

## DEFINING BARRIERS IN TOURISM FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN UZBEKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

Today, travelers with impairments confront a lot of challenges in Uzbekistan. To begin with, these tourists feel uncomfortable due to social and cultural misunderstandings, accommodation problems, restricted data, and transportation problems. To investigate the questions, we used quantitative and qualitative methods; however, it should be admitted that the information on this topic was limited, especially on the Internet. The results were found by using small questionnaires on tourist websites and available statistics.

**Keywords:** barrier-free tourism, tourists with disabilities, accessibility, data, touristic issues, accommodation, transport, bias

### INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has aimed progressively at segmentation as a way to supply superior benefits to particular visitor bunches that are differentiated demographically and psychographically. As a segment of the sector, people with disabilities are essential for expanding tourism prospects. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) also clarifies that accessibility is the main element of UNWTO's work in sustainable tourism development, which is sometimes referred to as "accessible tourism for all." It highlights the requirement of providing accurate data on barrier-free facilities for tourists, supplying support services in destinations for people with disabilities, and training staff to meet tourists' needs. (New York, 2003)

Unfortunately, it is still a relatively unexplored field in Uzbekistan, which leads to myriad problems for tourists with disabilities. Therefore, an analysis of the barriers to improvement in Uzbekistan will serve as the basis for this study.

### **RELATED WORK**

The requirements of people with disabilities can be a milestone for barrier-free tourism (BFT). BFT provides a brand-new segmentation opportunity that combines the accessibility needs of the elder and disabled sectors. The provision of information, the presentation, promotion, and marketing of amenities for quick-access tourism can give locations a competitive advantage for engaging these expanding niche markets. (Cameron et al. 2003, 1)

People with physical health conditions have similar intentions to be tourists as the rest of the population (Woodside and Etzel 1980; Foggin 2001). However, many tourists face barriers in all tourist campaigns. (Smith 1987). According to Smith (1987) and Kennedy, Smith, and Austin (1991), the main problems can be classified into three groups: fundamental, environmental, and communicational. They highlight that the fundamental group includes physical, mental, and psychological conditions of tourists, while the environmental barriers externally affect people with disabilities and incorporate others' views on construction, ecological characteristics, vehicular features, legislation, and economics; the communicational hurdles occur when people with disabilities interact with others. (Kennedy, Smith, and Austin, 1991)

After the research, further empirical investigation was conducted by Darcy (2002a) in order to define restrictions and difficulties in tourism for people with disabilities. According to him, people with impairments face certain limitations and hurdles while traveling:

- limitations connected with society and culture;
- Information on travel preparation;
- barriers with transportation;
- accommodations with easy access;

This classification will serve as the foundation for dealing with the limitations and

barriers that tourists with disabilities may face in Uzbekistan.

### **Proposed idea**

#### Limitations connected with society and culture

The sociological approach to disability emphasizes that debilitating surroundings and unfriendly public attitudes, not an actual physiological deficiency, cause disability. Tourism is an element of a country’s larger social interactions, but simultaneously it has specific responses to disability that must be recognized in the context of the nation because only after that can a plan for barrier-free tourism be established. (United Nations, 2013)

According to Miles, there have been inherent variations in how the majority of Western and Eastern societies conceive of disability. This includes psychological, religious, status, and visible issues, narcissist building, political inequities, and inadequately trained personnel. These disparities have ramifications for disabled people’s potential social participation and proclivity to visit tourist destinations. Such conceptual frameworks may have an impact on the acceptability of disabled travelers in target locations. (Miles 1982; 1996; 2000)

This seems to be a common problem in Uzbekistan—not paying attention to people with disabilities. According to the United Nations (Uzbekistan 2019), people with disabilities continue to be "unknown" to the wider public, leading to charitable mindsets and societal disapproval. Few persons saw or communicated with people with disabilities at their educational organization or employment, or among peers or family members, according to the knowledge, attitude, and practices questionnaire. Only one-third had met them in their mahallas, and the other third had never met anyone with a disability. 10% of participants said they had never interacted with an individual with a disability, while 14% said they had interacted with a person with a disability one time a year or less. (UN, Uzbekistan, 2019)

#### Accommodation with difficult access

The following are the most significant access characteristics and information requirements for hotel accommodation (United Nations, 2019):

- Inadequate continuous walkways (from parking or drop-off to all hotel services and the room)
- The reception desks are excessively high;
- Bedrooms are in the wrong place;
- There are no steps into the rooms;
- weight of door stops; door widths;
- D-type door knobs;
- corridor circulation area;
- room circulation space;
- uncluttered furniture arrangement, etc.;

In many cases, housing companies in Uzbekistan advertise their rooms as accessible or barrier-free, but people with disabilities find the accommodations unsuitable.

Having looked for the available information for tourists with disabilities on the Internet, unfortunately, we were unsuccessful as hotels do not reveal exact information about existing facilities. Most of them claim their availability is only for people with physical challenges. Moreover, most of the facilitated hotel prices range between 50 and 200 dollars per day, which is costly because of the prices for the essential needs of people with disabilities. Consequently, it can be seen that prices are still expensive for people with disabilities.

#### Information on travel preparation

Many tourists with disabilities face additional communication barriers when traveling. While all tourists face the common barrier of language differences between host and guest, this can be compounded for people with disabilities who may have expressive difficulties. These difficulties may require a greater level of concentration to understand the person. The non-disabled listener may also have attitudinal problems towards people with disabilities, and this will further aggravate the communication problem. (United Nations, 2019)

According to the United Nations (2019), one challenge is the requirement for

participants (people with disabilities, operators, tourist sectors, and mediators) to agree on what defines access and disability. These are:

- identifying the various characteristics of access (physical, visual, auditory, and mental);
- recognizing the challenges of implementing these aspects of access;
- supplying the correct access data;
- providing the appropriate degree of detail about the access information;
- ensuring the availability of information;
- Having a proper format for the data; conveying the information in an acceptable manner;
- determining distribution routes (both general and disability-specific);
- distributing the information to employees at all levels of the company.
- notifying mediators of the information.

Only limited data was discovered on a few websites by real travelers using wheelchairs in Uzbekistan. People shared their opinions about their experiences and described real challenges. Uzbek Railways’ website also does not give any information about facilities on trains for people with disabilities. It can be seen that the tourist sector of Uzbekistan should create more data in order to develop barrier-free tourism for tourists with disabilities.

#### Barriers with transports

The inaccessibility of the urban environment affects not only locals but also visitors to the city. According to the State Committee for Tourism for 2019, one-fifth of all visitors to Uzbekistan are over the age of 55. For example, the majority of Japanese visitors are above the age of 60. According to the World Health Organization, 15% of the planet’s population, or 1 billion people, have some sort of disability; the European Union alone has roughly 120 million people who are disabled. However, 85% of Tashkent’s buildings and social infrastructure amenities are still inaccessible to those with mobility restrictions, impeding the growth of barrier-free tourism. (Yusupov, 2020)

For example, On September 7, the press service of Uzbekistan Temir Yollari published a commentary on the creation of conditions for people with limited mobility on the new elevated underground line. The material emphasizes that elevators are intended only for passengers with limited mobility, and other categories cannot use them. (Yusupov, 2020)

Additionally, the respondents to an online questionnaire mentioned problems with finding real barrier-free toilets with necessary facilities in Khiva city, although many hotels claim their full availability for people with disabilities. Respondents also mentioned taking the train; AFAIK, there has been no barrier-free access. Consequently, traveling around can be challenging, as public transportation is unpredictable and already tough for individuals in good condition. They highlight that the roads are in poor condition, are potholed, and are extremely difficult to navigate, which is a barrier for tourists with disabilities.

## CONCLUSION

On this basis, we conclude that tourists with disabilities face a number of difficulties in Uzbekistan. First of all, because of social and cultural misconceptions, tourists feel unacknowledged; to put it another way, service providers also have a stereotyped image of guests with disabilities, and they also neglect to liberate clients with disabilities from the bias of clients without disabilities, who may categorize the group with disabilities with an unfavorable and unfriendly attitude. Secondly, accommodation problems are still a problem in Uzbekistan, especially for those who are not ready for high expenditures. Therefore, the facilities for visitors with disabilities in expensive hotels should be at least partly developed in mid-class hotels. Thirdly, it can be seen that Uzbekistan's tourist sector needs to develop more data in order to enhance barrier-free tourism for visitors with impairments, as the unavailability of accurate information prevents them from visiting Uzbekistan. Finally, the present findings confirm that the underdeveloped public system limits mobility around the country by limiting access to the sights for tourists with disabilities.

Nevertheless, we found that the current state of the infrastructure related to this

type of tourism has been studied by the State Committee for Tourism Development and that measures for its improvement have been planned.

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