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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT TRENDS OF BARRIER-FREE TOURISM: INTERNATIONAL AND RUSSIAN PRACTICE

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Abstract: Nowadays, the availability of tourism for disabled people has increased significantly. Social tourism is developing dynamically, positioning itself as one of the priority areas in the tourism industry. Special tourist programs are created for people with special needs, which allow them to fully exercise their right to rest and leisure. Today, the problem of developing barrier-free tourism is very important and relevant, since it has a very significant humanitarian component, namely, the life of disabled people in the contemporary world. Owners of hotels, motels, hostels, and other accommodation facilities are interested in this issue since no tourist trip can do without accommodation facilities. In the territory of the Russian Federation, this segment of the hotel services market is the most promising at the moment, because this niche has not yet been filled. This issue is extremely serious, as it is directly related to the physical health, needs, and capabilities of guests. In the present article, the authors consider the conceptual framework that defines the main components and growth areas of barrier-free tourism, as well as analyze the theoretical aspects of the development of this type of tourism and highlight the main development problems and prospects based on study and analysis of the barrier-free tourism promotion practices in several advanced European countries.

Keywords: barrier-free tourism, accessible tourism, accessible environment, persons with reduced mobility.

INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is inextricably associated with tourism, which is one of the main methods of learning the world around. Nowadays, the development of the hotel

industry has increased significantly, because to make a profit, it is necessary to meet all the emerging needs of the tourist. In order to achieve this goal, hotel companies are forced to implement new services, as well as improve existing ones. In most European countries, tourism is one of the most important economic sectors, and therefore, every year tens of millions of people are involved in tourist activities. Barrier-free tourism is developing dynamically as the tourist market segment. According to Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat), in Russia as of 2019, there are about 14 million disabled adults, about two and a half million disabled children, and two million people with diabetes (Karpova & Yakovleva, 2012).

Most people with reduced mobility are under the age of 40. As a rule, these are people with an active life stance who are not afraid to discover something new. In this regard, the demand for barrier-free tourism in Russia should increase in the near future. According to the United Nations, today there are about 600 million disabled people in the world, of which 200 million are children. In European countries, disabled people make up about 30% of the population, totaling 60 million (Bavelsky et al., 2012). Most disabled people lead an active social life. In Moscow, there are about 30 thousand employed disabled people. There are a large number of special programs to create jobs for disabled people. Many disabled people have their families, friends, and they do not want to be different from other people, they want to discover the world and to travel without borders. Disabled people travel no less frequently than other EU citizens. The highest percentage of travelers with special needs is in Germany, amounting to 53%, and the UK – 35%. At that, 10% of disabled people prefer to make tourist trips together with friends or family members. Experts have noted an increase in demand for barrier-free tourism abroad and its emergence in Russia over the past 8-10 years.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It should be noted that the topic under study is highly elaborated since many domestic and foreign scientists deal with this problem. Among them, one can note R.A. Fatkhutdinov, G.L. Azoev, M. Porter, A.Yu. Yudanov, A.D. Nemtsev, D. Riccardo, A.N. Litvinenko, A. Smith, N.Yu. Volodomanova, and E.A. Balashova. All authors studying the category of "competitiveness" formulated their own definitions, while approaching the study of this concept from different angles, highlighting various factors that affected competitiveness, including the availability of an accessible environment. Contemporary scientific literature and journalism include many works related to the study of the availability of services, as well as tourist services to persons with disabilities. These issues are considered in publications by researchers, such as A.D. Bavelsky, M.V. Efremova, N.A. Zaitseva, N.V. Zorina, G.A. Karpova, E.A. Sigida, A.O. Trukhan, and others.

METHODS

The purpose of the present research is to identify the main problems, constraints, and prospects for the development of barrier-free tourism in the Russian Federation. The objectives of the research concern also determining the meaning of the main terms that characterize barrier-free tourism, analyzing foreign and Russian experience in the development of this type of tourism, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of this type of tourism in Russia, followed by clarifying the most promising aspects of its development. The research object is barrier-free tourism in the Russian Federation,

while the research subject is the main problems and prospects for the development of this type of tourism. Using the comparative analysis method carried out based on studying best foreign practices in the development of barrier-free tourism, this article identified several effective measures, whose implementation would bring barrier-free tourism in the Russian Federation to a qualitatively new level.

DISCUSSION

The concept of an accessible environment is a social phenomenon that involves the creation of comfortable conditions for the disabled people and groups of the population with reduced mobility. Representatives of the authorities, nongovernmental organizations, and just some interested people can be the initiators of such a phenomenon as an accessible environment. Speaking about the accessible environment, it is necessary to take into account all categories of the population that experience temporary or permanent difficulties in independent mobility, receiving services, necessary information, or orientation in space (Sigida & Lukyanova, 2015). An accessible environment is created not only for the disabled, as is commonly believed, but also for groups of the population with reduced mobility, such as pregnant women, parents with baby strollers and small children, the elderly, and people with temporarily reduced mobility, as well as cyclists. It turns out that almost every person in his life goes through periods that are associated with reduced mobility. Therefore, one can safely say that an accessible environment is a need for the entire population in general, and each individual, in particular (Moshnyaga, 2013).

For more than 20 years, there have been scientific discussions about the concept of "tourism for disabled people", but so far there is no general universal concept for it. In world practice, this conceptual problem can be found under the terms of Accessible Tourism, Tourism for All, Universal Tourism, and Barrier-free Tourism. In domestic practice, the terminological designation of barrier-free tourism is also not generally accepted. One can find concepts, such as Accessible Tourism, Inclusive Tourism, Tourism for All, Adaptive Tourism, Disabled Tourism, Paratourism, Correctional and Educational Tourism, Rehabilitation Tourism, Affordable Tourism, Tourism for the people with hearing impairments, and Tourism for the people with visual impairments (Mezhova et al., 2015). Concerning supporting the development of accessible tourism, the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (UN WTO) adopted the Resolution "Creating Tourism Opportunities for Handicapped People in the Nineties" back in 1991. Based on this Resolution, the document was developed entitled "Accessible Tourism for All", adopted by the UNWTO General Assembly in 2005 in Dakar (Senegal) (Repina, 2015).

In the Declaration on the Facilitation of Tourist Travel, adopted at the 18th Session of the General Assembly in Astana, UNWTO calls on the Member States to make their tourist facilities and institutions accessible to disabled people. At the 10th session of the UNWTO General Assembly in 2013, an update of the recommendations of the 2005 UNWTO General Assembly "Accessible Tourism for All" was adopted taking into account the provisions of the 2007 "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities". The same document contains the definition of "accessibility" made by UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai: "Accessibility is a central element of any responsible and sustainable tourism policy. It is both a human rights imperative and an exceptional business opportunity. Above all, we must come to appreciate that accessible

tourism does not only benefit persons with disabilities or special needs; it benefits us all.”

Undoubtedly, the creation of an accessible environment is the key to the sustainable development of tourist facilities, as well as a condition for the safety of the territory for tourists and residents. Accessible tourism for disabled people is not just an opportunity to restore the body and spend leisure time but also a means of rehabilitation and unity with society. Scientists explain this by the fact that, firstly, tourism is a motor activity, which contributes to physical fit and health; secondly, tourism forms a realm for full-fledged communication, eliminates the sense of loss of dignity, inferiority, integrates the elderly and disabled people into society; third, tourism contributes to restoring people's mental resources, since a good climate and beautiful nature contribute to a positive psycho-emotional mood (Pedosyuk, 2014).

In November 2009, it was decided to develop the "Accessible Environment" program which had to be implemented during the period from 2011 to 2015 and has been extended later until 2020. Rehabilitation of disabled people is not only an acute problem for society but also a priority area of the state social policy. Raising the issue of accessibility of the environment, it is necessary to pay attention not only to the difficulties in traveling but also to the issues related to health, vocational education, culture, social protection and employment, sports and physical culture, information, and communication. It should also be noted that in contemporary society, unwanted emotions often arise concerning disabled people, starting with pity and ending with contempt and even disgust. Socialization of people with disabilities will help to remove stereotypes of public perception and help to respond normally to disabled individuals, which is primarily very important for the latter.

Today, there are hundreds of public organizations that deal with the problem of accessible environment, such as Perspective, White Cane, ROBOI (Regional public charitable organization of disabled people), World, Disabled People of War (All-Russian public organization of disabled veterans in Afghanistan and military trauma), Ark, Strategy, and many others. Specialists of institutions, such as urban development companies, educational institutions, and personnel organizations pay their attention to the issue of socialization of disabled people and groups of the population with reduced mobility. Only during the implementation of the federal program, when the concept of an accessible environment was widely mentioned in the mass media and the communication media, the discomfort of transport conditions, building planning, and getting educational and other services became widely discussed in society (Manshina, 2010).

It is worth noting that after the successful holding of the Sochi 2014 Paralympic Winter Games, where Russian athletes showed excellent results, the discussions concerning the organization of a barrier-free environment for disabled people and other groups of the population with reduced mobility became more often. Such a large project for the development of a barrier-free environment was launched by the need to simultaneously accept tens of thousands of disabled people in Sochi (Vititnev & Trukhan, 2016). Disabled (DSBLD) is a common abbreviation in the hotel business, which is used for special guests. In recent years, the world has become more open to tourists with disabilities. Observing this trend, hotel companies began to seek to expand their contingent of consumers, offering rooms equipped in a special way for such guests.

According to official statistics, today in Moscow, about 70% of urban infrastructure facilities are accessible to disabled people. However, experts believe that

there are much fewer of them for wheelchair users. According to experts, the urban environment of St. Petersburg is more accessible than Moscow's streets and parks. The main museums of the capital, such as the Tretyakov Gallery, the Hermitage Museum, and the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg are also available for disabled people (Shelkopyasova & Savenko, 2017).

In Moscow, there are about fifteen hotels that have specially equipped rooms, ready to accept at the same time about 50 guests with limited mobility. In the following years, this number is planned to be increased significantly. According to the standards already adopted in Russia, all hotels under construction or reconstruction, which are designed for fifty rooms, will be required to equip at least two rooms for people with disabilities, while large hotels should allocate at least 3% of the room stock for disabled people (Radygina, 2014). This consumer segment of the tourism and hospitality industry should be treated as a significant target audience and evaluated not only through the prism of charity and humanity but as, above all, serious business.

Affordable tourism is one of the latest trends in the contemporary tourism industry. This business area remains poorly studied, as it does not have a long history, unlike other types of tourism. Until recently, the study of this issue was almost not carried out. Foreign experts consider that in Russia there is still a problem of a low level of providing information not only to consumers, i.e., disabled tourists but also to tour operators. Experts note that even the information which is available should be searched on different portals: websites of hotels, travel companies, unions, and associations of people with disabilities. Information about available facilities cannot be found on any of the foreign tourist portals for tourists with disabilities, such as www.accessibleurope.com; www.disabilitytravel.com; www.accessibletourism.org. etc.

However, to date, the St. Petersburg Liberty travel agency has created a portal accessiblerussia.com, which offers tours to Veliky Novgorod, Moscow, and St. Petersburg for disabled people, but unfortunately, the portal does not show maps of accessibility and descriptions of attractions in terms of the possibility of visiting them by disabled people. In some countries, such as Europe, Israel, the United States, New Zealand, Argentina, and Brazil, special portals have been created for disabled people to facilitate their mobility and allow them to schedule their own tours. Simultaneously with the pan-European portal on affordable tourism (www.accessibleurope.com), many countries have created their national websites about the availability of tourist facilities in their country. This concerns the United Kingdom (disabledgo.com and accessibleplaces.co.uk), Italy (accessibleitaly.com), France (accessiblefrance.com and accessibleparis.org), Israel (goisrael.com and israel4all.com), etc.

The UK has achieved the greatest success in developing an accessible environment and promoting barrier-free tourism among its citizens. National standards for accessibility of tourist facilities, developed by British scientists, are considered to be among the best in the world. As a result of the implementation of these standards, more than 2.5 million people with disabilities now travel to the United Kingdom every year. In the international practice of affordable tourism, several forms of development and construction of a tourist product are used:

1. Independent travel of persons with disabilities.
2. Travel involving accompanying persons, such as family members, guardians, friends, etc.
3. Support by volunteers and sponsorship of paid chaperones by charitable organizations.

4. Traveling with people engaged to accompany a disabled tourist at a much lower price. The analysis of practical experience has shown that to a greater extent, these are students or young people aged 19-24 having limited financial opportunities.

In global practice, the more common option is to travel with accompanying family members. However, increasingly, there are trips in groups that are divided into pairs, where one of the tourists accompanies another who has some form of disability and consequently buys a tourist trip at an extremely low price. It is worth mentioning the British travel operator Traveleyes, which specializes in the recreation of people with visual disabilities and attracts not only visually impaired tourists but also those who will accompany them. Thus, for example, the price for a 6-day trip to Rome will cost for a person with disabilities GBP 899, while for his accompanying person – GBP 499, i.e., the price for a second tourist is almost half less (Tour operator for visually impaired people “Traveleyes”, n.d). This method allows families with disabled members to travel more economically. It also attracts student tourists who prefer budget vacation options. However, there are also some difficulties in applying such a scheme, of which the main is that two people are needed for such a tour. The first one is an accompanying person who agrees to take responsibility for the disabled person he is accompanying. Second, respectively, is a disabled person, who will be able to pay the financial costs for himself, and the discount for accompanying person. But if looking at this differently, this option gives almost unlimited travel opportunities.

In Europe, for many years, special programs have been created for disabled people, as well as active work is underway to adapt the infrastructure of resorts and destinations to the needs of people with limited mobility. Travel companies are trying to diversify their offer for this category of tourists. Among all the countries, the leading place is occupied by the UK. To provide disabled people with equal rights and opportunities, a specially designed infrastructure is organized, funds are allocated from the country's budget for the development of not only tourism for disabled people but also for creating comfortable conditions for their life. So, in the UK, 19 billion pounds are spent annually on disability benefits, which is equivalent to about 900 billion rubles. Disabled people in the UK are given discounts on medicines, visits to the dentist, on the purchase of wheelchairs, hearing aids, and in extreme cases, are provided even with free care. Free parking lots are also available in the city for citizens with disabilities. Persons with disabilities pay for their housing from their pension, which is paid for their maintenance, while the rest of the amount is paid by the local municipality budget. Legislation concerning persons with disabilities is so improved that about 19% of all employed Britons have a disability (Accessible tourism operator “Liberty”, n.d). Depending on the country and the level of its socio-economic development, the development degree of an accessible environment for people with disabilities also differs. Table 1 below shows the countries with the most successfully developed infrastructure for this category of the population.

Table 1. Foreign countries with the most developed infrastructure of barrier-free tourism (Seldom News, 2018)

Country	Available environment	Types of tourism
Spain	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 90%	Ski, sailing, scientific and educational, beach tourism
Finland	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 70%.	Reima Country (safari on dogs, horses, four-wheeled motorcycles, snowmobiles, fishing, rowing, raft swimming, and skiing), golf, or curling
Israel	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 85%.	Cultural and educational, beach, and religious tourism
Greece	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 65%.	Cultural and educational tourism for the people with visual impairments
Hungary	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 65%.	Cultural and educational, beach, health-improving tourism prevails
Czech Republic	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 95%.	Cultural and educational, health-improving, tactile guide path, organizing international festivals for people with disabilities, as well as ski, scooter, and intellectual tourism
Germany	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 95%.	Cultural and educational, health-improving tourism
France	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 85%.	Cultural and educational, health-improving, skiing, scooter, intellectual tourism
UK	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 85%.	Cultural and educational, health-improving, intellectual tourism
USA	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 80%.	Cultural and educational, health-improving tourism, Paralympic Games
Australia	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 75%.	Cultural and educational, ecological, and beach tourism, sailing, and diving

To compare, below are the results of the study of inclusive tourism in Russia. The degree of accessibility of environment for disabled people and the development level of barrier-free tourism in different cities of Russia are shown by the figures given below in Table 2.

Table 2. Development of accessible tourism in Russia (Trukhan, 2016)

Cities	Available environment	Types of tourism
Moscow	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 30%	Cultural and educational, health-improving tourism
Saint-Petersburg	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 30%	Cultural and educational, health-improving, and intellectual tourism
Saratov	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 5%	Cultural and educational tourism
Republic of Adygea	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 5%	Cultural and educational tourism
Republic of Tatarstan	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 5%.	Cultural and educational tourism
Republic of Karelia	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 4%	Cultural and educational, environmental tourism
Khanty-Mansi Autonomous District	All elements of the tourist infrastructure have been adapted by almost 5%	Cultural and educational, environmental tourism, and skiing
Sochi	A barrier-free environment will be created, adapting all elements of the tourist infrastructure by almost 60%	Cultural and educational, health-improving, intellectual tourism; Paralympics Committee
Voronezh	The barrier-free environment is at the initial stage of development	Festival tourism (Voronezh regional festival of the author's song "Ramonsky Rodnik")

According to the above statistics, it can be concluded that the Russian practice is experiencing certain difficulties with barrier-free environment that is the main deterrent to the development of barrier-free tourism in the Russian Federation. At the moment, there is no diversity of participants in the Russian market, both on the part of consumers and on the part of organizations that provide services to disabled people; and, as a result, there is practically no competition in affordable tourism.

The low economic activity of citizens with disabilities and underdeveloped infrastructure are the main challenges of barrier-free tourism development in the country. It is necessary to study the organizations whose activities are related to the creation of offers for disabled people, as well as their geographic distribution. This study was conducted before the start of the Sochi 2014 Paralympics as part of the study of the adaptation level of the environment for disabled people. Tourist organizations whose activities are aimed at the development of tourism for disabled people are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Tourist organizations of Russia engaged in the field of affordable tourism
(Accessible tourism operator “Liberty”, n.d.)

City	Tourist Company	Brief description
Moscow	Amadel Tour	Tour operator in Greece and Latin America, working with disabled tourists – wheelchair users, and people in need of hemodialysis
Moscow	WELL Agency	The Agency was created to assist in the socio-cultural rehabilitation of persons with disabilities through travel
Moscow	Autonomous Nonprofit Organization Invatour	Nonprofit organization Charitable Foundation "Social adaptation of disabled persons and youth". The main goal of the foundation is to promote social adaptation and rehabilitation of disabled persons through excursion tourism, as well as integration into society.
Moscow	Parilis Invatour	The company was created by a group of travel enthusiasts who once thought about those people who have much fewer opportunities to see both their homeland and other countries due to certain health restrictions
Saint Petersburg	Liberty	Specialized travel company for disabled people that organizes adapted tours in St. Petersburg, as well as offers services for inbound and outbound accessible tourism.
Bratsk	GLORY TOURS LLC	In addition to the standard tourist service, the Agency conducts specialized work on the selection of tours for adults and children with hearing, vision, speech, musculoskeletal disorders, as well as other groups of population with reduced mobility
Tula	Social Tourism LLC	Provides a variety of tourist services, offers a flexible system of discounts to its customers
Lermontov of the Stavropol Region	State budgetary institution of social services Lermontov Comprehensive Social Service Center	The Center implements social tourism programs for senior citizens

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data presented in Tables 1 and 2, a reasoned conclusion can be made that affordable tourism is still an undeveloped niche of the Russian tourism business, which represents quite large prospects for diversifying the tourism supply in the market. Based on the presented data and having considered the practical experience of providing affordable tourism services in the activities of domestic and foreign organizations, it can be concluded that the global experience of affordable tourism represents significant developments regarding the creation of an accessible environment, the supply of high-quality and accessible information to disabled persons, as well as the experience of organizing special Internet resources for disabled people

providing them with accessible travel guide containing information on tourist sites for disabled visitors as well as technical recommendations.

Thus, one can conclude that barrier-free tourism in Russia is still at a nascent stage. However, in the background of growing interest, there is a need to extend the legislative framework governing social protection for disabled people, to adopt normative legal acts that would solidify basic terms and approaches, as well as provide a stimulating effect on the tourism industry.

It is necessary to launch federal and regional programs for the development of affordable tourism in Russia, which will make it possible not only to attract new tourists, support disabled people, but also to open up additional opportunities for the tourism industry to receive new sources of income during the tough economic situation in the country and the fall in demand for tourist services. Besides, it is necessary to create a consolidated information portal about the availability of tourist facilities in Russia, collective accommodation facilities that can accommodate disabled people, etc. Thus, Russia is now entering the process of a large-scale study of the best practices of foreign countries and the formation of all the necessary conditions that will contribute to the promotion of affordable tourism.

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