

Motivations of sighted and blind travellers in inclusive holidays: Preliminary findings

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Objectives | Previous research (Hutzler, Chacham-Guber, & Reiter, 2013; Logan et al., 1998) has shown that participation in activities with peers with and without disabilities positively influences the quality of life of people with disabilities. One way for such interactions to occur is during inclusive holidays – a special form of leisure and travel that allows people regardless of their physical abilities to participate in recreational activities together. This relatively new type of tourism has not received considerable attention in tourism research. Yet, the existence of such holidays on the market brings up many questions, particularly regarding the motivation of people engaging in this type of leisure. It can be argued that inclusive holidays (clearly marketed as so) are a form of reverse integrated recreation, according to the classification of Schleien, Green and Stone (2003). While motivations for people engaging in other forms of reverse integration, such as sports, have been explored in the past (Medland & Ellis-Hill, 2008), it is arguable that inclusive holidays are substantially different. The objective of this study is to explore what motivates people to choose special inclusive tours from the broad array of other leisure products, including traditional travel packages. The model of tourism motivation and expectation formation of Gnoth (1997) is used to analyze and structure the findings.

Methodology | The study follows a qualitative framework. This allows carrying out the research without relying on questionnaires, developed within a mainstream holiday context, whose predetermined design could limit the emergence of new themes (Creswell, 2014). The findings are based on the analysis of eight semi-structured telephone interviews conducted with past participants of inclusive tours in June and July 2016. These interviews comprise the first part of data collection for the study. Two of the interviewees had a severe form of visual impairment at the time of joining the tour, while the rest participated as sighted guides. The interviewees were recruited via organizations offering reverse integrated inclusive tours through responding to a call disseminated by these organizations. The interviews were conducted by the author and followed an interview guide that, among others, touched upon reasons for choosing this type of tours, expectations prior the tour and reflections after the tour. The interviews were transcribed and reviewed using narrative analysis as an exploratory tool to identify major themes. These were structured following the model of tourism motivation and expectation formation process of Gnoth (1997).

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Main Results and Contributions | The model of Gnoth (1997) stipulates that motives, formed by a combination of cognitions and emotions, coupled with the objective situation, result in the motivation for travel – a process which is guided by inner- and outer-directed values. Consequently, cognitions and emotions play a role in building expectations. All the interviewees described themselves as vivid travelers, thus the need to travel was a common urge shared by all respondents. However, there was no clear consensus on the motives to choose inclusive holidays. While travelers with visual impairment indicated their general desire to travel and receive assistance from fellow travelers, some sighted participants had looked explicitly for “sighted guiding” activities. This could imply a motive to help others. The fact that these interviewees also had previous volunteering or work experience, related to a social cause, illustrates this argument. Almost all participants referred to the desire to travel in a company, particularly single travelers. Two affective states also appeared at this stage – namely curiosity and anxiety.

The final formation of motivation for joining inclusive holidays was affected by values and circumstances of the objective situation. Gnoth (1997) defines values as “strategies to adapt situations to one’s needs or strategies to adapt oneself to situations” (p. 298). While the interviewees did not describe the role of their values in the decision process explicitly, for some of them, previous experiences of interacting with people with visual impairment (either friends or as part of work) contributed to the choice of inclusive holidays for leisure. As a circumstance of objective situation, the discounted price for sighted travelers was pointed out by some interviewees as something that “*was one of the motivations*”.

It is worth noting that cognitions played a great role in the development of both motivations and expectations of travelers. The interviewees have been praising the tour offer of the organizations as well as its match to their interests (“*I always wanted to do that [sail off the coast of Alaska]*”). Consequently, the expectations before the first inclusive holiday for each participant were based majorly on knowledge about the destination and the other arrangements of the tour (e.g. travelling in a group, food, activities). Anxiety and nervousness were the only emotions that described these expectations for some of the interviewees. Finally, participation in the first inclusive holiday experience has been a strong influencer for expectations for further inclusive tours. Interviewees have expressed clearer expectations, thus indicating the cognitive effect of previous experiences. Some travelers have mentioned that the reason to participate in further inclusive holidays had been the need to check for consistency in the experiences.

Limitations | The current findings are based on interviews with only eight participants of inclusive tours. Insights from more participants, particularly more people with visual impairment, would be necessary to identify stronger patterns. The recruiting process of the study resulted in a possible self-selection bias, where all interviewees were highly satisfied with their experiences and were repeat “inclusive” travelers. This limits the findings to only one outcome of the holidays.

The geographical distribution of interviewees preconditioned the use of telephone for interviewing. In addition to traditional limitations of personal interviewing, the use of telephone may lead to shorter interviews resulting in less data depth (Irvine, 2011) and precludes control of distractions in the interviewee’s environment (Novick, 2008). Nevertheless, empirical research has shown that data quality between qualitative face-to-face and telephone interviews is comparable (Block & Erskine, 2012; Novick, 2008).

Conclusions | The current study presents preliminary findings of interviews with past participants of inclusive holiday packages. It explores their motivations and expectations by structuring them into in-

ternal motives as well as inner- and outer-directed values. It has been shown that other than a shared urge to travel, tour participants had been “pushed” to engage in inclusive holidays by values based on past experiences of interacting with people with visual impairment as well as a desire to help and to be helpful. As described by Gnoth (1997), inner-directed values target objects (in this case tours) that can be substituted. Such “substitution” occurs when tour participants engage in volunteering or other inclusive (non-travel) activities, which was illustrated by the interviews. At the same time, the participation in holidays leads to further outer-directed values that are cognition-dominant and are based on the actual experiences. These values are directly linked to the specific objects (in this case, inclusive holidays). For managers, it is important to understand that although a successful inclusive tour may develop into a motivation for further participation in such type of holidays, especially for first-time travelers these products compete with other “objects” that fit into the values of people. Finally, the interviews have revealed that inclusive tours enable travel for people that could not do it individually or by using mainstream travel services, because of either sensorial limitations or budget constraints. This means that inclusive tours can be considered as contributors towards social tourism.

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