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Barriers in Undertaking Tourist Activity by Disabled People

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Barriers in Undertaking Tourist Activity by Disabled People

Abstract

The objective of this study is to present the barriers in undertaking tourist and recreational activity by disabled people. **Methods.** Diagnostic examinations (survey) were conducted with the application of a survey questionnaire on people with various level and type of disability (n = 100, 40 men, 60 women). The respondents were asked to indicate the barriers that – in their opinions – reduce participation of the disabled people in the tourism movement. **Results.** The respondents indicated that the financial issues constituted the largest barrier (economic barrier). This results from the fact that the disabled often have a worse position on the labour market, they earn less and, on the other hand, the products and tourist services adjusted to their needs are usually more expensive. This is – to a degree – related to the next barrier – an organizational one that the respondents mentioned as well. **Conclusions.** On the basis of the conducted study it can be stated that participation of the disabled in tourism is limited and this results from both the external barriers (financial, architectural) as well as the internal ones (psychological, social).

Keywords: barriers, tourism, tourism activity, accessible tourism, disabled people.

Introduction

Possibility to travel, move around constitutes an important aspect of the quality of life of all people. It is also a form of spending free time, a chance to relax or rest from the daily reality, environment. Therefore, the right to undertake tourist or recreational activity should be treated as one of the fundamental social rights. However, not all people can take advantage of this right on an equal basis. This concerns people with disabilities. It often happens that participation of this social group in tourism is limited due to various reasons. Consequently, this violates all the principles of equality and non-discrimination. It is

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noticeable in the statistical publications that participation of the disabled in tourism is minimal and it significantly differs from the level of participation that is characteristic for the remaining part of the society¹. This is a result of the presence of numerous barriers.

There are various impediments that considerably limit and sometimes even completely prevent people with dysfunctions from participating in travelling.

The disabled – as travellers with special needs – need adjusted products or tourist services. Apart from the travel package, the information regarding the possibility of relaxation of this particular social group (on the part of tourists) as well as needs and method of service of this specific client (on the part of tour operators). These and other barriers constitute the cause of stagnation of numerous people with dysfunctions in tourism². Furthermore, the disabled are afraid whether they will meet the requirements or cope. That is why the flow of new people who would like to practise tourism is also minimal³.

According to estimates, every second disabled inhabitant of Europe has never participated in any form of the recreational or sports activity and every third one has never taken part in any tourist travel or trip due to the lack of accessibility of facilities and services⁴.

The objective of the work and research methods

The objective of this work is to show the barriers that people with disabilities encounter on their way while participating in tourism. The author has presented the results of the survey regarding tourist activity of 100 respondents with dysfunctions (40 men, 60 women) who were asked to indicate the barriers that limit their participation in travelling most significantly.

The spatial scope of the work covers the area of the city of Krakow as the place of residence of the respondents taking part in the survey.

¹ A. Borowicka (ed.), *Niepełnosprawny turysta: poradnik dla pilotów i przewodników turystycznych*, Szczecin 2003.

² M. Popiel, *Od niepełnosprawności do turystyki dostępnej. Problem segmentacji rynku oraz kreowania produktów turystycznych do potrzeb osób z niepełnosprawnością*, "Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis Studia Geographica" 2014, No. 7, pp. 121–132.

³ M. Preisler, *Turystyka osób niepełnosprawnych*, "Studia Periegetica. Zeszyty Naukowe Wielkopolskiej Wyższej Szkoły Turystyki i Zarządzania w Poznaniu" 2011, No. 6, pp. 27–36.

⁴ M. Furmanek, *Czy człowiek niepełnosprawny ma szansę być pełnosprawnym turystą?*, "Państwo i Społeczeństwo. Współczesna turystyka. Zagadnienia prawne, ekonomiczne i przestrzenne" 2011, No. 1, pp. 93–102.

Barriers in tourism of the disabled people

Various authors aim at classifying the barriers in access to tourism. The application of categorisation is considered to be beneficial to understanding the nature of particular barriers showing their mutual relations. However, it is thought that the research should go beyond the common and limited emphasis put on barriers in participation in tourism and take up wider conceptualization of limitations in access to tourism⁵. Scholars have participated in the scientific debates regarding using the terms of 'barriers' and 'limitations' on numerous occasions.

Various divisions of the barriers of tourism of the disabled can be found in the literature. While presenting the basic classification it is worth mentioning two main barriers, namely: internal and external ones⁶. The group of the external barriers includes the following:

- architectural,
- urban,
- communication,
- financial.

Among the internal barriers the following should be listed:

- health condition,
- family conditions.

The above-mentioned classification can be broadened with other groups⁷:

- internal ones – these barriers lie in the person with dysfunction himself/herself and they are mostly identified with his/her mental or physical condition or state of consciousness. They may directly result from this person's disability as well as – indirectly – be the result of the health condition. This group of barriers includes all lacks of knowledge and awareness (this applies to the lack of knowledge regarding tourist possibilities, accessibility of facilities, the rights that the disabled are entitled to and all possibilities of benefitting from the assistance funds), the problems related to health condition and abnormal social contacts as well as mental and physical dependence on others⁸,
- environmental ones – the barriers that are imposed on the disabled people by external conditions of the physical and social conditions. Among them the barrier resulting from the attitudes of the society towards people with dysfunctions is important. These attitudes are often ambivalent. On one hand,

⁵ V. Eichhorn, D. Buhalis, *A Key Objective for the Tourism Industry*, [in:] D. Buhalis, S. Darcy (ed.), *Accessible Tourism. Concepts and Issues*, Bristol 2011, p. 46–61.

⁶ M. Długołęcka, M. Ogonowska, *Bariery ograniczające udział osób niepełnosprawnych w turystyce*, „Zeszyty Naukowe. Turystyka jako dział nowoczesnej gospodarki” 1997, No. 22, p. 99–102.

⁷ T. Skalska, *Turystyka osób niepełnosprawnych*, [in:] A. Dłużewska (ed.), *Nowe wyzwania w edukacji turystycznej. Turystyka w obszarach odmiennych kulturowo i przyrodniczo cennych. Turystyka osób niepełnosprawnych*, Warszawa 2011, p. 117–175.

⁸ Ibid., p. 140.

people show compassion or excessive kindness, impudence with willingness to help, thus demonstrating paternalistic attitudes. On the other hand, the non-disabled people display negative feelings causing alienation of the disabled people and escalating this barrier at the same time⁹. Furthermore, this group includes architectural barriers (inaccessibility of the hotel facilities, tourist attractions, particularly for people who use wheelchairs), ecological barriers (terrain conditions that impede moving around), transport legal regulations (e.g. impeding transport of the battery to wheelchairs) and other regulations discriminating people with disability¹⁰,

- interactive – related to mutual relationship between the environment (both physical and social) and the disabled people. This group includes transport barriers, communication barriers, barriers related to lack of the proper skills that are necessary to undertake specific tourist activity¹¹.

The similar classification was presented by T. Łobożewicz and G. Bińczyk¹², who divide the barriers of practising tourism by the disabled into:

- economic barriers in understanding the high costs of participation in tourism,
- architectural barriers,
- communication barriers,
- social barriers,
- lack of the tourist equipment,
- insufficient information or lack of information – both regarding the needs of the disabled people (on the part of the tour operators) as well as tourist possibilities (on the part of the disabled tourists).

Another classification that puts emphasis on the human being and his/her social relation differentiates three main categories of limitations in participation in tourism.

- personal – these limitations include a lack of self-confidence, a lack of motivation or a lack of information about possibilities of relaxation that influence preferences or may lead to the lack of interest in the particular way of the recreational and tourist activity.
- interpersonal – these limitations are related to other people, including the lack of social interaction skills. These limitations are the result of the human interactions or relations among features of different people,
- structural – these are the limitations that occur between individual preferences regarding participation in tourism and recreation and the actual participation in the act of travelling and recreation. This includes the lack of finances, the lack of transport, limited skills, the lack of free time or architectural barriers¹³.

⁹ M. Preisler, op. cit., p. 31.

¹⁰ T. Skalska, op. cit., p. 141.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 141.

¹² T. Łobożewicz, G. Bińczyk, *Podstawy turystyki*, Warszawa 2001.

¹³ D.W. Crawford, G. Godbey, *Reconceptualizing barriers to family leisure*, "Leisure Sciences" 1987, No. 9(2), p. 119–128.

In their publication LaGrow Steven, Wiener William and LaDuke Robert¹⁴ identify several factors that limit independence of the disabled people during travelling, such as:

- lack of travel experience,
- fear and anxiety related to unaccompanied travelling,
- inadequate condition and endurance related to age, health problems and the lack of activity,
- embarrassing aspects of the visible disability,
- overprotection of the family or carers.

It has been noticed that barriers and limitations concern all tourists, however, they impede travelling of the disabled tourists much more disproportionately. Some elements of travelling seem insignificant from the point of view of the non-disabled tourist, yet, people with special needs require a higher level of accessibility and encounter bigger problems. The chain of barriers that the disabled people deal with while planning the trip and travelling has been presented below.

Results of the survey

In the survey conducted among 100 disabled respondents from the area of Krakow, there were, among others, 36 people with the motor organ impairment (05-R), 13 people with neurological diseases (10-N), 12 people with the voice, speech and hearing disorders (03-L), 11 people with other ailments, including endocrine, metabolic or enzymatic disorders, etc. (11-I) (Fig. 1).

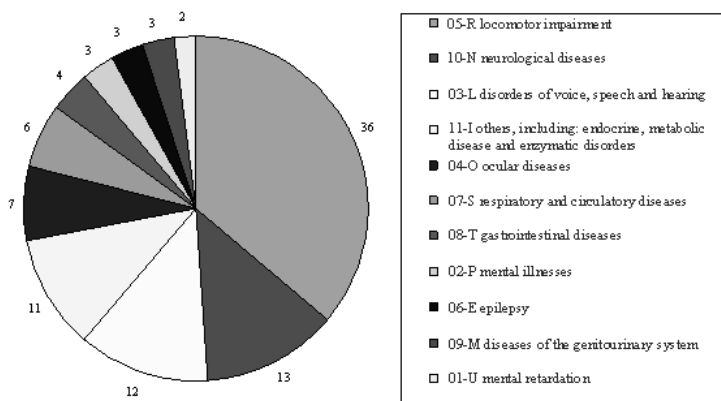


Fig. 1. The structure of the examined respondents with disabilities taking into account present type of ailment [n = 100 people]

Source: author's own studies.

¹⁴ S. LaGrow, W. Wiener, R. LaDuke, *Independent travel for developmentally disabled persons: A comprehensive model of instruction*, "Research In Developmental Disabilities" 1990, No. 11(3), p. 289–301.

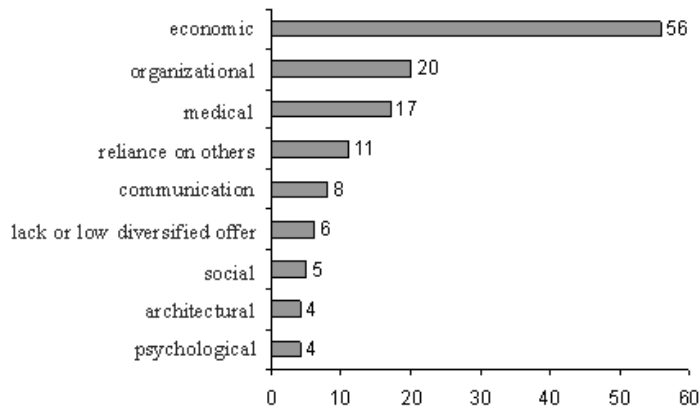


Fig. 2. Frequency of mentioned barriers in practising tourism by the disabled people (in %)*.

* The percentages do not sum up to 100 since each of the respondents in a specific type of disability could choose more than one of the listed barriers.

Source: the author's own studies.

The respondents were asked about the barriers that limit their equal participation in tourism. 56% of the respondents stated that the largest impediment is an economic barrier. It is paradoxical as the products and tourist services adjusted to the needs of the disabled people are usually more expensive than others. The disabled people are often unemployed and they do not have sufficient financial means for a longer trip. The cheapest hostels that are the most popular among young people do not have an obligation to adjust their services to the needs of the disabled people. Thus, the tourist with dysfunction may not use the cheapest accommodation facilities. Only the facilities possessing the third or higher categorization have this requirement, yet, this is connected with higher costs for the disabled tourist. Some means of transport are not often properly adapted and, consequently, it is necessary to take advantage of the individual specialist journeys that also generate additional costs. The next barrier that was most frequently mentioned by the respondents is an organizational barrier (20% of the answers). This must be understood as difficulties in organizing the tourist trips searching and combing all adjusted products and services in the single package. Another barrier indicated by the respondents is their health condition (17% of the answers) that – despite significant willingness of the concerned parties themselves – also impedes undertaking tourist and recreational activity. The respondents also mentioned – as the barrier in practising tourism – dependence on other people (11%), communication barriers with other people (8%), the lack or non-diversified offer for the disabled people (6%), social barrier in the contact with people (5%) and psychological barrier of the internal anxiety, fear (4%). The architectonic barrier that is most frequently regarded as the main cause lim-

iting the freedom of moving of the disabled people by existence of the numerous architectural difficulties should be noted. However, the respondents scarcely took advantage of this possibility of the answer (4%). This may indicate improved public awareness regarding the needs of people with dysfunctions and development of good practices to eliminate this barrier (Fig. 2).

Summary

Travelling and discovering new places brings a lot of pleasure and it should be a privilege to everybody. The process leading to accessibility of tourism is very important since this sector constitutes an integral branch of the economy and society. However, there are still barriers limiting participation of some people in tourism. Despite the fact that the above-presented survey has been carried out with participation of a small group of disabled tourists it gives an opportunity to draw attention to the essence of the problem regarding the barriers in tourism that people with dysfunctions experience. The fact that tourist activity includes a large chain of products and services still remains a significant challenge. Thus, the effort to make tourism and environment accessible for the needs of the disabled people to allow them to undertake tourist activity on an equal footing with other people is very important.

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Barieri w podejmowaniu aktywności turystycznej przez osoby niepełnosprawne

Streszczenie

Celem niniejszego opracowania jest ukazanie barier w podejmowaniu aktywności turystycznej i rekreacyjnej przez osoby z niepełnosprawnością. **Metody.** Przeprowadzono badania diagnostyczne (sondażowe) za pomocą kwestionariusza ankiety na osobach z różnym stopniem i rodzajem niepełnosprawności (n=100, 40 mężczyzn, 60 kobiet). Respondenci zostali poproszeni o wskazanie barier, które – ich zdaniem – osobom z dysfunkcjami najbardziej ograniczają udział w ruchu turystycznym. **Wyniki.** Respondenci wskazali, iż największą barierę stanowią kwestie finansowe (bariera ekonomiczna). Wynika to z faktu, iż niepełnosprawni mają często gorszą pozycję na rynku pracy, zarabiają mniej, a z drugiej strony dostosowane do ich potrzeb produkty i usługi turystyczne są zazwyczaj droższe. Wiąże się to poniekąd z kolejną barierą – organizacyjną, na którą również respondenci zwrócili uwagę. **Wnioski.** Na podstawie przeprowadzonego badania można stwierdzić, iż udział osób niepełnosprawnych w turystyce jest ograniczony i wynika to z barier zewnętrznych (finansowych, architektonicznych), ale również barier wewnętrznych (psychologicznych, społecznych).

Słowa kluczowe: bariery, turystyka, aktywność turystyczna, turystyka dostępna, osoby niepełnosprawne.