

Chapter 15

Model for Action and Cooperation on Accessible Tourism: ACT–MODEL

Borbála Gondos

Edutus University, Hungary

Márta Nárai

Széchenyi István University, Hungary

ABSTRACT

The study highlights the importance of accessible tourism, presents the actors of accessible tourism, including people with reduced mobility, and discusses their opportunities in tourism. The aim of the authors is to describe the ACT model and demonstrate its use in tourism. Creating an accessible environment provides comfort not only for people with reduced mobility but for almost everyone, so it has greater potential even from an economic point of view. The ACT model was born from the information obtained during the research in Hungary and summarizes and illustrates well what actors are involved in the topic of accessible tourism and what kind of relationship exists between them. Each actor and factor of the three levels of the theoretical model are important in order to ensure that accessibility is achieved, and that disabled people can participate in tourism in the same way as non-disabled people.

INTRODUCTION

In Hungary, the examination of the travel habits, roles and possibilities of people with disabilities, including those with reduced mobility, as well as the inherent potential in tourism, is a less researched area recently. In Hungary, until the change of regime, the existence and social presence of people with disabilities was a taboo subject. A real change of attitude took place from the second half of the nineties and the 2000s, (Nárai, 2013), so we cannot be surprised seeing the way most people relate to them even today, many are afraid of them, they avoid them because they are “different”.

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One of the goals of the doctoral dissertation (Gondos, 2020)¹, which forms the basis of the study, is to draw attention to this target group being equally valuable members of society with the same needs and rights as anyone else, such as for meaningful leisure time, gaining experiences, the right to travel should also be fundamental in their case. The segment of people with disabilities is very broad including people with reduced mobility, the blind and partially sighted, the deaf, the hard of hearing ones, the speech-impaired, and the mentally disabled. We did our research in 2018 and 2019 which was narrowed down to one target group, so a questionnaire survey was conducted among people over the age of 18 with reduced mobility because in our opinion this is one of the target groups easier to be reached and can be asked in independently used questionnaires. Appropriate infrastructure for people with reduced mobility such as ramps, elevators, and low-floor means of transportation, is essential for them to leave their homes and travel. However, this infrastructure can also be useful for a wider target group of people, such as elderly people and families with small children using strollers, because they require the same facilities, so the target group of accessible tourism can be much larger (UNWTO, 2016b). According to the data sources of the UN health organization, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2011), about 15% of the world's population, which means more than 1 billion people living with some kind of disability. In the forthcoming years, their number will be continuously increasing, also thanks to the growing average life expectancy (as we will see later, the proportion of people over 60, shows a constantly rising trend, they are sometimes included in the group of people with disabilities due to their deteriorating health or limited mobility).

In the recent decades it has become clear that handling the case of people with disabilities at both European and national levels, is not only a social or health issue but a human rights issue, too.² The essence of the change in attitude and paradigm is the fact that people, living with various disabilities, must be provided with the same chances and rights as non-disabled people. The opportunity to participate in everyday life and various services must be made available to them, including those that contribute to meaningful leisure time thus improving their quality of life (UN, 2006). Tourism is an activity through which visitors can gain experiences and become active participants in their experiences. This kind of experience can increase during multiple trips it can contribute to life satisfaction thus according to Veenhoven (2003) travel can lead to an awareness of happiness. Many people undertake to break away from their usual environment in order to be able to spend their free time properly, recharge mentally and physically and gain experiences that can become a source of their happiness and contribute to favorable indicators of the quality of life. Travel therefore has significant physiological effects, both in connection with reflection and consumption of various tourist products (Michalkó, 2010). Thanks to the aforementioned change in the attitude of people with disabilities have been receiving more and more attention in the field of tourism in recent years. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) announced themes in 2014 (community building) and 2016 (tourism for all) that focused on people with disabilities in connection with World Tourism Day and numerous conferences.

We can see and feel from above that the issue of accessible tourism is current interesting and relevant topic. It is important from several points of view to draw attention to the topic and to present research results that advance the matter and provide solutions to the problems raised. Regarding it, in this chapter the conceptual frameworks of people with disabilities/persons with reduced mobility will be presented, it will also cover the accessibility and accessible tourism, the theoretical model developed as a result of the information obtained from the authors' previous research results, the measure and cooperation model of accessible tourism, the ACT-model.

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