

Inclusiveness of accommodation tools in Uzbekistan and the essence of inclusive tourism

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Abstract. The scientific article basically describes the essence of inclusive tourism concept. Similarly, the results of the research carried out in cooperation with experts from Switzerland regarding the necessity of creating inclusive service facilities in the tourism sector and determining inclusiveness in the hotel system of Uzbekistan were analyzed and the existing problems were identified on this basis. Based on this foreign experience, conclusions were drawn and concrete proposals were made for their solutions.

1 Introduction

Today, tourism plays a crucial role in the nation's economy. As a result of the diversification of tourism-related services, it is becoming increasingly important to address the issues of giving a large portion of the population access to jobs in the industry and enhancing society as a whole. Recently, among the representatives of the tourism industry, the issues put forward regarding the development of inclusive tourism, which are widely discussed and emphasized, are considered one of the directions of tourism development [1-4].

In accordance with the Presidential Decree No. DP-60 dated January 28, 2022 "On the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026", wide introduction of barrier-free tourism infrastructure in the main tourism cities of the country, including, to study world experience in the direction of barrier-free tourism and develop appropriate standards, incentive measures for the organization of travel of foreign and local tourists in this direction by tourist organizations and development of its mechanisms, barrier-free among business entities It is decided to organize educational activities on tourism and its benefits in cooperation with UNWTO [5]. Additionally, the social model of determining disability step-by-step transition is defined, as is the implementation of widely accepted international norms and standards in the area of ensuring the rights of people with disabilities into national legislation, strengthening the interaction between people with disabilities and their families, society, and the state, as well as their presence in a comfortable environment, the creation of necessary conditions for the free use of city passenger transport, social and other

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infrastructure facilities, and an improvement of the inclusive education and employment system that ensures people with disabilities are involved and actively participate in society as a whole.

The decision of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated January 1, 2024 No. PQ-20 "On the development of barrier-free tourism infrastructure in the Republic of Uzbekistan and measures to promote it" regarding persons with disabilities It is decided to increase their awareness by widely promoting the opportunities created in our republic for them to travel without stress, and to further improve the quality of services provided to persons with disabilities in the facilities of the tourism industry using the possibilities of modern information and communication technologies [6]. All this confirms the urgency of analyzing the current situation of providing services to tourists with disabilities in the national tourist services offer system and, on this basis, creating more favorable conditions for this segment, developing new types of services, and developing measures to adapt the existing ones to modern standards.

In his speech on October 16, 2023, during the 25th session of the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) held in Samarkand, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev put forward initiatives aimed at developing tourism on a global scale and called 2025 the "Year of Inclusive Tourism", proposed to announce and adopt a special declaration. He noted that this should be done within the framework of the organization in order to strengthen favorable conditions for tourists with disabilities and develop inclusive tourism infrastructure [7].

2 Literature review

Since there is no generally accepted definition of inclusive tourism in the scientific literature, it is often observed that it is researched with different concepts that replace and complement each other [8-13].

Inclusive tourism (Inclusive tourism) is a broader perspective on tourism, which includes a favorable environment, programs and services that can be used by all in integrated conditions [12].

According to S. Djavadova, inclusion is the principle of organizing society's life in such a way that all people, regardless of their appearance, origin or health status, can participate in various aspects [10].

According to I.Semchenko, E.Nezhelchenko, S.Yasenok, Y.Boltenko, inclusive tourism is usually understood as tourism that is equally accessible to everyone, regardless of permanent or temporary restrictions and physical capabilities.

In defining the concept of inclusive tourism, R. Schevens and R. Biddulph put forward 7 different elements of inclusive tourism development. According to them, these elements reflect the directions of inclusive tourism research. Inclusive tourism is an analytical concept and an aspirational ideal. Tourism is understood as an exclusive industry, therefore, inclusive tourism is often overlooked [10].

According to S.Cole and N.Morgan, comfortable inclusive tourism is the demand for amenities including movement, sight, hearing, and cognitive aspects, and it is independent, fair and independent through universal designed environment and products (services). embodies a worthy activity [1].

According to S. Darcy, B. McKercher, S. Schweinsberg, the group of people with disabilities is considered a very important and economically attractive group as consumers [2].

Inclusive tourism means that the principles of universal design are applied, and the tourist environment is accessible, understandable and usable by all. Everyone can use

tourism, regardless of age, size, ability and level of health. Inclusive tourism is a type of tourism that includes everything from ramps to braille [14-18].

In order to ensure that everyone can participate in all aspects of tourism, the main focus is now on inclusive tourism, research has chosen inclusive tourism as the direction of the future. All definitions aim to remove barriers that prevent people from participating in tourism as equal citizens [19].

B. Koziboyev, one of the local scientists, has conducted many studies on the topic of inclusive tourism, in particular, the problems and prospects of the development of tourism for persons with limited opportunities and disabilities have been analyzed in his scientific works. According to his approach, one of the factors related to the lack of demand for inclusive tours is the susceptibility of people with disabilities and limited opportunities to various risks associated with tourism activities, feeling uncomfortable, having difficulty or limited mobility, vision. There are various abstractions associated with the term "popular tourism" as well as the poor manifestation of cognitive abilities in the visually and hearing impaired [8].

3 Research methodology

The theory of elements of inclusive tourism proposed by R. Schevens and R. Biddulph and the scientific research of a number of foreign scientists related to inclusive tourism form the methodological basis of this research work. Also, the research is based on conclusions obtained as a result of empirical observations made since 2022, national and international statistical data.

In order to clarify the essence of inclusive tourism, based on the analysis of the literature, an approach to inclusive tourism was proposed. In addition, the results of the research conducted in cooperation with the Swiss government in order to clarify the current experience of inclusive hotels throughout Uzbekistan were analyzed and conclusions were given.

4 Analysis and results

Inclusive tourism is a form of tourism that is inextricably linked with various areas of life, including medicine, psychology, architecture, design, environmental protection, maternal and child health care, support for the elderly, disability includes a number of aspects such as increasing and further strengthening the role of existing people in the life of society.

It is necessary to research the psychology of inclusive tourists, in which direction people who belong to the inclusive segment prefer to travel, in which seasons they prefer to go on a trip based on seasonality, and what kind of products to offer is an acceptable option from the point of view of the offer.

Inclusive tourism is the use of facilities, services, and activities to promote equality among travelers through travel planning that provides cultural, experiential, and emotional diversity to travelers with disabilities or to tourists with special needs. It is a type of tourism organized taking into account the needs and time of tourists. This type of responsible tourism should ensure that everyone can travel and participate in activities without any obstacles or complications, with the assurance that their safety and comfort needs are taken into account [13].

Accessible tourism, barrier-free tourism facilitates the participation of tourists with special needs in tourism activities, but it does not allow them to use full-fledged tourism services. At the same time, from the point of view that tourism should be able to provide the same participation for all, it cannot be denied that a wider scope is needed in this

direction. Inclusive tourism is considered significant due to the diversity of services and their level of coverage, as well as the fact that restrictions are not imposed on a certain group of representatives.

According to I.Tursunov, "inclusive tourism" includes the concept of Muslim-friendly tourism (MFT). Muslim-friendly tourism is a specialized form of tourism industry. It aims to accommodate Muslim travelers in accordance with Islamic principles. In this case, the directions, accommodations, provided services and facilities (houses) are convenient for Muslim visitors and conform to the requirements of Islam. But this is the task of creating an inclusive and hospitable environment not only for Muslims, but for everyone [20].

A number of studies have been conducted to study the impact of people with disabilities on the development of economy and tourism. In particular, people with disabilities have been researched separately as a separate market segment according to market segmentation, as well as a segment of each tourism market, taking into account the forms of disability and their needs according to the main segmentation of tourism [2].

R. Schevens and R. Biddulph defined inclusive tourism as follows: Social groups are involved in production activities, consumption and joint use of its benefits - transformative tourism.

Inclusive tourism is important for potential beneficiaries and accessibility of resources, equipment and services for people with disabilities and other social groups [11].

The above definition is very close to our approach to inclusive tourism. In our opinion, *inclusive tourism means that in the process of using tourism services from the point of view of demand, tourism services can be used without any obstacles, from the point of view of supply, all obstacles that may arise in the process of organizing tourism services are reduced to a minimum level, organizational and legal is a form of tourism whose foundations are strictly controlled by the state.*

- "Association of social tourism of Uzbekistan" was established in Uzbekistan in order to cover all categories of tourists and create suitable conditions for them. The association unites individuals who want to contribute to the development of tourism in Uzbekistan and direct their efforts to the development of social tourism, including the organization of trips for children, young people, the elderly, as well as compatriots with disabilities. At the same time, it establishes cooperation relations with foreign similar associations on the development of inclusive tourism. The main tasks of the association include:

- holding charity events for our compatriots with disabilities and children of needy families;

- to help create conditions for disabled people to travel;

- participation in the development of drafts of state programs, regulatory legal documents and other decisions in the field of social tourism and implementation of public control;

- to support the organization of tourism and excursions for children, young people, representatives of the third age group, as well as people with disabilities within the framework of the development of inclusive tourism [17].

In inclusive tourism, the formation process of the tourism flow is also considered an important issue. In the formation of the flow of inclusive tourism, there are organized and unorganized forms of the flow of inclusive tourists from the point of view of supply (from the point of view of the producer).

If travelers buy tourist packages produced by customized tour operators specializing in providing inclusive tourism services, they belong to the category of organized inclusive tourist flow, and those who independently plan their trip without buying inclusive tourist packages are called unorganized inclusive tourist flow.

As of May 14, 2024, the number of permanent residents of the Republic of Uzbekistan is more than 37,963,000. The share of adults belonging to the inclusive segment is 9.1% of the total population, and the share of children is 11.6% (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of permanent population by age groups (as of January 1, 2024, thousand people) [14].

Age groups	2020	share, %	2021	share, %	2022	share, %	2023	share, %
<i>Total</i>	<i>33905.2</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>34588.9</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>35271.3</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>36024.9</i>	<i>100.0</i>
number of children (0-4 years old)	3647.0	10.8	3756.1	10.9	3932.8	11.2	4162.2	11.6
number of teenagers (5-13 years old)	5699.8	16.8	5872.3	17.0	5984.1	17.0	6031.2	16.7
number of young people (14-30 years old)	9790.4	28.9	9726.6	28.1	9685.6	27.5	9654.4	26.8
number of middle-aged (31-59 years old)	12005.7	35.4	12279.3	35.5	12565.7	35.6	1289.3	35.8
number of adults (60 years and older)	2762.3	8.1	2924.6	8.5	3103.1	8.7	3283.5	9.1

According to the data provided by the World Bank, in 2022, 2.3 percent of the population of our country or 845,300 people were recognized as persons with disabilities. 54% of people over 60 have some form of disability. 13.5% of the total population aged three and over have some form of disability, and 3.5% have a severe form of disability. It is noted that the prevalence of disability is closely related to age, with 54% of people aged 60 and over having some form of disability. The majority of persons with disabilities live in rural areas: 532,000 in rural areas, and 313,300 in urban areas. In this regard, the highest rate is observed in Navoi (3.6 percent) and Syrdarya regions (3.1 percent) and in the Republic of Karakalpakstan (2.9 percent). There are 142,300 disabled children under the age of 18 and 396,700 disabled persons under the retirement age in Uzbekistan. The number of disabled men (475,800) is more than that of women (369,500) [21-24].

Funded by the Swiss government and implemented in Uzbekistan by the HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation branch, on September 23, 2022, by the Swiss Embassy in Uzbekistan on behalf of the Government of the Swiss Confederation and the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education on behalf of the Government of Uzbekistan On the basis of the signed project "Supporting vocational training reforms in Uzbekistan" (VET4UZ), a comprehensive study was conducted in November-December 2023 at the request and cooperation of the Hotel Association of Uzbekistan.

The purpose of the study is to clarify the current experience of inclusive hotels throughout Uzbekistan. This initiative aims to answer a number of questions related to gender equality, accessibility for people with disabilities, and the effectiveness of the industry from the perspective of partners and customers [15].

The relevance of this study is based on the fact that its initiators deeply understand that inclusion is not only a moral, but also a strategic factor in the development of the

hospitality industry in Uzbekistan. The practice of inclusiveness in the field of hospitality can serve as a basis for further increasing the attractiveness of the tourism industry of our country on a global scale, for ensuring systematic efficiency and a comfortable environment in this direction.

The questionnaire consists of a total of 31 questions, and their comprehensibility and appropriate content for everyone have been tested and checked several times.

In order to demonstrate the diversity of the industry and ensure the representativeness of the selection, a wide range of hotels were covered, particularly from city hotels in Tashkent to accommodation facilities located in more remote areas. The sample of respondents was designed to include hotels of a wide range of sizes and types and to have a comprehensive understanding of inclusive practices.

Demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as their role in the hotel, age, gender, and language of filling out the questionnaire, provided valuable information on the management profiles of Uzbekistan's hotels. These data help to assess inclusiveness practices from different perspectives, taking into account diversity in management teams.

Table 2. Territorial distribution of hotels and selection of respondents [15].

Territory	General		Selection	
	Number of hotels	%	Number of respondents	%
Tashkent city	357	34%	82	31%
Republic of Karakalpakstan	27	3%	18	7%
Andijan region	21	2%	7	3%
Bukhara region	191	18%	48	18%
Jizzakh region	28	3%	4	1%
Kashkadarya region	40	4%	9	3%
Navoi region	13	1%	3	1%
Namangan region	20	2%	7	3%
Samarkand region	154	14%	38	14%
Surkhandarya province	44	4%	8	3%
Syrdarya region	13	1%	2	1%
Tashkent region	45	4%	13	5%
Fergana region	43	4%	10	4%
Khorezm region	67	6%	16	6%
Total by country:	1 063	100%	265	100%

The survey covered a total of 1063 hotels and 265 respondents participated in it (Table 2). The level of reliability of the questionnaire was 95%, the margin of error was 5.23%. These statistical indicators prove that the obtained results are reliable and reflect the views and practices of the hospitality industry of Uzbekistan.

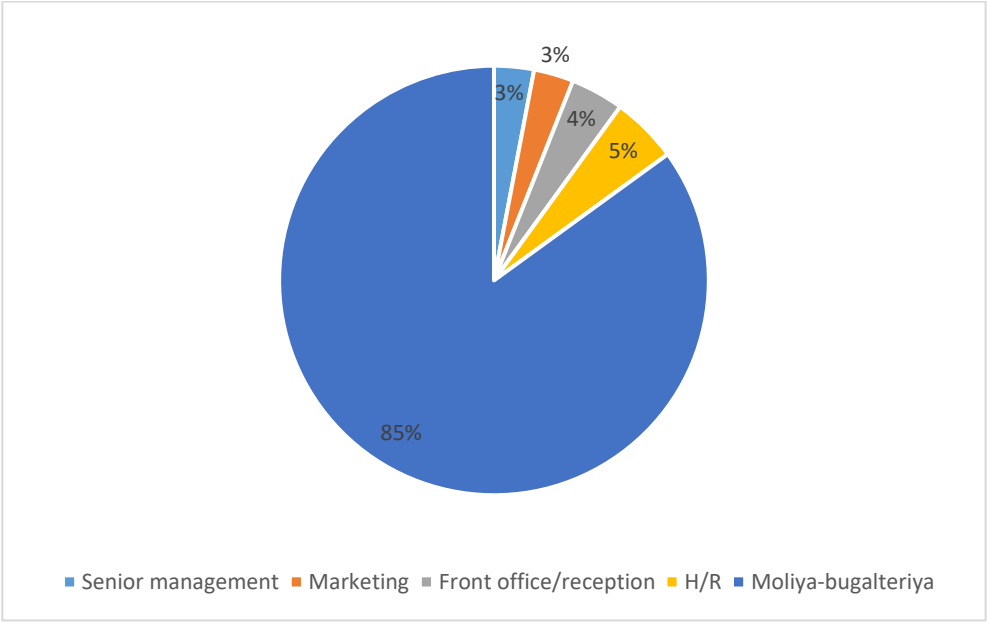


Fig. 1. Position of respondents [15].

It was found that 41.1% of the respondents have been working in this hotel for one to three years, 20.8% for less than one year, 24.9% for four to six years. Overall, 61.9% of employees have been employed at this location for up to three years, 86.8% for up to six years, 6.8% for seven to ten years, 5.4% for eleven to twenty years, and only 1.1 % have been working for more than twenty years. We can see that the respondents have worked in different positions in hotels and the number pool of hotels can be seen from Figure 1-2.

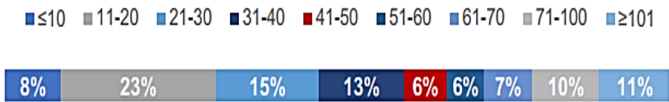


Fig. 2. Number fund [15].

95% of the respondents answered that the facilities are the same for men and women in hotels, 4% said they had difficulty answering, and only 2% stated that the facilities are not equal.

94.3% of the respondents answered "no" to the question about the activities of disabled people in hotels, and 5.7% answered "yes".

94% of the surveyed hotel managers did not answer the question about the provision of full accessibility for employees with disabilities, especially facilities including ramps, elevators and bathrooms. 4% of the participants answered the question positively and 1% answered no.

94.3% of participants did not answer the question about the availability of special initiatives and resources for employees with disabilities. 5.3% answered yes and 0.4% answered no.

91% of the participants gave a positive answer regarding the availability of rooms and public spaces for guests with disabilities, while 9% noted that there are no facilities.

Ease of information about the hotel for guests with disabilities was defined positively by 57% of participants and negatively by 43% of participants.

65% of the respondents answered yes and 37% no to the question about the availability of facilities for disabled tourists to leave comments and comments.

5 Conclusions and suggestions

By analyzing the theory of inclusive tourism in depth, it is the first issue to determine the directions of using its wide possibilities, to ensure that the population and all interested parties of tourism are aware that inclusive tourism services are equally useful for both consumers and service providers.

According to the general conclusions of the survey, hotel managers have sufficient knowledge about the need to create an inclusive environment in terms of attractiveness of hotels for tourists. Also, most of the respondents believe that hotels strive to create equal conditions for everyone, regardless of gender, age and physical ability.

The results also show that it is extremely necessary to further improve the knowledge and skills of the representatives of the hotel management sector in terms of creating comfort for employees with disabilities.

International research on inclusive tourism has started a long time ago. In our country, there are good reasons to say that studies on this topic have only recently begun.

In our opinion, in order to develop inclusive tourism in Uzbekistan, it is necessary to implement the following tasks:

- clarification and deeper analysis of the inclusive tourism segment;
- clarifying the difference between inclusive tourism, tourism without barriers, tourism for the disabled, social tourism, tourism for all, universal tourism;
- accelerating the adaptation of the criteria for determining disability to international standards;
- increase the transparency of statistical data of persons with disabilities, further expand the capabilities of the necessary information base;
- establish the development of inclusive tourism content, mobile applications and programs;
- analysis of international standards of inclusion and study of issues of implementation in our country;
- strengthening requirements to create necessary conditions for employees with disabilities working in placement facilities.

There is no doubt that the processes related to the development of inclusive tourism are in the center of attention of the country's government, and the adopted laws and decisions will make a huge contribution in the near future for persons with disabilities to become an important part of society.

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