THE ACCESSIBILITY OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN SPORTS TOURISM - A MATTER OF CONCERN

Submitting author: Dr Georgia Yfantidou
Democritus University of Thrace, Department of Physical Education and Sport Science
Komotini, 69100
Greece

All authors: Aggeliki Zioumpiloudi, Georgia Yfantidou (corresp), EYSTRATIA TSITSKARI, George Costa, Sofia Batsiou

Type: Scientific
Category: 13: Tourism and Leisure Sport Management

Abstract

Literature review
Quality of life is a major issue for people with physical disabilities (Card, Cole & Humphrey, 2006). Tourism is one segment of society that has the potential for improving the quality of life for individuals with physical disabilities (Shi et al., 2012). For disabled people the vacations and the journey are an important part of their life as a means in order to escape from their daily routine, to strengthen family ties and to promote health, self-confidence and independence (Blichfeldt&Nicolaisen, 2011).Their participation in physical activities, in exercise and recreation programs, as also in competitive sports becomes beneficial. (Theodorakis, 2010). According to Rimmer (2004), while exercise seems to be a universal recommendation for maintaining good health, for people with disabilities, options for exercise may be seriously limited by a lack of accessible equipment and facilities, a lack of information about what type of exercise is best for them or the severity of their physical impairment itself. Researches in accessible tourism have shown that disabled people face many obstacles when they participate in sport and recreation activities due to the lack of accessible destinations, facilities, means of transport, appropriate information and because of obstacles in communication and behavior (Blichfeldt&Nicolaisen, 2011; Figueiredo et al, 2012), but also in finding an accessible accommodation (Darcy, 2010).
Aim of the paper
The purpose of this study was to determine whether the ATAS questionnaire fits in the Greek context and to investigate a) the dimensions of sport tourists' accessibility as regards tourist accommodation, sport facilities and b) the dimensions of their own needs.
Methodology
Sample: The sample was consisted by 81 sport tourists with disabilities at the age of 18 and above, men and women, with physical and sensory

disabilities (vision or hearing disabilities) participated in this research.
Questionnaire: The questionnaire was consisted of the scale Accessible Tourism Accommodation Survey- ATAS which is about the accommodation needs of disabled people based on the accessibility with 2 questions concerning the dimensions of access and the independence of a traveller, 64 questions concerning the accommodation attributes (adding 9 questions regarding sport facilities), 17 questions concerning the accommodation type and 50 questions concerning the travel patterns. Since the ATAS questionnaire measures accommodation accessibility primarily, concerning the accommodation attributes of the ATAS questionnaire we added 7 questions in order to measure alongside the accessibility of sport facilities (facility with an accessible hot tub or whirlpool, trained fitness instructors in helping individuals with disabilities to participate at sports/recreation programs, suitable sports equipment for individuals with disabilities is provided, sports/recreation programs that allow persons with disabilities to participate, facility with an accessible sauna or steam room, trained personnel in helping individuals with disabilities, professional support and training in the facility).We also added 2 questions (Rooms on lower floors, bathroom door that opens outward), regarding accommodation attributes and sport facilities, after conversation with people with physical and sensory disabilities, users of disabled rooms, who answered the questionnaire and were recruited to product test the accessible accommodation. On the other hand, it was consisted of the Tourist Role Preference Scale of Gibson and Yiannakis (2002), translated by Yfantidou, Costa and Michalopoulou (2008) with 22 questions regarding the human needs, but it was also consisted of a part of 10 questions regarding demographics and specific preference destination.
Process: The research was conducted in four towns of Northern Greece (Alexandroupolis, Komotini, Thessaloniki, Naoussa). It was carried contact and cooperation with the National Sports Federation for people with disabilities, disability organizations, sports clubs, hotels, outdoor activity companies and camps. 150 questionnaires were distributed in Greek and English edition, while 81 questionnaires were returned. The vast majority of participants (90.1%) were domestic tourists, 7.4% of participants were residentsof Serbia and 2.5% residents of Germany.The forms of sport tourism they were participating in were powerlifting, wheelchair basketball, swimming, wheelchair rugby, blind chess and football.
Results
The exploratory factor analysis using the method of principal components analysis for the ATAS scale revealed 6 factors that explain 59,149% of the total variance:1) Core Mobility(a=.903), 2) Hearing & Vision (Communication)(a=.850), 3) Ambulant (Safety)(a=.875), 4) Service & Security(a=.863),5) Amenity (comfort/recreation)(a=.895),6) Supplementary Mobility (a =.925)and for the TRPS revealed five factorsof needs that explained 57,977% of the total variance: 1) need for self-esteem and recognition from the others(a=.857), 2)normal needs

(a=.780), 3) need for love (a=.579), 4) need for self- fulfillment,self-acting and self –development(α=.633), 5)need for safety (a=.661).It was used Manova analysis between the age and the gender in relation to psychological needs and to accommodation attributes. As regards the psychological needs, data have shown a statistically significant effect of the gender on the second factor of needs F(1,76)=7,368, p<0,05 among men (Mean=4,193) and women (Mean=2,781). As regards accommodation attributes, data have shown a statistically significant main effect of the gender on the second factor residence “Hearing and Vision” (Contact) F(1,76)=5,398, p<0,05, among men (Mean=2,418) and among women (Mean=4,193). Also between “Hearing and Vision” and the age F(2,76)=4,358, p<0,05, where it was found a statistically significant difference in the age of groups of 17-39 years old (Mean=3,280) and 40-59 years old (Mean=4,040), in relation to the age 60 years and over (Mean=1,000). Moreover, there was a statistically significant main effect of the age on the fourth factor accommodation “Services and Security” F(2,76)=8,872, p<0,05,where it was found a statistically significant difference in the age groups of 17-39 years old (Mean=3,821) and 40-59 years old (Mean=4,444) in relation to the age of group 60 years and over (Mean=1,000), but also on the fifth factor residence “Comfort and Recreation” F(2,76)=8,032, p<0,05, where it was found a statistically significant difference in the age of 17-39 (Mean=3,808) and in the age of 40-59 years old (Mean=4,178),in relation to the age of group of 60 years old and over (Mean=1,083).

Discussion and conclusions

The data have shown that sports tourists with disabilities over 60 years old do not consider accommodation attributes relating to factors as referred above (e.g. Alternative format guest information, non-slip bathroom floor, gym with access provision, a positive ‘can do’ customer service attitude, etc.) as important as tourists of smaller age groups. As they were doing the same activities as the younger cohorts, the above pointing out raises questions according to satisfaction or not aboutthe needs and desires of tourists in recent decades and the possible existence of previous negative or positive experiences. The last 30 years in Greece with the introduction of legislation has been noted progress in removing barriers of accessibility, so that today tourism sectors such as transport, accommodation, attractions are accessible to a greater extent compared to the past, which probably justifies the difference noted between older and younger age participants. In conclusion, all the data compose a challenge for the sports industry to design and redesign sport tourism products and services by taking into account the needs and desires of this different class of tourists while providing more opportunities for travelling and exercising in an environment without restrictions and barriers, showing respect to diversity.

References

Blichfeldt, B. S. &Nicolaisen, J. (2011). Disabled travel: not easy, but

doable. Current Issues in Tourism, 14(1): 79–102.
Darcy, S. (2010). Inherent complexity: Disability, accessible tourism and accommodation information preferences. Tourism Management, 31(6):816-826.
Card, A. J., Cole, S. T. & Humphrey. A, A.(2006). Barriers Model: Travel Providers and Travelers with Physical Disabilities. Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research, 11(2), 161–175.
Figueiredo, E., Eusébio, C. &Kastenholz, E. (2012). How Diverse are Tourists with Disabilities? A Pilot Study on Accessible Leisure Tourism Experiences in Portugal.International Journal of Tourism Research, 14:531–550.
Theodorakis(2010). Exercise, MentalHealthand Quality ofLife.Thessaloniki: ChristodoulidesPublications.
Rimmer, J. H., Riley, B., Wang, E. & Rauworth, A. (2004). Physical Activity Participation Among Persons with Disabilities. Barriers and Facilitators. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 26(5), 419–425.
Shi, L., Shu, C. H. &Chancellor, C. (2012). Understanding leisure travel motivations of travelers with acquired mobility impairments. Tourism Management, 31(1):228–231.
Yfantidou G., Costa G. &Michalopoulos M. (2008). Tourist Roles, Gender and Age in Greece: A Study of Tourists in Greece. International Journal of Sport Management Recreation & Tourism, (1):14-30. DOI: 10.5199/ijsmart-1791-874X-1b