

THE NEEDS OF TOURISTS WITH DISABILITIES

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SUMMARY

The tourism industry involves people with specific but different needs to be satisfied, whether one is able-bodied or has a disability. People with disabilities are a global phenomenon and research indicated that 600 million people in the world have some type of disability. Therefore the market for tourists with disabilities cannot be disregarded, for it can significantly contribute to a country's tourism receipts.

To understand and effectively cater for the disability market, there are several aspects that the tourism industry should look at. This leads to the aim of this study viz. to determine what the barriers and constraints faced by people with disabilities are. In order to achieve this aim, a hundred questionnaires were distributed to various sectors of the tourism industry, for example the accommodation sector (hotels, guesthouses, Bed and Breakfasts), tour operators and travel agents.

The study indicated that:

- The tourism industry needs to adapt and promote "Tourism for All".
- The lack of available and accessible facilities, transport, accommodation and attractions have an impact on the travel patterns of tourists with disabilities.
- Marketing should include information to tourists with disabilities.
- To achieve this goal and to serve diverse tourists, a universal design needs to be included in the current and future developments of tourism products. Evaluation of existing facilities and tourist attractions need to take place in order to provide a quality service and experience to people with disabilities.
- Government and local authorities have an important role to fulfil to ensure that a universal design be implemented in tourist attractions and facilities.

The key aspect that the tourism industry need to know and remember is that if a person has a disability, it does not mean that he/she is unable to travel or does not want to travel.

Key words: Tourist with disabilities, tourism, market, barriers and constraints, accessibility and universal design.

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