

Chapter 72

Accessible@tourism 4.0: An Exploratory Approach to the Role of Industry 4.0 in Accessible Tourism

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes how Tourism 4.0 is a concept that combines tourism and the fourth industrial revolution, and although the literature in this field is very scarce, this concept has been explored in some research projects, such as the government-sponsored research project in Slovenian tourism. People with various kinds of access requirements represent a combination of challenges and opportunities for the tourism industry. Tourism 4.0 set up the main goals of making tourism accessible to everyone at any time. Therefore, this new phenomenon may have an essential role in the development of accessible tourism. The adoption of technological components in accessible tourism enables the development of a new technological solution that can facilitate access to tourism products for disabled people, contributing to the development of accessible tourism. The new term Accessible@Tourism 4.0 is the answer to the role of the fourth industrial revolution in accessible tourism, emphasizing the effect of Industry 4.0 components in the tourism sector.

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INTRODUCTION

Currently, there is an ongoing technological revolution that may ultimately change society as a whole. The fourth industrial revolution is evolving at high speed and will lead to a deeply connected world. A significant change in the way that society works and communicates is happening at the moment, and is having impacts on diverse manufacturing and service industries. This new industrial revolution results from a new paradigm called Industry 4.0 (Schwab, 2016:10). The drivers of this revolution came from innovations in different technologies, which are taking the world into a new era of digitalization.

One sector that is being most affected by the new digital era is undoubtedly tourism (Ivanović, Milojević, & Roblek, 2017). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defined tourism as: “a diverse industry, which is a central economic driver for socio-economic development in many areas/destinations throughout the world” (UNWTO, 2009). Tourism is one of the economic activities that generates most income worldwide, often having a vital role in the economy of the countries. With the emergence of new technologies, the way of practicing tourism has radically changed.

This new industrial revolution will bring not only benefits but also challenges for tourism. A big challenge is how it can contribute to the social inclusion of people with disabilities (PwD) in tourism practices. Tourism is an activity that enriches people in many dimensions. However, it is difficult for disabled tourists to travel without constraint. People with reduced motor/cognitive skills often end up unable to travel due to various factors such as transport and accommodation. These situations make it impossible for these people to explore and experience tourism.

This chapter intends to explain how technology can improve accessibility in tourism and fight against the social exclusion of PwD. The main objective is to understand the impact of the fourth industrial revolution on accessible tourism, as the literature reveals that research in this field is currently very limited. The study of the connection between tourism and industry 4.0 led to the arrival of a new paradigm on tourism, named Tourism 4.0. With careful exploration of this new concept and its relationship with accessible tourism, it was possible to overcome the gap in the literature on how the fourth industrial revolution is transforming accessible tourism.

The theoretical background provides interesting findings related to accessible tourism and the core concepts related to Industry 4.0 and the fourth industrial revolution. After the theoretical background, the chapter offers insights about the technological impacts of tourism, which led to the appearance of Tourism 4.0. A new concept, Accessible@Tourism 4.0, was created to explain the role of technological innovation in promoting accessible tourism. The chapter ends by discussing the main findings, possible limitations of this study, and recommends targets for future researches.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

About Accessible Tourism

Accessibility is a quality concept that may be interpreted differently from person to person (Persson, Åhman, Yngling, & Gulliksen, 2015). Some people think of accessibility as directly serving some of their needs, while others think of it in a more general way. The Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities states in art. 9 that, in order to enable persons with disabilities to live their life independently and participate in all aspects of life, appropriate measures must be taken. To ensure accessibility condi-

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