

ITB seminarium

12 mars 15.30; Hall 7.1a, Auditorium New York 1

Accessible Tourism : Market Potential and Best Practises

What is accessible tourism? It can be described as products and services along the entire tourism service-chain, that are designed for all and free of barriers.

It can also be described in market terms as being the fastest growing market in tourism. So why is that so?

We are undergoing a demographic change, this is a well-known fact. A growing share of the Europeans are older people, 60 years and older. This generation, as experienced the boom of mass tourism in Europe starting in the 1960s, is not prepared to give up travelling because of any disability that might come with the age. It is possible that these senior customers would not call themselves “disabled” but their access needs when travelling will invariably correspond closely to the access requirements of persons with disabilities – that is, those who have permanent or long-term functional impairments. The aging population is rapidly leading to the transformation of “accessible tourism” from what was considered as being a niche market issue to become a mass market phenomenon.

The market potential for Accessible tourism for all, does not only include the older population, but also many person in all stages of life with extended need of good accessibility: that is for instance disabled persons with friends and families, families with young children, and people with temporary or long-standing health problems.

This market is equivalent to at least 630 million overnight-stayings in Europe/year, according to figures from the European Commission. And we are talking about at least 130 million citizens of Europe. In addition to that, I can tell you that people from other parts of the world have about the same needs and expectations, and many of them wants to visit Europe. From German studies (carried out by mr Neumann) we also know that the target group for accessible tourism are willing to spend more money on their holiday, likes to travel in low-season, are more loyal to the destination than the tourist in general, and they often travel accompanied by family or friends. We also know that accessible tourism offers can lead to an increased turnover in the enterprise, a prolonged seasons, new job opportunities and more tax incomes for the society.

Most business successes are based on a concept where the enterprise makes it as **easy as possible** for the potential costumer to use the product or service that are offered. And this is the only “secret” behind the concept of accessible tourism – **make it as easy as possible for your costumer**. Provide products and services that are designed for all, and free from barriers.

“Easier said than done” might some of you think. And for sure it can be difficult to provide good accessibility from one day to another. The first step in the process is **awareness**, and from there you will need a strategy, knowledge, and support and other things along the way. All tourists will gain from better access, higher quality, comfort and security.

To work effectively in order to provide accessible tourism it's important to take a look at the good examples. This is a way to gain knowledge, but also to save money by not re-inventing the wheel or repeat others mistakes. In different parts of Europe we can now follow the development of destinations, where good accessibility already is, or are becoming a part of the strategy, in order to strengthen the competitiveness. There are examples like South Tenerife, or the German destinations who works together in the promotion of accessible offers; or Accessible Portugal in Lisbon and the Swedish passenger-boat by the lake of Vättern, which I will mention more about later.

All these examples have something in common, although they are examples from totally different parts of Europe. In all these cases we can notice a cooperation or interaction between enterprises, and between public and private actors. And this is what I would like you to remember most of all after this seminar: that **a success in accessible tourism is to a large extent affected by which conditions a destination can offer the visitor in terms of accessibility along the whole service-chain**. No-one goes on holiday just to sleep in a hotel. No-one reaches the concert-hall without using any kind of transportation or movement in public areas like pavements, squares e t c. And this raises the need of cooperation between different enterprises in different parts of the service-chain, but also a close interaction between the private businesses and the public actors.

In this context I would also like to welcome you all as members of ENAT- the European Network for Accessible Tourism. Started in 2006, the network have some 500 members on 5 continents, and is an important forum where you can find partners to cooperate with, or to get inspired from. Through the work of ENAT members we want to help make Europe an accessible destination, where all travellers can move freely, enjoy new experiences and be sure of getting the service they need and expect. We believe that accessible tourism must be made a priority - for the good of the tourists and for the long-term sustainability of the European tourist industry.



Lilian Müller/President of ENAT