it is worth it in the end (p. 430). These findings display that people with disabilities are willing to put extra effort in to make their vacation possible. However, this should not have

to be the case; people with disabilities should be accommodated as much as possible by the tourism industry.

The research questions that will be asked, researched, and discussed within this thesis are as follows:

- How are theme parks assisting and accommodating people with disabilities? Are the regulations in the ADA being executed?
- What are the most common accommodations provided by theme parks across the United States?
- How much information about the accommodations that are offered is readily available on each theme park's website?
- Which theme parks are providing the most inclusive and unique accommodations for people with disabilities?
- How can theme parks improve the accommodations that they currently offer?

These questions are important to ask because they could educate a family with a child with disabilities about what assistance and accommodations are available to them. These questions could also be crucial in the family's decision whether it is plausible for them to go to a theme park for vacation. The results of this thesis could help theme parks examine the effectiveness of their own accommodations for people with disabilities, as well as how they measure up to other theme parks' accommodations. The effects of such an analysis could assist them in deciding how they could improve the accessibility of their park and in implementing new accommodations for guests.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) attempts to make public scenarios such as shopping and getting on a train, easier and more accessible for people with disabilities. The act is “the primary piece of nondiscrimination legislation in the USA” (Kuo & Kalargyrou, 2014, p. 165). “The act’s titles specify that access to jobs, goods, and services may not be denied on the basis of disability” (Hinton, 2003, p. 210). The passing of regulatory acts like the ADA allow such acts to:

...provide some guidelines and parameters with regard to persons with disabilities for businesses and society as a whole. The enactment of regulations has brought increased economic and political attention to the disabled population... (Kim & Lehto, 2012, p. 452)

The entire population of people with disabilities is sometimes overlooked, even though it has the potential to be a new market for retailers to sell their products to: “The US Bureau of the Census reports that Americans with disabilities have a total income of \$700 billion, resulting in a discretionary income of \$188 billion...” (Kaufman-Scarborough, 1998). One possible reason that accommodations may not be readily available for people with disabilities could be that the consumer segment for people with disabilities and senior citizens is usually perceived to “... have significantly less disposable income...” (Darcy, Cameron, & Pegg, 2010, p. 519).

[B]y developing products and services that are not inclusive of the whole community, the enterprise not only affects its own financial bottom line by effectively excluding part of

the customer base but it is also socially inefficient by creating infrastructure that cannot be used by the whole community (Darcy, et.al, 2010, p. 520).

Research has also found that “[a]s accommodations for disabled persons increase, so do their opportunities to shop and enjoy activities which had been prohibitively difficult, embarrassing, or simply just not possible” (Kaufman-Scarborough, 1998). When people with disabilities shop and participate in more leisure activities, they will, consequently, be spending more money, therefore benefiting retailers, and society as a whole, as well as themselves and their families.

The ADA’s main purpose, however, is to ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are being met: while the consumers with disabilities segment could be a new market for tourism companies, it is also crucial that governmental regulations are being followed (Kim & Lehto, 2012, p. 451). The tourism industry needs to be mindful that they are executing the proper standards and accessibilities that the ADA requires. Some examples of such accessibility requirements can be identified as “...ramps, tactile ground surface indicators, wayfinding signage...” (Darcy, et.al, 2010, p. 517).

Exclusion

“Disability is... one of the most prevalent factors of social exclusion” (Kastenholz, Eusébio, & Figueiredo, 2015, p.1261). Many people with various types of disabilities experience overwhelming exclusion and isolation from the general society as a whole.

Through the proliferation of discourses on impairment, the category of disability emerged as a new concept... It can hence be argued that the social model arose out of counter-discourses with the aim to improve the situation of disabled people as a whole. However,

in offering a counter-discourse, the social model assigns one aggregated identity category to all individuals (Eichhorn, Miller, & Tribe, 2013, p. 581-582).

Because society groups certain people in stereotypical groups, "...people with impairments are grouped into one category because they meet certain criteria of this identity category, which was formed by political and social arrangements" (Eichhorn, et.al, 2013, p. 582). In addition to being categorized based on their abilities, many people with intellectual disabilities are stereotyped as being "dependent," which can cause them to feel rejected and discouraged (Patterson & Pegg, 2009, p. 388). The act of categorizing someone can have a powerful effect on that person: "[l]abeling someone as mentally handicapped has the effect of causing a self-fulfilling prophecy..." (Eayrs, Ellis, & Jones, 1993, p. 112). According to Gillovic, McIntosh, Darcy, & Cockburn-Wootten (2018),

"[g]aining control of language then, is crucial for resisting particular meanings to describe disability, to challenge detrimental perspectives that dominate society, and perhaps more importantly, claim new meanings" (p. 615).

In a study conducted to examine how some advertisements affect how viewers of the ad view people with disabilities, it was found that, at least for one ad in particular, some of the ads that are supposed to raise awareness and help people that have disabilities can actually cause "feelings which are degrading to people with learning disabilities and reinforce the image of dependency" (Doddington, Jones, & Miller, 1994, p. 218).

There is extensive research in the area of disability and exclusion from social activities: "Physical or intellectual impairment often triggers removal from social participation spheres and/or losses in terms of ability of functioning and of participating in certain activities..."

(Kastenholz, et.al, 2015, p. 1262). This is another reason why it is crucial for the tourism industry to create an environment of inclusion for all of its guests and visitors. “In fact, physical and mental individual impairments may be conditioned by environmental and societal barriers, aggravating disabilities and social exclusion” (Kastenholz, et.al, 2015, p. 1263). To break free from these “barriers,” it is necessary for the tourism industry and theme parks across the world to provide proper accommodations for people with disabilities that will not further enable social exclusion, but instead, promote inclusion and acceptance.

Tourism Accessibility

“The disabled population has become a significant consumer segment” (Kim & Lehto, 2012, p. 451). Because there are so many people that are affected by disabilities in the United States of America, alone, it is crucial for the tourism industry and theme parks to provide the correct accessibility that will allow people with disabilities, and their friends and families, to enjoy their vacations to the fullest. Research has found that individuals that have disabilities are contributing to the tourism, while also spending a considerable amount of money doing so (Wan, 2015). Adopting “Accessible Tourism” can be beneficial for everyone: “... Accessible Tourism focused on the access to leisure and tourist activities for any individual, regardless of their capabilities” (Soler, Díaz, & Vera, 2018, p. 659).

“Tourism for people with disabilities could bring many benefits and should become a part of national industries, too” (Zenko & Sardi, 2014, p. 655). However, people that have disabilities may also face a variety of different challenges when visiting tourist destinations—such as theme parks: “Barriers satisfactory tourism experiences by people with disabilities are economic, physical and attitudinal” (Darcy & Daruwalla, 1999, p. 43). Mendez-Hodgkinson (2012) expresses a similar view: “Many do not take an active part in recreation because a number of

barriers. Lack of accessible or inclusive recreational settings present the greatest challenges” (p. 23). The types of barriers that are faced by individuals with disabilities also depends on the type of disability/disabilities the person has (Michopoulou & Buhalis, 2013).

As research has found, tourism can be especially beneficial for people that have disabilities.

Importantly, serious leisure has also been suggested as a purposeful means of helping people with disabilities to regain, or indeed to re-establish positive feelings of dignity and self-esteem and to contribute to their social inclusion in community settings... (Patterson & Pegg, 2009, p. 392).

According to Card, Cole, & Humphrey (2007), tourism could improve the quality of life that individuals with disabilities have because, if accessible travel opportunities were made available, people with disabilities may find more happiness and satisfaction in life. Not only that, but tourism and traveling with family “...provide[s] opportunities for interaction and communication among family members” (Cloquet, Palomino, Shaw, Stephen, & Taylor, 2018, p. 225). In one study, it was found that participants felt that leisure time gave them an opportunity to “... be more authentic versions of themselves” (Cook & Shinew, 2014, p. 430). However, the study also found that, participants felt that work was actually less stressful than planning for leisure activities, dealing with inaccessible areas, and having to get help from others or use assistive devices (Cook & Shinew, 2014, p. 431). In addition, if people with disabilities feel that the tourist destination they are visiting is not be able to properly accommodate them, then they will most likely feel like they are not in control while they are there, “and vice versa” (Cole, Zhang, Wang, & Hu, 2018). And, “[h]owever beneficial and relevant for life satisfaction, access to tourism is particularly limited for persons with disabilities...” (Kastenholz, et.al, 2015, p. 1265).

Although, if the difficulties that people with disabilities face in the tourism industry are “eliminated,” it can be assumed that they will then be more likely to take part in tourism (Lee, Agarwal, & Kim, 2012). All aspects of tourism—travel, accommodations, excursions, etc.—must be accessible to people with disabilities in order for them “... to achieve a quality holiday experience” (Nyanjom, Boxall, & Slaven, 2018, p. 677).

There is a need that is not being met by the tourism industry. It seems that the industry is not recognizing the needs of people with disabilities to the degree that it should be, usually simply considering them to be in the same consumer segment as people who do not have disabilities (Pagán, 2012). Buhalis & Michopoulou (2011) agree that this is an up and coming market, which includes not only people with disabilities, but also ageing people because they may experience a disease that eventually causes a disability. Families that have a child with disabilities may have “...different needs, interests, and limitations...” for tourism needs than families that do not have a child with disabilities because of “[d]ifferences in physical, mental, or emotional conditions...” (Kim & Lehto, 2013).

Because there is such a wide range of disabilities, it can sometimes be difficult for the tourism industry to provide the exact accommodations that each person needs: “Within the disabled population, differences in physical, mental or emotional conditions may lead to different needs, interests, and limitations for their travel activities” (Kim & Lehto, 2012, p. 452). However, it is important for theme parks and other tourist destinations to consider the different accommodations and accessibilities that could assist the wide variety of guests that they welcome on a daily basis. “Varied special needs have to be carefully addressed if the hospitality and tourism industry intends to serve this market segment with quality” (Kim & Lehto, 2012, p. 452).

Without the proper accommodations,

“[a]ttempts to prompt the person’s travel initiative without bridging the gap between his or her travel skills and the skill level required for a successful travel performance can amplify the person’s problems and complicate the situation further. (Lancioni, et.al, 2014, p. 198).

It is important to make sure that when people that have disabilities are travelling or are at a tourist destination that they are equipped with the best accommodations that will empower and encourage them instead of discouraging them.

The ease of access to information about the accommodations that are available to people with disabilities at theme parks is also important. In a survey conducted to examine how people with disabilities felt about how specialized products and services are being—or are not being—advertised, it was found that “[m]ore than 51% would like to see more advertisements related to specialised services” (Aichner & Shaltoni, 2018, p. 125). While a few survey participants responded that they did not think more advertisements were needed, the majority agreed that they would like to see more advertisements. The reasons that participants of the survey cited for wanting more advertisements included: simply wanting more information, wanting to find out about new products that could be of assistance to them, and where such products are available for purchase. While the survey results previously discussed were specifically for products and not services, the results of the questions that concerned services had similar results (Aichner & Shaltoni, 2018, p. 125).

Another accessibility function that could provide an important accommodation for individuals with disabilities that is seemingly lacking in the tourism industry is website

accessibility—and people are aware of it: many lawsuits have been filed against tourism and hospitality websites (Mills, Han, & Clay, 2008). According to Peters & Bradbard (2007), “[c]onsumers with disabilities are the most likely group to be affected by Web accessibility barriers” (p. 28). Mills, et.al (2008) define an website that is accessible “...as one that ensures that all of its pages can be used effectively by all persons using that website.” It is crucial for tourism websites to be accessible to people with various forms of disabilities. In one preliminary study, it was found that many websites for in the hospitality and tourism industry are not in compliance with ADA Standards or guidelines that are followed by many “international web agencies” (Mills, et.al, 2008).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Theme parks are a prime vacation location for families across the world. However, when proper accommodations are not provided, vacationing can be difficult and stressful for people with disabilities. In an effort to provide a welcoming and accepting environment for people with disabilities, many theme parks have gone above and beyond regulated stands to adopt unique and innovative accommodations. For the purposes of this thesis, the accessibilities and accommodations provided by various theme parks across the country will be examined and compared to one another to gain an understanding of how well theme parks are accommodating individuals with various forms of disabilities. The results and findings of this research will also be compared to ADA standards to determine which theme parks are providing the most comprehensive and inclusive accessibilities and accommodations.

The reason that this topic was chosen is because the writer has a brother with autism, and their family has had the opportunity to experience first-hand the accommodations that various theme parks offer individuals with disabilities and their families. Because of these experiences, the writer is passionate about this topic and is interested to see how theme parks have been able to implement unique ways to accommodate people with disabilities in various scenarios.

The theme parks that were chosen were done so somewhat randomly, but mostly based on popularity. Another factor that was taken into consideration was the general reputation that each theme park has; i.e., which theme parks are known for being the most accommodating, family-friendly, etc.

The theme parks that were ultimately chosen and will be studied in-depth throughout this thesis are as follows: Walt Disney World, Disneyland, Legoland Florida, Legoland California, Universal Orlando, and Universal Hollywood.

Because one of the research questions for this thesis is concerned with the availability of information regarding accommodations for people with disabilities on each theme park's website, there will be an in-depth description of what information is listed on each website. Some of the theme parks have more information and details regarding the accommodations offered listed on their website, so the size of the section dedicated to each respective theme park in Chapter 3 will vary.

**Chapter 4: Accommodations, Accessibilities, and Services Available to Individuals
with Disabilities**

The following chart displays some of the most popular accommodations, as listed on each respective website, among the theme parks studied, along with the parks that offer each of them.

	Walt Disney World	Disneyland	LEGOLAND Florida Resort	LEGOLAND California Resort	Universal Orlando Resort	Universal Studios Hollywood
Special Access to Attractions	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Wheelchair /ECV Rental	✓	✓		✓		✓
Allowance of Service Animals	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Braille Accommodations	✓	✓			✓	✓
Hotel Room Accommodations	✓	✓			✓	
Assistive Listening	✓	✓				✓

The above chart highlights some of the accommodations and services that are available to guests at each park (according to each theme park's website). Many more accommodations are offered in addition to the ones previously listed, which will be detailed below.

Walt Disney World

Walt Disney World (WDW), is located in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. "Disney Parks have an unwavering commitment to providing a welcoming and inclusive environment and accessible experiences for our Guests" (Walt Disney World, Walt Disney World Resort Modified DAS Message and FAQ – 4/30/2015). Walt Disney World takes prides in providing a guest experience that its visitors will remember forever, which is evident in their accommodations for individuals with disabilities. Walt Disney World's website provides an in-depth guide on the numerous accessibility opportunities available to people with disabilities. Walt Disney World offers assistance for guests with cognitive disabilities, mobility disabilities, hearing and visual disabilities.

If guests should have questions about the services and accommodations that Walt Disney World is able to provide for people with disabilities, they are invited to contact "Disability Services"—there is a phone number and email provided (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Disabilities). In addition, there are also downloadable "Guides for Guests with Disabilities" available for each of the theme parks (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Disabilities).

For people with cognitive disabilities, there is a range of accommodations available. One option for parties that include a guest with a cognitive disability is purchasing park tickets ahead of a visit—guests purchase their theme park and waterpark tickets (and even annual passes)

online, or they may call a provided number. Strollers, wheelchairs, and ECVs are also available to rent at the theme parks. Personal strollers can be allowed to be used as wheelchairs on rides and attractions—guests must see a Cast Member at Guest Relations “to obtain the appropriate identifying tag” (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities).

The Disability Access Service (DAS) is a unique option for people with disabilities and their party because it allows the party to return to attractions at a later time, as opposed to waiting in line. Guests may speak with Guest Relations regarding questions about the Disability Access Service and other available accommodations. Rider switch is available as well, which allows all members of the party to visit each attraction—if one person needs to stay off the ride with a person with disabilities, he or she may then head to the front of the line to ride once the rest of their party has returned. Guests may inquire more about this service with a Cast Member at each attraction.

“Break Areas” are offered for individuals with cognitive disabilities if they “...become over-stimulated or need some down time...” (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities). Guests may speak with a Cast Member if they need to ““take a break”” at one of these areas—guests may view a list of locations by downloading the “Guide for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities” (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities).

Another accommodation that is available is companion restrooms. It is also noted that the toilets are equipped with automatic flushing, which can be very loud. Guests may also download guides, “Attraction Details for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities” and “Guide for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities,” for information regarding “experiences” at the Walt Disney World Resort (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities). There is also a link

that leads to a page with details about the attractions at Walt Disney World (Walt Disney World, Attractions). Dietary accommodations can be made, in most cases, regarding “food allergies, intolerances, and specific dietary needs” (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities). Guests may indicate special dietary needs when making reservations, or they may speak with the manager or chef at some of the table-service dining options at Walt Disney World. Guests may also bring their own food into the theme parks that meets their dietary needs and requirements—they may simply tell the bag check Cast Member that they have special dietary needs. It is also important to note that Cast Members are not able to handle the food that guests bring into the park in any way, including “storing, preparing, cooking or reheating” (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities). There is also a link to information regarding the available dietary accommodations at Walt Disney World.

In the “How to Prepare” section, there is a list of things that Walt Disney World recommends parties with a guest with cognitive disabilities do before they visit the park (Walt Disney World, Guests with Cognitive Disabilities):

- Plan a Visual Schedule
- Watch Videos
- Study Location Maps
- Choose a Meeting Location
- Practice Waiting in Line

There is also a “What to Bring” section, which includes the following (Walt Disney World, Guests with Cognitive Disabilities):

- A Safety Bracelet or Nametag

- Ear Plugs or Headphones
- A Favorite Device or Activity
- Reinforcers for Good Behavior
- A Sensory Toy

In addition, there are downloadable guides available for guests with disabilities for each theme park, as well as the “Guide for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities” and the Disability Access Service guide (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities). There are also interactive maps of each theme park which show guests the locations at which services and accommodations for individuals with cognitive disabilities are available (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities).

Regarding mobility disabilities, Walt Disney World offers a variety of accessibilities and assistances. There are three “categories” that can help guests with disabilities determine which rides and attractions are able to accommodate their needs (Walt Disney World, Guests with Mobility Disabilities):

- Must transfer from wheelchair/ECV to ride vehicle
- Must transfer from ECV to wheelchair
- Must transfer from ECV to wheelchair, and from wheelchair to ride vehicle

There is a list of rides and attractions provided that fit the requirements for each of these categories. There is also information pertaining to which transportation services are wheelchair accessible. Walt Disney World’s “... bus routes are serviced by buses equipped to accommodate various types of wheelchairs and ECVs/scooters...” (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities). However, there are guidelines that need to be followed—the wheelchair or ECV must fit properly on the lift and it must be secured by restraints on the bus. It

is noted that most of Walt Disney World's buses are able to accommodate two wheelchairs or ECVs at a time, and it is suggested that individuals transfer to one of the bus seats while travelling on the bus. Guests with other mobility impairments, including "Guests using canes, walkers, crutches, or who have difficulty walking," are able to enter the bus on the bus's ramp (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities). Regarding watercraft transportation services, Walt Disney World recommends that guests speak with Cast Members to find out which watercrafts are able to accommodate people with mobility disabilities—depending on the watercraft itself, as well as "the existing water levels and conditions" (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities). At the monorail boarding locations at the Walt Disney World Resort, guests that have mobility disabilities are able to use the ramps and elevators that lead to the monorail. "Disney's Magical Express motorcoaches accommodate most Guests in standard size wheelchairs and ECVs..." however, it is requested that guests inform the company if someone in their party will need to use a wheelchair lift to access the Magical Express when making their reservation (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities).

Wheelchairs and ECVs are available for guests to rent at Walt Disney World. Designated parking areas are also available for people who have disabilities—" [a] valid disability parking permit is required and standard parking rates apply" (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities). There are two parking lots that guests may park in—if a guest is able to walk from their vehicle to a tram that will take them to the entrance, they are invited to park in the "main parking lots"; if the guest has a mobility disability, including if they are using a wheelchair or ECV, they are invited to park in the "Disability Parking Lots," which the trams do not pick up from (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities). Guests

may visit the “Auto Plaza” at each parking lot, or call a provided number if they have more questions about parking—guests under 18 are required to get a parent or guardian’s permission before calling. There is also an interactive map for each park that displays where guests with mobility disabilities are able to access services at each park (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities). Service animals are permitted at the Walt Disney Resort. There are also interactive maps available that show where guests with mobility disabilities are able to access services and accommodations (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities).

People with hearing disabilities have a number of accommodations available to them. Walt Disney World offers “Guest Room Amenities,” which may include the following: “... door knock and phone alerts, phone amplifiers, bed shaker notification, a strobe light smoke detector and a Text Typewriter (TTY) telephone” (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Hearing Disabilities). There is a phone number provided for guests who wish to learn more or “request a Room Communication Kit”—anyone under 18 must receive permission from a parent or guardian to call (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Hearing Disabilities).

Another accommodation that is available is “Assistive Listening,” which is a feature available on “Disney’s Handheld Devices” that “...amplifies sound through headphones or an induction loop at specific theme park attractions” (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Hearing Disabilities). This accommodation may benefit individuals with mild to moderate hearing loss. Guests are able to borrow one of “Disney’s Handheld Devices” through Guest Services locations—the devices are available, “first-come, first-served,” with a refundable deposit of \$25 (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Hearing Disabilities). There is a provided link that informs guests which attractions this technology is available for. In addition to

“Assistive Listening” technology, “Disney’s Handheld Devices” are also equipped with “Handheld Captioning,” a portable captioning system which displays on-screen text...” at some of Walt Disney World’s attractions (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Hearing Disabilities). A link is provided for the attractions at which this technology is available, as well.

Video Captioning is available at a number of exhibits and pre-shows, through monitors labeled with “CC.” It is noted that guests may need to speak with a Cast Member to get assistance in accessing this accommodation. Video captioning can also be accessed through “Disney’s Handheld Devices” (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Hearing Disabilities).

Sign Language interpretation is also offered at some of the Walt Disney World Resort’s live shows. Each park has Sign Language interpretation available one to two days per week. Each week, there is a schedule for when and where Sign Language interpretation will be available—guests may download the schedule through the Walt Disney World website, as well as email a provided email address, or visit Guest Relations. Guests may also request Sign Language interpretation for select dinner shows or events, including Hoop-Dee-Do Revue, Disney’s Spirit of Aloha, and Disney’s Keys to the Kingdom Tour (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Hearing Disabilities). Guests must make their requests at least two weeks in advances and may do so by calling a provided phone number (before calling, anyone under 18 must get permission from a parent or guardian). It is also noted that guests will be contacted with details about their requested Sign Language interpretation services.

Guests may also request other accommodations to enhance their experience at Walt Disney World. Written aids are available upon request at select attractions and shows, as well as “Reflective Captioning,” which is “... an alternative service to Handheld Captioning” (Walt

Disney World, Services for Guests with Hearing Disabilities). In addition, Guest Relations and some of the payphones at the Walt Disney World Resort are equipped with Text Typewriters (TTYs). Service animals are also permitted. There are also downloadable “Guides for Guests with Disabilities” for each theme park (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Hearing Disabilities). There are interactive maps, as well, which indicate the locations at which guests with hearing disabilities may find accommodations and services to assist them in each park (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Hearing Disabilities).

For guests that are affected by visual disabilities, Walt Disney World offers multiple accommodations. With Disney’s handheld device, guests have access to “Audio Description” technology, “which provides supplemental audio by describing visual elements such as actions, settings and scene changes” (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Visual Disabilities). This accommodation is available at select shows and attractions—a list of attractions and shows at each park for which “Audio Description” is offered is provided.

Braille Guidebooks, which are available in large-text and Braille, provide “descriptions of attractions, restaurants and stores” (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Visual Disabilities). The Braille Guidebooks are given out to guests on a “first-come, first served basis” at the theme parks’ Guest Relations, and a refundable deposit of \$25 is required (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Visual Disabilities).

In addition, “Walt Disney World theme parks offer Portable Tactile Map Booklets which feature a tactile representation of building boundaries, walkways and landmarks for each land/area of the theme parks” (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Visual Disabilities). This accommodation, as with the Braille Guidebooks, is available on a “first-come, first served basis” and requires a refundable deposit of \$25 (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with

Visual Disabilities). Stationary Braille Maps can be found at all four theme parks, as well as the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex and Disney Springs. These maps have "... large print with a clear Braille overlay and raised graphics to highlight key landmarks and attractions" (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Visual Disabilities). Additional listings that the Stationary Braille Maps highlight include areas and destinations such as restrooms and First Aid locations, as well as Guest Services and areas of relief for service animals (which are allowed at the Walt Disney World Resort).

There is also a section entitled "Other Useful Things to Know," which informs guests that Braille menus are available upon request at some of Walt Disney's table-service dining options (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Visual Disabilities). It is also recommended that guests who may be affected by some lighting (including guests who have a seizure disorder or photosensitivity) speak with their doctors before their trip to Walt Disney World, as "[s]pecialty lighting and other visual effects are used extensively throughout our shows and attractions" (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Visual Disabilities). There are also interactive maps of each of the parks that are provided and indicate where accommodations are available for Walt Disney World's guests who have visual disabilities (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Visual Disabilities).

The Disability Access Service (DAS) is a program that Walt Disney World prides itself—it "enhances[s] the service we provide to our Guests with disabilities," according to the "Walt Disney World Resort Modified DAS Message and FAQ – 4/30/2015," a guide that is available when a guest clicks the "Disability Access Service" section on the "Services for Guests with Disabilities" page on the Walt Disney World website. It is also noted that individuals who are using a wheelchair or scooter may not need to use the Disability Access Service—they may

wait in the queue line, or get a time to return back to the attraction later. “DAS is intended for Guests whose disability prevents them from waiting in a conventional queue environment” (Walt Disney World, Modified DAS Message and FAQ). The service allows guests to receive a return time and come back to the attraction they wish to visit at a later time so that they do not have to wait in line for the listed wait time. The guest is able to come back to the attraction at any time after their return time, or until park close. Guests may only have a return time for one attraction at a time. Once the guest uses his or her return time at the designated attraction, he or she may be issued another return time, either at the same attraction, or a different one. The Disability Access Service may also be used in conjunction with the “*Disney FastPass+ Service*” (Walt Disney World, Modified DAS Message and FAQ).

The guide goes on to explain that Disney understands that because there is such a wide variety of disabilities, some guests may require further assistance than the Disability Access Service offers, and Disney is willing to work with guests to ensure their needs are met. In such cases, Disney’s Guest Relation Cast Members can speak to the guest and attempt to make special accommodations for those whose needs do not match the purpose of the Disability Access Service. It is also important to note that “[a]ll accommodations will be made in person, on site at Guest Relations” (Walt Disney World, Modified DAS Message and FAQ). The guide also give an explanation of how to obtain and use the Disability Access Service. There is also a section that provides answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about the Disability Access Service (Walt Disney World, Modified DAS Message and FAQ).

Guests are able to rent ECVs in various places throughout the Walt Disney World Resort, including the theme parks, the waterparks, and Disney Springs. The price for a rental ECV for a day is \$50, with a refundable deposit that varies depending on the location from which the guest

is renting the ECV—\$20 at the theme parks, and \$100 at the waterparks and Disney Springs locations. Guests may also transfer their rental between locations if they decide to visit another area of the Walt Disney World Resort. While ECVs are not available to reserve for the entire length of your stay, “vehicles can be held if Guests leave and return to the same park on the same day” (Walt Disney World, ECV Rentals). Guests may not take their rented ECVs outside of the location from which they rented them. Guests may return the ECV and reclaim their refundable deposit, or bring their receipt with them to their next park destination to rent another ECV (if an ECV is available at that location) and the deposit will be returned when the guest returns their ECV.

The “ECV Rentals” page on the Walt Disney World website also includes a list of things that guests should “Know Before You Go,” including information regarding the “first-come, first-served” policy due to a limited number of ECVs available, and advanced reservations are not available. There is also information about requirements for renting ECVs, as well as weight limits (450 pounds). It is also noted that, “ECVs are not designed to hold more than one person” (Walt Disney World, ECV Rentals). Guests are also permitted to bring their own ECVs to the park. A list of ECV providers that the Walt Disney World Resort works with, through which wheelchairs, ECVs, strollers, etc. can be pre-ordered and delivered to a guest’s resort, is listed on the “ECV Rentals” page, as well. Interactive maps of each theme park and waterpark, as well as Disney Springs, is available for guests to see where ECVs can be rented from (Walt Disney World, ECV Rentals).

Wheelchairs are also available for rent to guests at the Walt Disney World Resort at all four parks, both waterparks, and Disney Springs. The cost to rent a wheelchair in the theme parks is \$12 per day, or \$10 per day if guests decide to reserve a wheelchair for the length of

their stay. At the waterparks and Disney Springs, the price to rent a wheelchair is \$12 per day, as well, however, these locations require a \$100 refundable deposit. As with the ECV rentals, once a guest rents a wheelchair for the day, they are able to use a wheelchair at other locations at no additional cost. The “Length of Stay Rentals” are also transferrable between all four of Walt Disney World’s theme parks (Walt Disney World, Wheelchair Rentals). However, it is noted that the “Length of Stay Rentals” may not be offered at all times—i.e. “peak seasons” (Walt Disney World, Wheelchair Rentals).

Many of the same rules that have been listed for ECV rentals apply to wheelchair rentals, as well, including protocol for wheelchair rentals when leaving one area of the Walt Disney World Resort to go to another location. Another similarity is the “Know Before You Go” section, which gives guests information regarding the “first-come, first served” nature of the wheelchair rental process, as well as the fact that Walt Disney World does not offer reservations for wheelchair rentals (Walt Disney World, Wheelchair Rentals). In addition, guests must be at least 18 and have a valid ID to rent a wheelchair. The weight limit for the rental wheelchairs is 350 pounds, and it is noted that “[w]heelchairs are not designed to hold more than one person” (Walt Disney World, Wheelchair Rentals). Walt Disney World also welcomes its guests to bring their own wheelchairs into the Resort if they so wish to do so. Also like the “ECV Rentals” page, there is a list of local companies that provide rental services for strollers, wheelchairs, ECVs, etc., that are able to accept pre-orders and deliver said rentals to guests at the Walt Disney World Resort’s hotels (Walt Disney World, Wheelchair Rentals). Lastly, there are interactive maps available for guests to see where wheelchair rental services are offered at each theme park, as well as the waterparks and Disney Springs (Walt Disney World, Wheelchair Rentals).

There is a page that explains the parking that is available at the Walt Disney World Resort, however, much of the information does not specifically pertain to guests with disabilities. For the purposes of this thesis, the information that will be presented is only that which pertains to people with disabilities and is as follows: There are designated parking spots for people with disabilities (which require a valid disability permit) throughout Walt Disney World's property. It is also noted that "... standard parking rates apply" (Walt Disney World, Parking). At the theme parks, for those who are able to walk for a short period of time to a tram that takes guests to the park's entrance, the main parking lots are available to park in. Guests may also request to park at the end of the row, next to where the tram picks guests up. For individuals who have mobility disabilities, including people using a wheelchair or ECV, the "Disability Park Lots" are available at all of Walt Disney World's theme parks, which are a short walk from the park entrance (Walt Disney World, Parking). It is also important to note that the trams do not stop at these lots to pick guests up or drop them off.

If a guest should have further questions about parking, he or she is invited to visit the "Auto Plaza" at any of the four theme parks, or call a provided number—anyone under 18 must have permission from a parent or guardian before calling (Walt Disney World, Parking). There are also interactive maps provided for each of the four theme parks, as well as the waterparks, Disney Springs, ESPN Wide World of Sports, and the Walt Disney World Resort's hotels, which display to guests the available parking lots (Walt Disney World, Parking).

The restrooms at the Walt Disney World Resort are able to accommodate people with mobility disabilities. The theme parks at Walt Disney World also have companion restrooms available for its guests in some places. If a guest requires extra privacy or space, or assistance from someone in their party, the First Aid locations at each of the theme parks are equipped with

restrooms that can accommodate those needs (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Disabilities).

Service animals are able to visit most areas of the Walt Disney World Resort. Walt Disney World provides a definition of “service animal”: “... a service animal is defined as any dog or miniature horse trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability” (Walt Disney World, Service Animals). It is required that a service animal’s owner remain in control of the animal, and the animal should wear a harness/leash. It is also noted that “Cast Members are not permitted to take control of service animals” (Walt Disney World, Service Animals). While service animals are able to accompany their owners to most parts of the Walt Disney World Resort, there are some rides that are not able to accommodate service animals—there are lists provided for each park that include rides that cannot accommodate service animals. There are also lists provided for each park that include rides on which “Service Animals [are] Permitted with Caution” (Walt Disney World, Service Animals). On rides that are not able to accommodate service animals, guests may take advantage of accommodations, including “Rider Switch,” as well as “a portable kennel” (Walt Disney World, Service Animals). Walt Disney World also gives service animals access to relief areas, so long as the owner is sure to clean up after the animal. A list of available relief areas is listed for each theme park, as well as interactive maps that show guests the locations of relief areas at the theme parks, as well as the waterparks, Resort Hotels, Disney Springs, and ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex (Walt Disney World, Service Animals).

It is noted that the Walt Disney World Resort uses many forms of special effects, which include snow, bubbles, fog, and theatrical smoke, in their shows and attractions, as well as events. The website also makes it clear that the special effects that are used are safe for Walt

Disney World's guests to experience—"[a]ll special effects are produced using products that have been proven to be safe in these applications" (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Disabilities). The website also informs guests that if they should have further questions regarding the special effects that are used, they may direct those questions to a Cast Member at Guest Relations (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Disabilities).

The "Services for Guests with Disabilities" page also features a section called "Magnetic Fields," which describes to guests the nature of the magnetic fields that are used at the Walt Disney World Resort. It is explained that items that are used every day around the world "... that produce electric and magnetic fields, including electric motors and radios, are used at the Walt Disney World Resort (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Disabilities). It is also noted that the magnetic fields at Walt Disney World are similar to the magnetic fields that people are exposed to in cities, or even in their own homes when using a everyday products. If a guest should have further questions regarding the Walt Disney World Resort's magnetic fields, he or she is invited to contact Walt Disney World's Guest Relations (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Disabilities).

In addition to the accommodations and accessibilities that are provided for individuals with disabilities at the theme parks, water parks, Disney Springs, and other Walt Disney World Resort destinations, the hotels also offer a variety of accommodations and services. The hotels on Walt Disney World's properties are able to provide wheelchair-accessible hotel rooms, as well as hotel rooms that are accessible for individuals with hearing impairments. It is also noted that guests may request TTY equipment when they check-in to their hotel. All hotels have "accessible paths of travel" to areas including the lobby, "...accessible Guest rooms, restaurants, shops, meeting rooms, business centers, pools, exercise facilities and laundry facilities" (Walt

Disney World, Services for Guests with Disabilities at Disney Resort Hotels). The resorts that have “convention spaces” have accessible paths, as well, which include Disney’s BoardWalk Inn, Disney’s Contemporary Resort, Disney’s Coronado Springs Resort, Disney’s Grand Floridian Resort & Spa, and Disney’s Yacht Club Resort (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Disabilities at Disney Resort Hotels). Service animals are also welcome at the resorts (see the paragraph with information regarding service animals at the Walt Disney World Resort).

Valet parking is available at “Disney Deluxe hotels,” and it is complimentary for individuals with a valid disability permit, as well as a room or dining reservation at said hotel (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Disabilities at Disney Resort Hotels). All of Walt Disney World’s hotels are parking spaces designated for guests with disabilities; these spaces require a valid disability permit.

To book an accessible hotel room, guests who are booking online are instructed to click the box entitled “Accessible Rooms,” which will then allow them to browse through the rooms that are available (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Disabilities at Disney Resort Hotels). Guests may also book their rooms over the phone, and a phone number is provided, however, guests that are under 18 must receive permission to call from a parent or guardian.

There are also interactive maps that are provided so guests can see where at each park they may find information regarding the services and accommodations that can be provided at Walt Disney World’s hotels for guests with disabilities (Walt Disney World, Services for Guests with Disabilities at Disney Resort Hotels).

Disneyland

Disneyland is located in Anaheim, California. The original location of Walt Disney's first theme park, Disneyland is a classic American theme park. Being its sister park, Disneyland shares the ideals and values of Walt Disney World. Many of the accommodations provided at Disneyland are similar to Walt Disney World's, however, they are not identical. The accommodations that Disneyland offers are as follows.

Guests with cognitive disabilities have access to an array of accommodations. Advanced ticket purchase is offered for guests, which alleviates concerns of waiting in line to buy tickets the day of the guests' visit. Advanced tickets are available for purchase on the Disneyland website, as well as over the phone. At the park, and even some resorts, wheelchairs, ECVs, and strollers are available for guests to rent. The rider switch and FASTPASS programs are also offered.

If a park guest is "over-stimulated or need[s] some down time," break areas are available upon request; guests may simply tell a cast member that they wish to "take a break". There is also a list of areas where guests can "take a break" in the "Guide for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities" (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities). Companion restrooms are also available for guest use.

Because guests with cognitive disabilities may be overwhelmed by aspects of some of the rides and attractions at Disneyland, the website direct[s] guests to the downloadable "Attraction Details for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities" guide, as well as the "general descriptions" of each ride and attraction to decide which attractions will be appropriate for their party (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities).

Disneyland is also able to meet many dietary needs, including food allergies and intolerances to many foods—guests are able to note dietary needs in advanced reservations, as well as speak to managers and chefs at Disneyland restaurants in regards to the dietary accommodations a guest in their party may require. Guests are also permitted to bring their own food that meets their dietary needs into Disneyland; they must simply inform the bag check cast member that they have special dietary requirements. However, it is important to note that Disneyland “Cast Members are strictly prohibited from storing, preparing, cooking or reheating any food brought into the parks” (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities). There is a link provided for guests to learn more about the dietary accommodations the “Resort” offers.

Guests are able to call or email Guest Services for more information regarding the accommodations Disneyland offers for its guests that have cognitive disabilities—there is also a disclaimer that guests under 18 must have permission from a parent or guardian before calling Guest Services (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities). Also, on the “Service for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities” page, there is some information regarding “How to Prepare” and “What to Bring” for a trip to the park with a person that has cognitive disabilities. There is a list of tips provided that guests may find beneficial when preparing for their trip (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities):

- Plan a Visual Schedule
- Watch Videos
- Study Location Maps
- Choose a Meeting Location
- Practice Waiting in Line

Some of the items that Disneyland recommends guests bring are (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities):

- A Safety Bracelet or Nametag
- Ear Plugs or Headphones
- A Favorite Device or Activity
- Reinforcers for Good Behavior
- A Sensory Toy

Numerous guides are also provided on the “Services for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities” page. “The Disneyland Park Guide for Guests with Disabilities” and “Disney California Adventure Park Guide for Guests with Disabilities” are guides with information about the parks for people with various disabilities, including visual, hearing, and mobility disabilities. The “Guide for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities” is a guide that provides information about how Disneyland is able to accommodate people with cognitive disabilities. The “Attraction Details for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities” gives information about the “experiences” that each attraction has—the website gives examples of these “experiences:” “noise, darkness, etc.” (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Cognitive Disabilities). The “Disability Access Service” guide explains the accommodations that are available for people with disabilities for rides and other experiences.

There is also a downloadable guide, as mentioned above, entitled “Disneyland Resort Modified DAS Message and FAQs – 11/19/14.” This guide explains is similar to Walt Disney World’s in that it describes what the service is and how it can be used, as well as FAQs (Disneyland, Disneyland Resort Modified DAS Message and FAQs – 11/19/14).

For guests with hearing disabilities, Disneyland offers “Assistive Listening Systems,” which can be helpful for people that experience “mild to moderate hearing loss.” The “Assistive Listening Systems” help guests hear by “amplify(ing) sound through headphones or induction loop...” (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Hearing Disabilities). Guests are required to give a \$25.00 deposit, which is refundable. A list of attractions for which the “Assistive Listening Systems” are available is also given. At two Disneyland locations, “Reflective Captioning” is offered, which allows guests to view captions through the use of an LED Display (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Hearing Disabilities).

Sign Language Interpretation is also available for some of the shows at Disneyland’s parks on specific days—guests may visit the website to learn which days interpretations are offered. Guests may also download a current schedule, or call or email the provided contact information, as well as visit Disneyland Guest Relations to get up-to-date schedules. In addition, guests may request interpretation for special events at least two weeks in advance.

Payphones with “Text Typewriter (TTY)” can be found in Downtown Disney District, as well as requested in Disneyland’s Resort Hotels. The sound in all of Disneyland’s telephones can be turned up by pressing the “#” key, or the volume button. “Handheld Captioning” devices are available, as well. These devices allow guests with hearing impairments to view captions “in locations where fixed captioning systems are impractical, such as moving attractions” (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Hearing Disabilities). Guests may locate these devices at Guest Services (there is a \$25.00 deposit, which is refundable). There is also a provided list of attractions and locations for which handheld captioning is available.

In some locations, video captioning is available for guests. Monitors that are capable of captioning will be labeled with the “CC” designation. Cast members are able to turn the captioning on upon guest request. A list of locations and attractions that have the ability to provide video captioning is provided. For some of the shows and attractions, written aids are offered, which are packets that include the attraction’s script, as well as a flashlight, pencil, & paper. Guests may learn which attractions written aids are provided for at Disneyland’s Information Centers. (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Hearing Disabilities).

For guests with disabilities, there are four categories that a guest may fit. The categories are as follows (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities):

 Ambulatory Requirements

 Transfer from ECV to

Wheelchair

 Wheelchair and ECV

Accessible

 Transfer from Wheelchair or

ECV

Each category represents a different form of accommodation, and each attraction is labeled with these symbols to let guests know what type of accommodations are offered. The first category, “Ambulatory Requirements,” requires guests to be able to walk on their own, or with the help of someone from their party (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities). The second category, “Transfer from ECV to Wheelchair,” is self-explanatory;

the guest is required to transfer into a wheelchair to access attractions marked with this label (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities). The third category, “Wheelchair and ECV Accessible,” means that the attractions that are designated with this symbol are able to accommodate both wheelchairs and ECVs (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities). The fourth and final category is “Transfer from Wheelchair or ECV”—“[t]hese attractions require Guests to transfer from their wheelchair or ECV—by themselves or with assistance from their party—to a ride vehicle” (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities). There are also lists of attractions that are able to accommodate guests that fit into each category, as well as a definition key for the language and terms that are used to describe the nature of accommodations available for some of the attractions.

Disability parking is available, as well, with “[a] valid disability parking permit” (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities). Transportation from the parking lot to the park entrance is also provided. Much of Disneyland’s transportation is accessible for both ECVs and wheelchairs, however there are regulations in place to make sure guests are safe—for example, “...wheelchairs and ECVs must fit without being forced on lifts, ramps and in designated wheelchair spaces” (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities). Also, large wheelchairs and ECVs may not be permitted on Disneyland’s transportation due to the inability to accommodate their size. (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities).

Individuals who have visual impairments may benefit from “...Audio Description through Disney’s Handheld Device, which provides supplemental audio information and narration...” for some attractions at Disneyland (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Visual

Disabilities). Guests can get the devices from Guest Relations, and a refundable deposit of \$25.00 is required. There is a list of attractions for which “Audio Description” is available on Disneyland’s “Services for Guests with Visual Disabilities” page. Disneyland also has “Braille Guidebooks,” which provide information about the park, rides, restaurants, and stores. Due to limited availability, the guides are “first-come, first-served,” and guests must put down a refundable deposit of \$25.00 (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Visual Disabilities).

At Disneyland, guests are able to rent ECVs for \$50.00 per day (plus tax). A \$20.00 refundable deposit is required, as well. Disneyland does not allow reservations to be made in advance for ECVs, and because there is a limited availability, they will be issued “...on a first-come, first-served basis” (Disneyland, ECV Rentals). Disneyland also allows guests to bring their own ECV. If guests choose to rent an ECV, they may use it in both of the Disneyland Resort parks, Disney California Adventure Park and Disneyland Park. The Disneyland hotels do not offer ECV rentals—guests may only rent ECVs at the parks. Guests must be at least 18 and provide a valid photo ID to rent and operate an ECV. The ECVs are designed to hold one person, and they have a weight limit of 450 pounds. There is also a link provided which brings guests to the “Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities” page upon clicking on it. Interactive maps of each of Disneyland’s theme parks are available, as well, which display where guests are able to rent ECVs (Disneyland, ECV Rentals).

Wheelchairs are available to rent, as well, for \$12.00 per day, plus a \$20.00 (plus tax) refundable deposit. As with the ECV rentals, the wheelchair rentals are available “on a first-come, first-served basis” (Disneyland, Wheelchair Rentals). Guests may also bring their own wheelchair to the Disneyland Resort. If guests rent a wheelchair at Disneyland, they may use

it in both of the parks. Some of the hotels at Disneyland also offer wheelchair rentals (it is noted that there is limited availability at these locations), and there is a link to the “Discover Disneyland Resort Hotels” page. Guests must be at least 18, with a valid photo ID, to rent and operate a wheelchair. The wheelchairs are designed to hold only one person, and they have a weight limit of 350 pounds. There is also a link to the “Services for Guests with Mobility Disabilities” page. There are interactive maps of each of the parks that show guests where they are able to rent wheelchairs, as well (Disneyland, Wheelchair Rentals).

Service animals are permitted at Disneyland, however, there are rules and regulations that must be followed. Service animals must always be on their leash and cast members may not “take control of the service animal” (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Hearing Disabilities). Also, guests with service animals may enter attractions the same way as guests with wheelchairs do. Some attractions are not able to accommodate service animals, however, so guests may participate in “Rider Switch,” or place the service animal in a kennel, to ensure all members of the party are able to visit each attraction (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Hearing Disabilities).

Additional services are also available for people with disabilities at the Disneyland Resort. There are numerous sections on the “Services for Guests with Disabilities” page that have the following information. Information regarding magnetic fields and lights, which may affect people with sensitivity to light, is available on the website. Disneyland also has restrooms that are accessible for people that have mobility disabilities, as well as companion restrooms. For guests that may require “...additional space or privacy...”, the First Aid locations are equipped with accessible restrooms, as well (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Disabilities). Disneyland also invites guests with disabilities to email them for more

information about the accessibilities available for the use of their website (Disneyland, Services for Guests with Disabilities).

LEGOLAND Florida Resort

The LEGOLAND Florida Resort is located in Winter Haven, Florida. The park, as is inferred in its name, is themed and revolves around Legos. The park has a sister park in California, which will also be studied.

The LEGOLAND Florida Resort requires its guests to “be able to transfer to ride vehicles with assistance from a member of their party,” as “Model Citizens,” LEGOLAND employees, “are not permitted to lift guests into or out of a ride vehicle” (LEGOLAND Florida Resort, Special Situations). However, “Model Citizens are happy to assist with access to special ride compartments...” (LEGOLAND Florida Resort, Special Situations).

Guests that have casts may not be permitted on some of the rides at the LEGOLAND Florida Resort due to safety concerns. The website provides a list of the rides from which guests with casts of various types are prohibited—the ride list varies based on what type of cast a guest may have (LEGOLAND Florida Resort, Special Situations).

The LEGOLAND Florida Resort website also features a section called “Resort Accessibility & ADA Information” on its “Special Situations” page. Under this section, various information is provided about the accommodations and accessibilities the parks and hotels have for individuals with disabilities. The stores, restaurants, shows, and most of the attractions at the LEGOLAND Florida Resort comply with ADA guidelines for accessibility for people using wheelchairs or people who have other disabilities. There is also a downloadable guide, the “Guide for Guests with Disabilities,” that guests are invited to use in conjunction to the Park

Map, which will “ensure your safety and enjoyment” (LEGOLAND Florida Resort, Special Situations). For guests that may be unable to wait in line for rides and attractions, a “Hero Pass” is available. The Hero Pass grants the guest, to whom the pass was assigned, access to “immediate boarding through the exit along with one helper...” on any ride or attraction (LEGOLAND Florida Resort, Special Situations). The rest of the guest’s party, however, must get a “reservation,” which allows the entire group (including the guest with the Hero Pass) to experience the attraction together at the time of the reservation. Guests may receive a Hero Pass, which is able to accommodate up to 6 people in the guest’s party, at Guest Services. It is also noted that “[t]he Assisted Access Pass is assigned at the discretion of LEGOLAND Florida Resort staff and may be revoked at any time if terms are violated” (LEGOLAND Florida Resort, Special Situations). Due to limited availability, the LEGOLAND Florida Resort asks that stand-up ECVs be requested a week prior to the guest’s visit. For guests who have questions about the accommodations provided, they may fill out an online form (at least a week prior to their visit) and a LEGOLAND employee will get in contact with them (LEGOLAND Florida Resort, Special Situations).

LEGOLAND California Resort

The LEGOLAND California Resort is located in Carlsbad, California. This theme park is affiliated with the LEGOLAND Florida Resort, and they are both theme parks that are built around the building toy, LEGOs. “LEGOLAND California is committed to providing a welcoming, inclusive, and accessible experience for all Guests” (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide).

The LEGOLAND California Resort website features a guide for guests with disabilities, which explains the variety of accommodations the park offers. Guests who use strollers as

wheelchairs are allowed to access all areas of the park, but they are required to visit Guest Services to request an “identifying tag” (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide). Another accommodation that the park offers is the LEGOLAND California Resort’s “Assisted Access Pass,” which allows guests with various disabilities “an alternate option to access our rides...” (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide). It is specified that this accommodation is available for people with physical disabilities, as well as people with cognitive disabilities. As with the LEGOLAND Florida Resort’s “Hero Pass,” the “Assisted Access Pass” needs to be issued and authorized by a “Resort Model Citizen” before it can be used by the guest (LEGOLAND Florida Resort, Special Situations, LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide). Guests may see the “Assisted Access Pass” or contact Guest Services for more information regarding this accommodation (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide).

There is also a chart provided on the “Access Guide” which informs guests as to which attractions are wheelchair-accessible, etc.—please see Appendix A (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide). The guide also details that some shows feature elements (lights, sounds, etc.) may be overwhelming, and guests are invited to view the “daily Resort Entertainment Guide” for more information (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide). There is reserved show seating available for people in wheelchairs; guests may speak with a “Resort Model Citizen” to locate the proper seating (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide). The guide features a section which details the park’s dedication to assisting guests on the Autism Spectrum.

“LEGO system based social skills have been proven to be an effective way for children with social difficulties associated with Autism, Asperger’s Syndrome, Anxiety, Depression, or Adjustment Disorders to improve their social interaction and communication skills” (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide).

This section also outlines the offerings the park has for people with cognitive disabilities: stroller and wheelchair rentals, the tag which can be used to identify strollers as wheelchairs, Assisted Access Pass, quiet areas—which include The Baby Care Center and First Aid, and companion restrooms. There is also additional information about the park and general safety: If the park should close unexpectedly, the LEGOLAND California Resort requests that everyone stay calm, and remain where they are on an attraction until a “Resort Model Citizen” is able to assist them (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide). It is also noted that in such an event as an unexpected park closure, guests on rides may need to exit the attraction on “... stairs, narrow walkways, or ladders,” and that guests need assistance to exit the ride vehicle may receive that assistance from someone in their party (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide).

“Responsible Riders” may ride with guests who meet the “minimum requirements” to ride, and it is that riders responsibility to make sure that the guests follow the instructions for each attraction (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide). Guests are also required to use the restraints provided on each ride, and they must be secured by said restraints before riding. It is noted that guests must be able to “... properly fit...” on the attraction’s seat and “... secured by all required restraint systems...” to ride (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide). It is also recommended that guests read the “Let’s Have Fun and Be Safe” signs at each attraction before entering to learn about the safety instructions for each ride (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide). If guests should have further questions regarding the information and instructions presented on the signs, they may speak with the operator.

There are also sections, as well, that discuss the responsibility of riders to act appropriately and follow safety instructions when riding theme park rides, as “[t]here are

inherent risks in the participation in or on any amusement ride or attraction” (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide). If a guest seems nervous about riding (he or she is fidgeting or crying, etc.), he or she “...must be calm and acknowledge their willingness to ride to the operator before the ride will begin” (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide).

For safety reasons, it is required on most of the rides at the LEGOLAND California Resort that guests can sit upright without assistance. The majority of the attractions at the LEGOLAND California Resort also require guests who are using wheelchairs to transfer into ride vehicles, either on their own, or with the assistance of a member of their party. If guests are not able to transfer from their wheelchair, or enter and exit the ride unassisted, someone in their party may assist them in transferring, and that person is usually required to ride the ride with them. There is a chart on which guests may see which attractions require transferring out of wheelchair, etc. (Appendix A). Most of the LEGOLAND California Resort’s attractions are accessible to wheelchairs (guests in wheelchairs may enter through the attraction’s exit), and guests are invited to see view the chart (Appendix A) for information regarding each specific attraction. Some of the attractions are also able to accommodate service animals (Appendix A), however, it is important to note that “Model Citizens” are unable to handle or monitor service animals (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide).

The “Access Guide” also provides information about safety at the waterpark—please see the guide for further information (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide). There is also a section which suggests that guests download the LEGOLAND app for more information and “tips” (LEGOLAND California Resort, Access Guide).

Universal Orlando Resort

The Universal Orlando Resort is located in Orlando, Florida. Universal theme parks are known for their thrilling rollercoasters and movie-themed attractions. For each of its parks, Universal Studios Florida and Universal's Islands of Adventure, as well as Universal's Volcano Bay, there are "Guides for Rider Safety and Accessibility" that are available for guests to view online (Universal Orlando Resort, Accessibility Information).

The Universal Orlando Resort is able to accommodate manual wheelchairs for almost all of its queue lines, as "the queue experience is an important part of telling the story of the overall attraction experience" (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests Using Manual Wheelchairs And ECVs). The only queue line that is not able to accommodate manual wheelchairs is the "Pteranodon Flyers" at Universal's Islands of Adventure (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests Using Manual Wheelchairs And ECVs). Each attraction has its own requirements when boarding that must be met, as well as accommodations for people who are using wheelchairs. If guests have the ability to transfer from their wheelchairs into a ride seat, either unassisted or with the assistance of a member of their party, they are able to do so. To learn more about the requirements that must be met and the accommodations that are offered at each attraction, guests may ask an attendant, or view the "Universal Orlando Resort Guide for Rider Safety and Accessibility" (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests Using Manual Wheelchairs And ECVs). None of the Universal Orlando Resort's queue lines or ride vehicles are able to accommodate ECVs, except for Hogwarts Express. If guests are able to, they may transfer into a provided manual wheelchair so that they are able to access the rides that are able to accommodate wheelchairs. If guests are not able to transfer out of their ECV, they may speak with an "Attractions Attendant" (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests Using Manual Wheelchairs And ECVs).

The Universal Orlando Resort's restaurants and gift stores are accessible for guests who are using wheelchairs. The shows and parades also have "Accessible Viewing" areas available, which are identified by "the International Symbol of Accessibility" (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests Using Manual Wheelchairs And ECVs). Guests may speak with an attendant to locate an "Accessible Viewing" area (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests Using Manual Wheelchairs And ECVs).

The Universal Orlando Resort's hotels are all able to accommodate guests with disabilities, and there are rooms at each which are specifically equipped for guests with disabilities. All the restaurants are accessible for guests who are using wheelchairs, and the room numbers of every room are written in Braille, as well. The website lists the accessibilities of the hotel rooms at the Universal Orlando Resort, as well, which include the following (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests Using Manual Wheelchairs And ECVs):

- Entry doors are 36" wide
- Accessible peepholes
- Closets with rods at 48" high
- Toilets with grab bars
- Bathroom choices include roll-in shower stall with adjustable shower head or combination shower/tub with adjustable shower head, tub seat and hand bar
- Closed-caption TV
- Smoke detector with light

For guests with prosthetic limbs, the Universal Orlando Resort has set guidelines for which rides require the securing or removal of said prosthetic limbs. On rides allow prosthetic

limbs, “[a]ny guest with prosthetic arms or hands will be required to ensure the limb is properly attached and able to grasp the ride restraint...” (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests With Prostheses). On rides that require guests to remove prosthetic limbs, “...certain natural extremities are required to ride safely” (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests With Prostheses). On such rides where prosthetic limbs must be removed, the following requirements must be met:

“You must remove all prosthetic limbs before riding and still have the ability to (1) continuously brace with an upper natural extremity, (2) independently maintain yourself in an upright position while seated, and (3) when seated, both natural legs must extend to the edge of your seat or terminate below the knee...” (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests With Prostheses).

A list of attractions is provided for rides at both Universal Studios Florida and Universal’s Islands of Adventure that either require that guests secure their prosthetic limbs, or that require that guests remove their prosthetic limbs before riding. There are only two rides that require guests to remove their prosthetic limbs, which are “Pteranodon Flyers” and “Hollywood Rip Ride Rockit” (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests With Prostheses). The “Hollywood Rip Ride Rockit” requires that “...when seated, you must have one natural full leg and one natural leg that extends to the edge of the seat or terminates below the knee...” (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests With Prostheses).

The Universal Orlando Resort also provides a list of attractions at which oxygen tanks are allowed. If guests who are using oxygen concentrators, or similar devices, are able to secure them (without causing interference with restraints), they may be able to ride with them. Guests may speak with an attendant at each ride to find out more about the requirements that must be

met and the accommodations that are available (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests Using Oxygen Tanks/Devices).

For people with hearing disabilities, American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters are available every day to interpret some of the shows at Universal Studios Florida and Universal's Islands of Adventure, free of charge. Guests may email a provided email address to view a schedule or to request more information. Locations and show time can also be viewed on the Universal Orlando Resort's "Show Times" page, as well as the guide map, which has information regarding when certain shows will have American Sign Language interpretation available—the available times will be "indicated with the Interpreter Symbol" (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests With Hearing Disabilities). Guests may also email the provided email address at least one week in advance to request an interpreter at a specific showtime.

Open captioning is available on the queue monitors at some of the Universal Orlando Resort attractions. Guests may see the signs outside of each attraction, an attendant, or visit the "Universal Orlando Resort Guide for Rider Safety and Accessibility" for further information about open captioning services (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests With Hearing Disabilities). In addition, Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDD) can be requested at Universal Studios Florida and Universal's Islands of Adventure Guest Services locations.

Guests with vision impairments have access to loanable large-print and Braille versions of the "Universal Orlando Resort Guide for Rider Safety and Accessibility", which can be found at Guest Services locations in both Universal Orlando Resort parks (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests With Vision Disabilities). There are also guides available for loan in large-print and Braille for some of the park's show scripts, which can be found at Guest Services in both parks, as well as "Poseidon's Fury," "Animal Actors On Location!," "A Day in the Park with Barney,"

“FEAR FACTOR LIVE,” and “Universal Orlando’s Horror Make-Up Show” (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests With Vision Disabilities).

There are also certain rides that can accommodate white canes, or they will be held off the ride until the guest is done riding. On rides that are able to accommodate white canes, guests may be required to collapse their white cane while riding. On rides where white canes are not allowed due to safety hazards, an attendant will hold the white cane until guest is ready to exit the ride once it has stopped in the unloading area, where it will be returned. There are also provided lists that indicate which rides at each park require that guests must leave their white canes with an attendant while riding (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests With Vision Disabilities).

The Universal Orlando Resort allows trained service animals and has guidelines in order to keep them safe and taken care of. They must be on a harness or leash at all times, and the guest must remain in control of his or her service animal. Guests may view the “specific entry and boarding requirements” at each of the Universal Orlando Resort’s attractions to decide what attractions are the safest for service animals to accompany them on (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests With Service Animals). There are also portable kennels available at some attractions. In addition, there are walking areas in the parks that services animals may utilize. Guests may speak to an attendant or refer to the “Universal Orlando Resort Guide for Rider Safety and Accessibility” for further information about service animals the Universal Orlando Resort (Universal Orlando Resort, Guests With Service Animals).

Universal Studios Hollywood

Universal Studios Hollywood is located in Universal City, California. Being theme park revolving around movies, Universal Studios Hollywood features many rides and attractions that guests may recognize from the big screen. Universal Studios Hollywood is a sister park to the Universal Orlando Resort.

For Universal Studios Hollywood's guests that have hearing disabilities, the park provides multiple accommodations. One accommodation that is available are assisted listening devices, which may help guests hear if they are hard of hearing. This accommodation is available for free and can be found at Guest Relations locations. Amplified headsets, which may help guests who have mild to moderate hearing loss, are available, as well, at Universal Studios Hollywood's phone locations. Guests may also contact Guest Relations, either through a link online or over the phone by calling a provided number, a week before their planned visit to request free sign language interpreting services. In addition, Guest Relations and First Aid locations have video remote interpreting available (Universal Studios Hollywood, Guests With Hearing Disabilities).

Guests that are affected by visual disabilities have access to a number of accommodations, as well. The scripts to the shows are available in both large font and Braille and can be found at Guest Services locations at Universal Studios Hollywood. Guests that use white canes are able to bring their canes on some rides and attractions and some attractions have a compartment on the ride vehicle in which the cane can be stored in, however, they may be required to be collapsed. In the case that an attraction cannot accommodate a white cane, the guest is able to leave their cane with an "Attraction Attendant," who will hold the cane until the guest is ready to exit the ride vehicle once it has stopped its motion and is in the unloading area

(Universal Studios Hollywood, Guests With Vision Disabilities). The website provides a list of each attraction's ability to accommodate white canes, whether it be "Allowed in vehicle," "Not Allowed in vehicle," or "Allowed in vehicle if collapsible and store in pouch" (Universal Studios Hollywood, Guests With Vision Disabilities).

Universal Studios Hollywood provides an array of accommodations and accessibilities for people that are using wheelchairs or who have prosthetics. To accommodate guests that are in wheelchairs, Universal Studios Hollywood's stores and restaurants are wheelchair-accessible. The outdoor stage shows have areas that are reserved and are designated with the International Symbol of Accessibility. The Universal Studios Store provides rental wheelchairs and Electric Convenience Vehicles (ECVs), as well as strollers. Wheelchairs are \$15 to rent, and ECVs are \$60 to rent. It is also noted that wheelchair rentals require a refundable deposit of \$25. There is also a disclaimer that informs guests that the ECVs are "first-come, first-served" and must be operated by only one guest who is at least 18 (Universal Studios Hollywood, Guests Using Wheelchairs or Prosthetics). The website also states that none of the rides are able to accommodate ECVs, however, guests are able to transfer into wheelchairs on the rides that can accommodate wheelchairs. A list of three rides ("Flight of the Hippogriff," "Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey," and "Revenge of the Mummy – The Ride") is provided for which "[g]uests should properly secure all prosthetic limbs before riding..." due to safety concerns (Universal Studios Hollywood, Guests Using Wheelchairs or Prosthetics).

For guests that wish to bring service animals, Universal Studios Hollywood is able to accommodate said service animals in all restaurants, stores, queue lines, and most places in the park. There are specific requirements for entering and boarding each attraction, which may help guests to decide which rides are safe for their service animals to accompany them on. The

website invites guests to visit the “Rider’s Guide for Rider Safety and for Guests with Disabilities” in order to assist them in making their decisions (Universal Studios Hollywood, Service Animals in the Park).

Guests who are using oxygen tanks are able to bring their oxygen tanks to some attractions at Universal Studios Hollywood. However, because of safety concerns on some of the rides (i.e. “dramatic movement” and “flame effects”), the website provides a list of rides on which oxygen tanks are not allowed (Universal Studios Hollywood, Oxygen Tanks in the Parks). The website informs guests that they may speak with a team member at any of the listed rides for further information and assistance (Universal Studios Hollywood, Oxygen Tanks in the Parks).

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

It is clear from the research presented that theme parks across America are providing opportunities for individuals with disabilities to take part in many aspects of the theme park “experience.” While all theme parks are required by law to provide minimal ADA-mandated regulations, it is evident that many theme parks choose to provide extra accommodations that enhance the overall experience for people with disabilities.

Similarities in the Accommodations Offered by the Researched Theme Parks

Because the parks that were researched all have multiple locations in the United States (i.e. Walt Disney World and Disneyland, the LEGOLAND Florida Resort and the LEGOLAND California Resort, and Universal Orlando and Universal Hollywood), many of the accommodations that are offered by each park are similar to those that are offered by their sister park.

One of the most common accommodations that many of the theme parks share is the idea allowing guests with disabilities to be excused from waiting in attraction queue lines. Each theme park and its respective accommodation name are as follows: Walt Disney World (Disability Access Service), Disneyland (Disability Access Service), LEGOLAND Florida Resort (Hero Pass), LEGOLAND California (Assisted Access Pass). Another similarity is that all of the websites, with the exception of the LEGOLAND Florida Resort, provided information about service animals in the theme parks. Many of the websites also had information about renting wheelchairs and ECVs. These are just a few of the similarities that were among the theme park website, which this writer believes is important for guests to be able to research before they plan their trips.

Recommendations for Theme Park Websites

It is strongly recommended that theme parks keep their websites up-to-date and full of helpful information for guests, especially guests who will be travelling with an individual with disabilities. Walt Disney World and Disneyland are, by far, the most informative websites of the theme parks that were researched, with the most detail available about the services and accommodations that are offered.

Each of the theme parks that were researched had a section on its website that gave its prospective guests information about the types of services and accommodations that are available to guests with disabilities. However, the theme parks that really stood out through the information that is readily available on their websites are Walt Disney World and Disneyland. The research indicates that these two theme park locations offer the most comprehensive and inclusive accommodations, accessibilities, and service for individuals with disabilities. Because these theme parks' websites are so detailed regarding each service and accessibility offered, it is easy for guests to understand the exact accommodations that would be available to them should they decide to visit either Disney Parks location. The amount of services that the Disney Parks offer is impressive.

Recommendations for the Accommodations Available at the Theme Parks

Because there is such a broad spectrum of disabilities that people visiting theme parks may have, it is necessary for the proper accommodations to be offered at every theme park. However, as it is clear through the research provided, many theme parks have differing accommodations, and many may be neglected entire segments of consumers because they are not offering accommodations that can be of assistance to their guests. A universal set of guidelines

should be created so that guests with disabilities can be ensured that they will receive the proper accommodations that they need at each theme park that they visit.

To ensure that theme parks are accommodating the needs of people with disabilities, each theme park should have quiet places for guests with disabilities or medical conditions can go to escape the hustle and bustle of the parks. While some of the parks listed do offer quiet spaces for guests with disabilities, it would be beneficial to have a place that is designated specifically for the purpose of providing a safe-haven for overwhelmed guests. One way to achieve this idea would be to build buildings designated specifically for people with disabilities. In these buildings, guests would find refuge from the loud and busy nature of theme parks, which can be perceived as overwhelming. Not only would this be helpful for people with disabilities who are overwhelmed by the busyness of the parks, but people with special medical needs (people who need to take medications, etc.) could use these buildings, as well. An area where guests could unwind in a quiet and relaxing environment could be a beneficial addition to the accommodations offered at theme parks—and even other public spaces—across the world.

These buildings could be customized to fit the characters or movies that each theme park revolves around. The buildings could also have many different elements that would be appealing to people in search of a peaceful environment—private rooms that can be reserved for 30-minute periods, a Guest Services kiosk, a lobby area with couches and televisions, private companion restrooms—the possibilities are endless.

If this concept were to be implemented, theme parks would not only be providing a safe space for people who are experiencing sensory overload, but they could also draw in an entirely new market segment—potential guests who are hesitant to visit a theme park because they have a family member with a disability and they are not sure how their loved one would react to the

crowds and noises. The introduction of a new market segment would provide the opportunity for the marketing team to create new content and advertisements that would cater to the needs of said market segment.

The addition of this idea, as well as compliance with a universal set of guidelines for accommodating people with disabilities, would add elements to the table of popular accommodations among theme parks (see chart on the next page).

	Walt Disney World	Disneyland	LEGOLAND Florida Resort	LEGOLAND California Resort	Universal Orlando Resort	Universal Studios Hollywood
Special Access to Attractions	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Wheelchair /ECV Rental	✓	✓		✓		✓
Allowance of Service Animals	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Braille Accommodations	✓	✓			✓	✓
Hotel Room Accommodations	✓	✓			✓	
Assistive Listening	✓	✓				✓
Quiet Areas for People With Disabilities						
Complies with Universal Guidelines for Accommodations						

Recommendations for Future Research

Through the research conducted in this thesis, it is clear that the theme parks presented are accommodating people with disabilities, and they are listing the accommodations they offer on their websites. For future research, it would be beneficial to conduct a study with a larger number of theme parks, with various sizes, locations, etc., so as to get a broader view of the types of accommodations that are being provided, as well as how well information is presented and explained on each respective website.

Another angle that would be interesting to pursue would be including a survey which asks people with disabilities about the experiences they have had at theme parks, whether they believe theme parks are going above and beyond to accommodate them, and the needs that they have that are not being met by theme park accommodations. The opinions that are collected through this survey would be a thoughtful addition to future research since it would add an element of personal experience, which is often a very important factor in creating change. If theme parks could see the feedback from guests about their experiences, whether they be positive or negative, it could spark the creation of new or improved accommodations.

It is evident that the theme parks that were researched have a variety of accommodations and services available for people with disabilities. It is important that the theme park industry continues to accommodate individuals with disabilities because doing so will create a positive environment for everyone.

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Universal Orlando Resort, Guests With Service Animals

Universal Orlando Resort, Guests With Vision Disabilities

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Universal Studios Hollywood, Guests With Vision Disabilities

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Universal Studios Hollywood, Service Animals in the Park

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