

## TOURISM ACCESSIBILITY. THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION FOR TOURISTS WITH DIFFERENT ABILITY LEVELS

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### ABSTRACT

The main goal of accessible tourism is to focus on social needs rather than disability features and to adjust the conditions of geographical (social and physical) space to meet these needs. Accessibility is a key condition that must be fulfilled to achieve this goal. This means that products and services in tourism must be accessible to people with disabilities, including the physical environment, transportation, technology, communication and information systems, and other facilities and services.

**Keywords:** accessibility, tourists with disabilities, tourism, information, barrier-free tourism.

The main goal of accessible tourism is to focus on social needs rather than disability features and to adjust the conditions of geographical (social and physical) space to meet these needs. Accessibility is a crucial condition that must be fulfilled to achieve this goal. This means that products and services in tourism must be accessible to people with disabilities, including the physical environment, transportation, technology, communication and information systems, and other facilities and services.

Barrier-free tourism is more relevant in investigations connected to disability because tourism can improve the well-being and attraction of people with disabilities

(Bergier et al. 2010). According to Nawijn and Veenhoven, the more people with disabilities participate in leisure activities, the more they gain satisfaction from life. They proved the positivity of recreational activities in the empirical study on holiday trips. Many other studies also connected life satisfaction and conditions to tourist activities (McCabe et al. 2010). Therefore, it can be seen how significantly conducting a trip for people with disabilities impacts their lives.

Tourism-related organizations are in charge of supplying comfortable conditions for both abled and disabled tourists regardless of which activities they choose. It should be admitted that many people with disabilities visiting different destinations feel challenged while traveling, and sometimes have to avoid tourism (Eusebio et al. 2021). To make barrier-free tourism it is of utmost relevance to provide cooperation between all layers of the tourism sphere.

Reliable information is also crucial for meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities. Lack of reliable information is a major barrier to travel for people with disabilities. A study by NOP (2003) found that establishing credibility is a three-stage process, with standards set by respected disability organizations being the first step.

The next component of meeting the informational needs of disabled tourists is communication and customer-oriented services. Communication refers to the ease of obtaining information and the quality of customer service provided. To meet the needs of disabled tourists, customer-oriented services need to be accessible, and staff needs to be well-trained and knowledgeable about disability issues (Yau et al. 2004). Customer-oriented services ought to be flexible and competent to respond to individual needs, such as providing alternative formats or sign language interpretation (Stumbo and Pegg 2005). Effective communication and customer-oriented services help to build trust and confidence, leading to higher information satisfaction levels.

Thirdly, meeting the informational needs of disabled tourists requires rich and reliable information, appropriate travel information sources, effective communication, customer-oriented services, and a single source for all information needs. By

addressing these needs, the tourism industry can provide a positive experience for disabled tourists and help reduce travel barriers.

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