


Chapter 3

Travel by People With Physical Disabilities: Constraints and Influences in the Decision-Making Process

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ABSTRACT

It is acknowledged that access to tourism by persons with disabilities continues to be shaped by a variety of constraints that are not being clearly or consistently addressed by those in charge of tourism planning and management. Based on these assumptions, this chapter is focused on the identification of structural constraints and negotiation strategies that influence the decision and participation to travel for people with physical disabilities. To achieve these objectives, the chapter used a qualitative methodology, with the analysis and discussion of the information collected through in-depth interviews. Results may ultimately contribute to deepen the knowledge about the factors that influence people with disabilities travel choices, allowing to identify specific recommendations for improving the tourist supply chain and, consequently, for the overall tourist experience quality.

INTRODUCTION

Participation in tourism activities is influenced by a wide variety of factors, whether from the personal and social context of the individual or the environment itself. In the case of people who have physical limitations or special needs, the decision-making process to travel and full tourism participation, in addition to architectural factors, is largely shaped by the capacity of the tourism supply to respond

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to special and specific needs. It is important to understand how the different barriers or constraints to travel are overcome through adaptive strategies that allow people, even with special needs, to become active travelers. In this context, this chapter objective, beyond identifying travel and tourism constraints, intends to find out how individuals, with physical disabilities, deal with and overcome these difficulties, which inevitably affect the pleasure of the tourism experience.

The quality of lived tourism experiences will have a determining influence on the choice of future trips, and may act as an inhibitor of future participation if the individual evaluates the experience as negative, or, on the contrary, as a facilitating factor, if the overall evaluation of the experience is positive. In the case of a recent disability, the first travel experiences are perceived as a challenge where emotions and feelings are mixed, but as the individual becomes more experienced, he acquires more skills, learning to deal with obstacles in a more efficient way (Packer, Mckercher & Yau, 2007). The experience gained at this level thus allows greater knowledge and confidence, which can stimulate motivations and the desire to travel and, above all, contribute to enriching experiences and experiences that can have a lasting positive impact on people's lives.

Studies published on the decision-making process of tourists with disabilities point to the need for a much longer travel planning phase, where one seeks to minimize the uncertainty associated with the trip and the occurrence of problems through a research process. Accurate and detailed information on the different services involved, including new technologies as the internet, websites and social media, provide participation, learning and connection (Altinay, Saner, Bahçelerli, & Altinay, 2016). According to Neumann & Reuber (2004) the most important factors for choosing a destination are, in decreasing order of importance, accommodation, the existence and availability of adequate means, which allows them to move freely, the availability of excursions and leisure facilities, the existence of cultural activities and the reception and ease of communication. In general, the accessibility conditions of the different services are highly valued when choosing a destination. But there are also diverse needs that require different responses from the tourist destination, namely the availability of different support services, the existence of health equipment and services and the information provided.

The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to analyze the constraints that negatively affect full participation in tourism by people with physical disability and to identify the adaptation strategies that allow them to overcome the limitations found, namely the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). To do so, we opted for a qualitative methodology, with the analysis and discussion of the information collected through in-depth interviews.

Background

Decision making in tourism has been extensively studied, with many and diverse models found in scientific literature to explain this phenomenon. Most of these models understand this decision making as a process, during which the tourist goes, sequentially, through different phases in which he is making decisions about different aspects of the trip (Decrop, 2006). This is a complex process that starts with the generic decision to travel or not to travel, from which different elements of the tourist product are taken into account. As with other consumers, the decision to travel is influenced by a wide range of variables, among which the social environment of the individual stands out.

Published studies on the decision making process of tourists with disabilities (e.g. Burnett & Baker, 2001; Daniels, Rodgers, & Wiggins, 2005; Darcy, 1998, 2002; Israeli, 2002; McKercher, Yau & Lam, 2003; Murray & Sproats, 1990; Neumann & Reuber, 2004, ; Nyman, Westin & Carson, 2018; Ray &

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