

**Ulyana Khanas, Candidate of Philosophical Sciences,
Associate Professor**
*Uzhhorod National University
Uzhhorod, Ukraine*

**Mariana Popyk, Candidate of Economic Sciences,
Associate Professor**
*Uzhhorod National University
Uzhhorod, Ukraine*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-529-7-25>

DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSIVE TOURISM: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL ASPECTS

In today's world, tourism is an important component of social, economic and cultural development of society, promoting intercultural dialogue, broadening worldview horizons and integration of different social groups. At the same time, despite the rapid development of the tourism industry, a significant part of the population remains outside its borders due to physical, social or economic barriers. Today, about 15% of the world's population has some form of disability, which is more than a billion people. This number includes the elderly, families with young children and other vulnerable groups. This significant proportion of the population often faces restrictions in access to tourism services and travel opportunities. In this context, inclusive tourism is becoming not only relevant, but also a necessary direction for the development of modern society.

Inclusive tourism involves creating conditions for equal access to tourism services for all people, regardless of physical, sensory, cognitive or other disabilities. Its significance goes far beyond ensuring technical accessibility: this concept promotes social integration, breaking down stereotypes, improving the quality of life and creating a more tolerant society. Successful implementation of the principles of inclusive tourism not only ensures the rights of people with disabilities, but also serves as a driver for expanding the tourism market by attracting a wider audience, which increases the competitiveness of tourism products.

This topic is especially relevant for Ukraine in the context of the brutal full-scale war unleashed by Russia. According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, as of 2024, there are more than three million people with disabilities in Ukraine, which is about 8% of the country's population [1]. The war, unfortunately, increases this number due to injuries to the military and civilians. Experts estimate that more than 20,000 Ukrainians have suffered amputations due to combat injuries, and tens of thousands more need long-

term rehabilitation for other types of injuries or psychological trauma. In addition, internally displaced persons who have lost their homes and access to basic services also face numerous obstacles, including in the tourism sector. At the same time, popular tourist attractions, such as hotels, museums and historical monuments, often remain inaccessible to people with reduced mobility due to the lack of ramps, lifts or specially equipped toilet facilities, etc. In these circumstances, the development of inclusive tourism is of paramount importance not only as a kind of social responsibility, but also as an effective tool for rehabilitation, psychological support and integration of victims into society.

Inclusive tourism is a relatively new trend in the tourism industry, based on the principles of equality, accessibility and social integration. In addition to the term «inclusive tourism», other terms are used in the scientific literature: «accessible tourism», «barrier-free tourism», «tourism for all», which are synonymous concepts. The theoretical basis of inclusive tourism was formed due to the work of many international researchers. Darcy and Dickson define accessible tourism as a form of tourism that allows people with different accessibility needs, including physical, visual, auditory and cognitive access, to function independently, equitably and with dignity through the provision of universally designed tourism products, services and environments. The basis of their concept is the principles of universal design, which involve creating an environment that is convenient for use by all people without the need for adaptation or specialized design [2].

Buhalis and Michopoulou expanded this definition to include the economic aspect, emphasizing that inclusive tourism creates significant market potential for the tourism industry. According to their research, the market for accessible tourism in Europe is estimated at more than 130 billion euros annually [3]. An important contribution to understanding the social significance of inclusive tourism was made by Zajadacz and Śniadek, who view it as a tool for social integration and ensuring equal opportunities for all members of society [4]. A significant contribution to the development of this concept has also been made by researchers such as Buhalis (research on the role of information technology in the development of inclusive tourism) [5], Ambrose (his contribution to the development of European standards of accessible tourism) [6], Kastenholz et al. (critical analysis of social and ethical aspects of inclusive tourism) [7]. Their works emphasize the importance of inclusive tourism as a tool for social justice and human rights.

A barrier-free environment or universal design is a prerequisite for the organization and development of inclusive tourism. Such an environment is characterized by: accessibility (possibility of access by transport, availability of parking spaces for people with disabilities, etc.), accessibility (availability of paths, surface level, sufficient space for manoeuvre, height difference, etc.)

and usability (a person with a disability can independently cope with the necessary tasks). These components are combined in the concept of accessibility for efficiency. The National Strategy for Creating a Barrier-Free Space in Ukraine identifies the following areas: physical, information, digital, social and civic, educational, and economic [8], which are applicable to all areas, including tourism.

Inclusive tourism has the potential to become one of the most popular types of tourism in the coming years for a number of reasons. First, there are moral and ethical reasons, as inclusive tourism is based on the principles of equality, accessibility, and respect for the dignity of every person. It recognizes the right of all people, regardless of their physical, sensory or mental characteristics, to have access to tourism as a means of cultural and social development. This is a basic principle of a civilized society. Secondly, there are demographic reasons, as scientists' forecasts clearly indicate an increase in population, as well as an increase in human life expectancy, which means that there will be a large part of humanity with certain physical limitations and corresponding recreational needs.

Strategies and directions for the development of inclusive tourism at the global macro level and at the micro level of Ukraine are already reflected in program documents. At the international level, such a document is the Quality Framework Program «World Tourism for All» proposed by the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT) [9]. In Ukraine, it is the National Strategy for Creating a Barrier-Free Space in Ukraine until 2030 [8]. One of the key tools for implementing the provisions of the Strategy is the introduction of modern technologies that can significantly increase the level of accessibility of services and infrastructure.

In October 2024, the State Agency for Tourism Development of Ukraine presented the handbook «Methodological Recommendations on the Formation of Barrier-Free Tourism» [10], which contains important information for the arrangement of an accessible environment in hotels, catering establishments and other urban hospitality infrastructure. The guide was developed on the basis of current state building codes on inclusiveness and best international practices of accessibility in the tourism sector.

In order to create a barrier-free space and develop inclusive tourism, taking into account the content of the National Strategy, the following tasks are necessary:

1. Normative: to create and implement a program for the development of inclusive tourism.
2. Administrative: to involve united territorial communities in the creation of a high-quality barrier-free space.
3. Technical: modernize existing and build new real estate, taking into account building codes and accessibility standards. Significantly improve and

expand the transport infrastructure (introduce inclusive multimodal transportation systems, navigation for the visually impaired).

4. Rationally plan the development of territories, guided by the principles of accessibility, safety and sustainable development.

5. Digital: introduce mobile applications with adaptive interface, interactive maps, VR/AR tours for the visually impaired etc.

6. Information: create multi-format information materials, tactile maps of tourist routes; develop audio guides with audio comments; introduce QR codes with audio descriptions of objects.

7. Provide specialized training for staff (inclusive guides, service personnel, etc.).

8. Service: create inclusive eco-routes, gastronomic tours, excursion programs, sports recreation programs, SPA programs, etc.

In our opinion, a systematic solution to these main tasks will create an accessible space.

Thus, the implementation of systemic and strategic changes in the development of tourism in Ukraine creates prospects not only for improving the tourist environment, but also for solving important social challenges of our time. The implementation of the proposed innovative approaches will contribute to the development of inclusive tourism, which provides high-quality and affordable services for all categories of visitors.

References:

1. Tanasyshyn at the UN headquarters: In Ukraine, more than 3 million people with disabilities are people with great potential, skills, ideas, strength (2024, 13 June). *Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine*. Available at: <https://www.msp.gov.ua/news/23795.html>

2. Darcy S., Dickson T.J. (2009). A whole-of-life approach to tourism: The case for accessible tourism experiences. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, no. 16, pp. 32-44. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1375/jhtm.16.1.32>

3. Buhalis D., Michopoulou E. (2011). Information-enabled tourism destination marketing: Addressing the accessibility market. *Current Issues in Tourism*, vol. 14(2), pp. 145-168. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683501003653361>

4. Zajadacz A., Śniadek J. (2015). Inclusive tourism – a new approach to accessible tourism. *Journal of Tourism Research*, no. 10, pp. 1-10. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/jtf-04-2015-0015/full/pdf>

5. Buhalis D. (2000). Marketing the competitive destination of the future. *Tourism Management*, vol. 21(1), pp. 97-116. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(99\)00095-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(99)00095-3)

6. Ambrose I. (2012). European policies for accessible tourism. In Dimitrios Buhalis, Simon Darcy *Best Practice in Accessible Tourism: Inclusion, Disability, Ageing Population and Tourism*, 2012, pp. 19-35. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781845412548-006>

7. Kastenholz E., Eusébio C., Figueiredo E. (2015). Contributions of tourism to social inclusion of persons with disability. *Disability & Society*, vol. 30(8), pp. 1259-1281. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2015.1075868>
8. Rozporiadzhennia Kabinetu Ministriv Ukrainy «Pro skhvalennia Natsionalnoi stratehii formuvannia bezbariernoho prostoru v Ukraini na period do 2030 roku» [Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine «On Approval of the National Strategy for Creating Barrier-Free Space in Ukraine for the Period up to 2030»]. Available at: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/366-2021-%D1%80#Text>
9. Quality Programme «World Tourism for All» (2018) European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT). Available at: <https://www.accessibletourism.org/?i=enat.en.world-quality-programme>
10. *State Agency for Tourism Development of Ukraine*. Available at: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sGn4DpjrSjohyq1n8v_AyxSQdlCtzm7k/view