CURRENT STATE AND PROBLEMS OF FORMING AN ACCESSIBLE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROMISING DIRECTIONS OF INCLUSIVE TOURISM IN UKRAINE

Sergiy Tsviliy[1]
Pavlo Bobrykin[2]

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Abstract. The modern development of the global and Ukrainian tourism and hospitality industry is taking place amidst significantly heightened demands for inclusivity, social responsibility, and equal access to services for all consumer groups. Creating a barrier-free and universal environment is a key prerequisite for ensuring equal opportunities for all types of tourists, making a systematic study of barrier-free accessibility in the hospitality sector highly relevant. *The purpose* of the article is to substantiate the theoretical and applied principles for creating an accessible environment and to identify the challenges and future directions for the development of inclusive tourism in Ukraine. Achieving this goal involves systematizing theoretical approaches to developing a barrier-free environment within the tourism industry specifically regarding inclusive tourism in Ukraine during and after the war while drawing on international experience, classifying inclusive tours, and leveraging the potential of various types of inclusive tourism. Addressing these research objectives shapes the article's structure: systematizing theoretical approaches to the concept of an "accessible environment" as the foundation of inclusive tourism; summarizing best international practices for creating barrier-free spaces for persons with disabilities and other groups with limited mobility; critically analyzing the current state and accessibility challenges of domestic accommodation infrastructure; and identifying promising forms of inclusive tourism in

[1] Candidate of Economic Sciences, Associate Professor,
Associate Professor of the Department of Tourism, Hotel and Restaurant Business,
National University Zaporizhzhia Polytechnic, Ukraine
[2] Postgraduate,
Senior Lecturer of Department of Entrepreneurship, Management and Tourism,
Zaporizhzhia Institute of Economics and Information Technologies, Ukraine

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Ukraine alongside mechanisms for their implementation through the development of an accessible environment. *Methodology* of the study is based is based on a comprehensive system of general scientific and specialized methods, including: comparative analysis and synthesis (when examining theoretical foundations and international experience), statistical and analytical review (to assess the state of accommodation infrastructure in Ukraine), as well as methods of generalization and strategic planning (when substantiating promising directions for development). *The results* of this study demonstrate that international practice emphasizes the application of universal design principles and the implementation of reasonable infrastructure adjustments. An analysis of the domestic market reveals significant institutional, financial, and architectural barriers that hinder the accessibility of most tourist accommodation facilities in Ukraine. The study establishes that overcoming these obstacles is a fundamental prerequisite for boosting promising forms of tourism, such as rehabilitation and wellness, cultural and educational, eco-tourism, and adaptive sports tourism. *Practical implications.* The practical significance of the obtained results lies in the potential for state authorities, local self-government bodies, and tourism businesses to utilize the formulated conclusions and recommendations to develop barrier-free strategies, roadmaps for the development of inclusive tourism destinations, and plans for modernizing tourism infrastructure facilities in Ukraine. *Value/originality.* This study integrates an analysis of the theoretical foundations and practical challenges regarding accommodation infrastructure with the development of strategies to implement promising forms of inclusive tourism. This approach emphasizes the systematic integration of accessibility standards aligned with European requirements within the context of post-war recovery. The study substantiates the hypothesis that creating a barrier-free environment for tourists with disabilities, alongside the development of various forms of inclusive tourism in Ukraine and its regions during and after the war, can drive regional economic recovery, generate new jobs, and provide a source of income for local residents.

INTRODUCTION

Today, the priority tasks of Ukraine's state tourism policy must include market analysis and the identification of the most valuable and in-demand

tourism products. Attention should also be focused on developing a competitive tourism sector capable of meeting the service needs of both domestic and international tourists [44; 45; 57].

It is also necessary to address mechanisms for promoting new products in domestic and international markets through the production of promotional and informational materials such as brochures, cards, and guidebooks and by organizing international-level trade shows, familiarization trips for foreign journalists to showcase the country's regions, and screenings of films and presentations highlighting the most attractive features of tourism destinations (based on pre-war conditions) [41; 42; 47].

Despite the challenging wartime conditions facing Ukraine's tourism economy, special attention must currently be paid to developing new forms of tourism that have recently gained global popularity. Such avenues could help increase tourist flows to regional tourism hubs and provide fresh momentum for the development of the tourism industry and related sectors [23; 37]. Developing domestic and inbound tourism today offers not only an opportunity to fully unlock the country's territorial potential but also a way to cope with the pressures of the crisis [16]. Recent years have posed a significant challenge to the country's tourism economy: the coronavirus pandemic (2020–2022) and the war (2022–2026) have affected virtually every aspect of the sector. Closed airspace has limited travel options to other countries. Furthermore, the weakening of the national currency has had a substantial impact, driving up the cost of foreign tours and making them less affordable for the general public [28]. Nevertheless, tours within Ukraine are becoming increasingly popular. Interest in domestic tourism should be sustained and fostered through the development of tourism infrastructure, the creation of new routes, and the expansion of service offerings and target customer segments.

Inclusive tourism should become a key direction for post-war development. Recently, barrier-free tourism or tourism for people with disabilities – has gained increasing societal importance. While the majority of these individuals wish to travel and are capable of doing so, not all countries and cities offer environments sufficiently adapted to ensure a comfortable stay [26]. This is particularly true regarding accommodation facilities [8; 25]. The level of accessibility for people with physical disabilities varies depending on a country and its level of socio-economic development [50].

This consumer segment within the tourism and hospitality industry should be viewed as a significant target audience; they should be considered not merely through the lens of charity or humanitarianism, but primarily as a matter of responsible business practice.

1. Theoretical Foundations of Creating an Accessible Environment as the Basis for the Development of Inclusive Tourism

The contributions of scholars to addressing the challenges and development prospects of inclusive tourism are reflected in numerous works by both domestic and international researchers. In recent years, Ukrainian scholars have made significant contributions to the study of various aspects of inclusive tourism, drawing upon contemporary global and European experience. For instance, the rehabilitative component of this type of tourism has been examined in the works of N. Barna and A. Korotieieva [2]; L. Bezuhla, M. Bieloborodova, and T. Herasymenko [4]; O. Rohovska and A. Tsariok [32]; and A. Skrypnyk and H. Kucherov [36]. The potential for implementing global and European inclusive tourism practices is highlighted in the works of L. Bezuhla, T. Kuvaieva, and T. Herasymenko [7]; I. Danchevska and T. Kalaitan [12]; O. Kravchenko and A. Voitovska [22]; S. Chaika [11]; and I. Trunina and Yu. Sosnovska [40]. Research regarding the creation of an inclusive tourism environment in Ukraine and its support during and after the war has been conducted by Ya. Didukh [16]; M. Zhurylo, S. Antonov, and V. Tkachek [57]; V. Kostynets [21]; A. Motsa, R. Korinets, and K. Horiunova [27]; and L. Slatvinska [37]. Recommendations for ensuring the accessibility of tourism services for various consumer categories taking into account their specific needs and the types of services involved have been developed in the works of researchers such as D. Zakharov and T. Kupach [56], D. Petrunchak, I. Baniieva, and S. Matviienko [30], and U. Tkach and V. Danylenko-Kulchytska [38]. However, despite the abundance of scholarly ideas, there is a practical lack of research into the regional disparities in inclusive tourism development during the war and the factors hindering its growth factors that must be addressed if inclusive tourism is to become a competitive sector in the post-war period. Furthermore, there is a need to devise approaches for identifying current problems that prevent the full realization of inclusive tourism's potential, as well as a need to classify promising forms of inclusive tourism.

Recent research into the challenges of creating barrier-free environments and the application of inclusive approaches in the tourism and hospitality sector specifically within hotel enterprises has been conducted by domestic authors such as O. Motsa, R. Korinets, and K. Horiunova [27]. S. Tyshchenko, T. Chernyshova, and O. Osipchuk [52] examined the essence and purpose of tourism as a means of providing socio-psychological support to people with special needs and developed a typology of adapted tours for this category of tourists. O. Sazonets, O. Hessen, and O. Khanina [34] investigated barrier-free design as an element of an ecological approach to shaping the architectural environment. N. Vlashchenko [54] analyzed the specifics of infrastructure development for inclusive tourism and formulated recommendations for boosting its growth.

The concept of an "accessible environment" is viewed as a social phenomenon that entails creating safe and convenient conditions for persons with disabilities and other groups with limited mobility. Initiatives to implement accessibility principles may be spearheaded by government authorities, civic organizations, or individual active citizens committed to creating inclusive spaces.

At the same time, an accessible environment is designed not only for people with disabilities as is often assumed but also for a broader range of individuals with temporarily or permanently limited mobility. This group includes pregnant women, parents with strollers, the elderly, people with temporary injuries, and cyclists. In fact, most people will experience situations involving reduced mobility at some point in their lives. Therefore, ensuring accessibility is a societal need that concerns everyone [1].

Academic debates regarding the definition of "tourism for people with disabilities" have been ongoing for over two decades; however, a universal and established interpretation has yet to be formulated (Table 1).

In international practice, this field is referred to by various terms: "Accessible Tourism", "Tourism for All", "Universal Tourism" and "Barrier-free Tourism." There is also no unified terminology within the Ukrainian academic and professional communities; alongside the concept of "barrier-free tourism," terms such as "accessible," "inclusive," "adaptive," and "rehabilitative tourism," as well as "paratourism" and "remedial-educational tourism," are used, alongside specialized niches specifically tourism for individuals with hearing or visual impairments [18].

Table 1

Definitions of the concept of "barrier-free tourism"

Author/Source	Content of the definition
Marusei T. [26]	"Barrier-free tourism" is an approach to organizing travel and tourism services that takes into account the needs of all people, regardless of their physical or mental abilities.
Scott R. [1]	"Barrier-free tourism" is, first and foremost, the social integration of people with disabilities into modern society.
Darcy S. [13]	"Accessible tourism" is the process of enabling people with disabilities and the elderly to function independently, equitably, and with dignity through the provision of universal tourism products, services, and environments.
Barskyi Yu. [4]	Inclusive tourism (from the French "inclusif" – meaning "including" and the Latin "includere" – meaning "to enclose" or "to include") is a form of tourism development aimed at ensuring accessibility for all segments of the population. It involves adapting tourism infrastructure and facilities to meet the needs of all people, including individuals with disabilities, the elderly, their caregivers and relatives, people with temporary limitations, and families with young children.
Topalova O. [39]	"Adaptive tourism" is a relatively new form of tourism activity designed for people with physical disabilities; it is a type of adaptive physical recreation that fosters physical rehabilitation, health improvement, and social integration for this specific social group.

Source: compiled based on [1; 3; 4; 13; 39]

Accessible tourism for people with health limitations should be viewed not merely as a form of leisure or a means of improving health, but as a vital tool for rehabilitation and social integration. Researchers emphasize that, firstly, travel stimulates physical activity and helps maintain physical fitness and overall health. Secondly, tourism activities create opportunities for meaningful communication, reduce feelings of isolation and social inadequacy, and facilitate the inclusion of the elderly and people with disabilities in active social life. Thirdly, spending time in favorable climatic conditions and natural environments has a positive impact on one's psycho-emotional state, helping to restore inner resources and psychological balance.

Given the nuances of their definitions, these terms carry different meanings and cannot always be considered synonymous [20].

When addressing the issue of environmental accessibility, it is essential to consider not only physical mobility barriers but also limitations regarding access to medical services, vocational education, cultural life, social protection, employment, sports and physical activity, information, and communication tools. Another crucial aspect is overcoming socio-psychological barriers stemming from stereotypical attitudes toward people with disabilities ranging from excessive pity to disdain or prejudice. The effective social integration of individuals with health-related limitations helps dismantle such stereotypes and fosters an appropriate, tolerant societal perception, which is of fundamental importance above all to the individuals themselves.

Accessible tourism is a relatively new area of development within the modern tourism industry. Despite its relevance, it remains under-researched in the academic community, with the systematic study of its theoretical and practical aspects having gained momentum only in recent years [18].

A comprehensive approach to inclusive tourism integrating technical, service-related, social, and economic aspects has emerged within the global scientific community. In Ukraine, this issue is also gradually attracting academic attention but requires further systematic study that takes into account both global practices and national specificities.

Inclusion is a crucial aspect of modern societal development, reflecting a society's humanity and maturity [52]. Scholarly literature offers numerous interpretations of this concept, linking it to various processes such as education or socialization. The authors consider it appropriate to examine inclusion from the perspective of tourism and propose their own definition: inclusive tourism is a form of tourism activity aimed primarily at creating products and services accessible to people with special needs ensuring their freedom of movement and unrestricted access to tourism resources, while enabling them to feel like full-fledged members of society. Consequently, it is essential to create specific conditions that facilitate the participation of individuals with health-related limitations in travel. In turn, inclusivity in tourism offers opportunities to discover new regions and destinations, explore the country’s culture and way of life, and expand social connections. Furthermore, it provides people with special needs a chance for professional fulfillment and the acquisition of new knowledge and competencies, as the industry requires guides and tour leaders who are

proficient in sign language or possess personal experience in overcoming mental health challenges. Orienting Ukraine's tourism industry toward this demographic opens new avenues for established tourism clusters, attracts investment through participation in socially significant projects, expands the range of services, and drives growth in tourist traffic.

2. International Experience in Creating an Accessible Environment for Persons with Disabilities and other Groups with Limited Mobility

In various regions and countries such as Europe, Israel, the USA, New Zealand, Argentina, and Brazil specialized portals have been established for people with disabilities to facilitate their travel and enable them to plan their own trips independently. Alongside the pan-European accessible tourism portal (https://accessibleurope.com/), many countries have launched their own websites detailing the accessibility of local tourist sites: the UK (disabledgo.com and accessibleplaces.co.uk), Italy (accessibleitaly.com), France (accessiblefrance.com and accessibleparis.org), Israel (israel4all.com), and others. The UK has achieved the greatest success in developing accessible environments and promoting barrier-free tourism among its citizens. National accessibility standards for the tourism industry, developed by British experts, are considered among the best in the world. As a result of implementing these standards, over 2.5 million citizens with disabilities now travel across the United Kingdom annually. International practice in accessible tourism employs several models for developing and structuring tourism products:

– independent travel by individuals with disabilities;

– travel involving companions such as family members, caregivers, friends, etc.;

– accompaniment by volunteers or paid companions sponsored by charitable organizations;

– travel with individuals who accompany a tourist with a disability in exchange for significantly lower costs. Analysis of practical experience indicates that these companions are predominantly students or young people aged 19–24 with limited financial means [3; 9; 55].

Globally, the most common practice involves travel accompanied by family members. However, group travel arrangements organized in pairs where one tourist accompanies another with a disability are becoming

increasingly common; in this model, the companion purchases the trip at a significantly reduced price. A prime example is the British tour operator Traveleyes, which specializes in vacations for the visually impaired, attracting both visually impaired travelers and those who serve as their companions.

For instance, a six-day trip to Rome costs £899 for a person with a disability, while the companion pays £499 meaning the cost for the second traveler is nearly half that of the standard rate [14]. This approach allows families that include individuals with disabilities to significantly reduce travel expenses, as paying for the tour under this special scheme is far more cost-effective than purchasing two full-price packages. Furthermore, this format appeals to university students, who typically seek more budget-friendly vacation options [10; 13; 17].

At the same time, implementing such a model presents certain challenges. First and foremost, it requires the participation of two individuals. The first is the accompanying person, who assumes responsibility for the safety and support of the person with a disability during the trip. The second is the person being accompanied, who covers their own expenses as well as the cost difference or the portion of the fare associated with the discount granted to the accompanying person. Nevertheless, with proper organization, this arrangement opens up extensive travel opportunities, including active and even extreme forms of tourism.

According to an analytical study by D. Buhalis, people with health-related limitations account for more than 7% of global tourism traffic; consequently, accessible tourism is highly developed in Western countries. In Europe, approximately 11% of all tourists about 50 million people have health impairments; in the UK, this figure reaches 37%, and in Germany, 53% this despite the fact that people with physical disabilities generally lead less active lifestyles than the average citizen [18].

According to statistical data, travelers in this segment generally prefer to travel accompanied by friends or family members. In Western European countries, developing itineraries that cater to the needs of people with disabilities as well as designing universally accessible buildings and spaces has already become established practice. Many European nations are implementing specialized programs for people with physical disabilities and adapting the infrastructure of resorts and tourist destinations, while travel

companies are actively expanding their range of services. In particular, they offer specially designed tours tailored to the needs of this category of travelers. Experts note that the United Kingdom stands out among European countries, demonstrating a high level of development in inclusive tourism.

In countries with well-developed tourism industries, the concept of family leisure has become widespread, particularly regarding activities for people with disabilities, low-income populations, at-risk groups, and children. Cultural institutions – such as museums, theaters, and libraries – play a significant role in organizing meaningful leisure activities. Specialized services are being implemented for individuals with visual or hearing impairments; these include sign language tours, audio guides and recorded tour materials, visual signaling systems, and policies allowing guide dogs into museums and other cultural venues, as well as the organization of thematic events and social gatherings (such as holiday celebrations, children's programs, and social evenings).

A number of countries regularly host events and initiatives aimed at supporting people with disabilities. Nations such as Germany, France, Finland, and the USA, among others, are making significant efforts to support the daily lives of people with disabilities and to foster social tourism for this demographic.

Observations regarding social welfare for people with disabilities in the UK reveal the following: to ensure equal rights and opportunities, specially designed infrastructure is developed, and state funds are allocated not only to promote tourism for people with disabilities but also to create comfortable living conditions for them. The author also notes that annual disability benefit payments total approximately £19 billion equivalent to about UAH 1.11 trillion [39]. In the UK, people with physical disabilities receive discounts on medications, dental care, wheelchairs, and hearing aids, and in certain cases, they are provided with completely free care. Urban parking is also provided free of charge to citizens with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities pay for their housing using their pension which is applied toward their upkeep while the local municipality covers the remaining cost. Legislation concerning people with disabilities is so well-developed that approximately 19% of all employed Britons have a disability.

The level of accessibility for people with physical disabilities varies depending on the country and its level of socio-economic development.

An analysis of international experience allows us to identify the countries most advanced in terms of tourism accessibility. The Czech Republic, Germany, and Spain hold leading positions, with nearly 95% of their tourism infrastructure adapted for accessibility. These countries offer cultural and educational tourism, health and wellness tourism, skiing, scooter tourism, and intellectual tourism, as well as accessible trails and international festivals for people with disabilities. Next come Israel (85%), France (85%), the United Kingdom (85%), and the USA (80%), which also offer cultural and educational, beach, religious, health and wellness, skiing, scooter, and intellectual tourism. Australia (75%) and Finland (70%) rank third; the types of tourism available there include cultural and educational, eco-tourism, beach tourism, sailing, and diving. Hungary and Greece have an accessibility adaptation rate of nearly 65%, with a predominance of cultural and educational tourism (including for the visually impaired), beach tourism, and health and wellness tourism [3].

Inclusive social-rehabilitation tourism is emerging and actively developing in Ukraine; it entails a comprehensive set of measures aimed at creating conditions for the recovery and harmonious development of persons with disabilities. Its goal is to support physical well-being, spiritual growth, social integration, and intellectual development, as well as the realization of an individual's creative potential.

In terms of structure, this field encompasses various types of rehabilitation and social services – including medical, psychological, psycho-pedagogical, vocational, sports and fitness, physical, social, and daily living support measures – thereby ensuring a comprehensive approach to recovery and socialization [27].

3. Analysis of the Current State and Accessibility Issues Regarding Tourist Accommodation Infrastructure in Ukraine

One of the pressing issues in the operation of accommodation facilities is the provision of high-quality, safe, and comfortable service for guests with disabilities. The growing number of war veterans, persons with disabilities, and the elderly, combined with rising human rights standards, highlights the need to adapt hotel infrastructure and service processes in line with the principles of universal design and barrier-free accessibility.

It is worth noting that domestic hotel and restaurant businesses are increasingly creating accessible infrastructure that addresses the inclusive needs of various guest categories. Many Ukrainian cities are implementing barrier-free features: installing ramps and lifts, lowering curbs, laying tactile paving for the visually impaired, and setting up traffic lights with audio signals. Such changes help improve the accessibility of urban spaces and foster a positive image of Ukraine as a socially responsible tourism destination committed to the principles of inclusion.

Significant attention is also paid to improving information accessibility. In particular, specialized interactive resources – such as accessibility maps – are in operation, enabling persons with disabilities to quickly locate barrier-free facilities. These platforms display establishments and infrastructure across cities and regions, indicating their accessibility levels, which facilitates travel planning and the use of tourism services [27].

The State Agency for Tourism Development, in cooperation with regional civil-military administrations, conducted a survey on the physical accessibility of accommodation facilities across Ukraine's regions. The survey results are presented in Tables 2 and 3. A total of 6,394 tourism entities participated in the survey, comprising 3,537 hotels, 2,116 recreation centers, 261 health resort facilities, and 445 motels and campsites [15]. The level of inclusivity of the accommodation facilities was assessed using a checklist covering 17 accessibility criteria outlined in the "Methodological Recommendations on Establishing Barrier-Free Environments in Tourism." These recommendations were approved by the Ministry for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development of Ukraine and published on the State Agency for Tourism Development's website [29].

Table 2

Results of the survey on the physical accessibility of accommodation facilities

Questions and Answers	Yes	Part	No
Accessible universal toilet cabin	22,55%	22,53%	51,92%
Fully equipped room	22,98%	32,40%	44,62%

Source: compiled based on [27; 29; 48]

The issue with accommodation facilities is that over 50% lack a universal restroom. Survey results indicate that only 19% of accommodation establishments in Ukraine have ramps installed at their entrances. While 28% are equipped with elevators, only 2% of these feature audible signals and Braille floor indicators.

Table 3

Accessibility indicators for the site, building, and additional inclusive elements

Group of indicators	Indicator	Yes, %	Part, %	No, %
Access to the site and building	Barrier-free entrance	42,83	29,39	27,78
	Entrance ramp	18,73	21,20	60,07
	High-contrast markings	23,50	15,08	60,92
	Safe stairs	29,55	31,44	39,01
	Lifting mechanisms	3,91	4,85	91,24
Elevators	Elevator with Braille markings	1,90	3,86	94,25
	Elevator is operational	27,66	1,60	70,74
Additional accessibility elements	Parking spaces for people with disabilities	55,59	12,40	32,01
	International accessibility symbols	23,99	37,36	38,66
	Braille signage	21,25	29,88	48,87
	Accessible evacuation routes	16,34	28,25	55,41
	Accessible security system	21,80	21,07	57,13
	Accessible website	23,84	23,74	52,43
	Knowledgeable staff	66,44	8,98	24,57

Source: compiled based on [27; 29; 53]

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Only 23% of the surveyed establishments offer rooms adapted for people with disabilities, and 26% have universal restrooms. 16% of the facilities reported having accessible evacuation routes for people with disabilities, while 24% indicated the use of international accessibility symbols. The

highest accessibility ratings were recorded in just three areas: barrier-free site access (43%), dedicated parking spaces for people with disabilities (nearly 56%), and staff awareness regarding the rules and etiquette for accommodating people with limited mobility (66%).

The results indicate that the level of accessibility in Ukrainian accommodation facilities is fragmented and unsystematic. While isolated elements of inclusivity are often present, a comprehensive approach to creating a fully barrier-free environment is lacking.

The primary issues include:

– non-compliance with regulatory requirements;

– inadequate technical equipment;

– a lack of comprehensive building modernization;

– weak oversight regarding the implementation of accessibility standards.

Future prospects for developing inclusive services in Ukrainian accommodation facilities depend on strengthening state policies on barrier-free access, implementing European accessibility standards, and increasing corporate social responsibility. Given current circumstances – specifically the challenges posed by the war and the rising number of individuals with temporary or permanent health impairments – creating a universally accessible environment has become a matter of strategic importance [3].

Key prospects include:

– improving the regulatory framework and strengthening oversight regarding compliance with state building codes for barrier-free access;

– modernizing hotel facilities and infrastructure, and implementing universal design principles during renovation and new construction;

– enhancing digital accessibility, specifically by adapting hotel websites, online booking systems, and information resources;

– training staff to assist guests with various types of disabilities;

– leveraging international experience and investment, and participating in grant programs for the development of inclusive infrastructure.

In the long term, the development of inclusive accommodation facilities will not only boost the competitiveness of Ukraine's tourism industry but also integrate principles of social equality into business operations. This will expand the target audience for tourism services, improve service quality, and ensure the realization of the right to accessible leisure and travel.

4. Promising Directions for the Development of Inclusive Tourism in Ukraine and Ways to Implement them Through the Creation of an Accessible Environment

Currently, approximately 15% of the global population lives with health-related limitations [30; 46]. The number of such individuals is rising annually, driven by population aging and the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases. In Ukraine, the war is undoubtedly a critical factor contributing to the growth of this demographic. It is necessary to develop new tours or adapt existing ones to meet the needs of people with disabilities [24; 51]. To this end, the authors propose classifying inclusive tours based on the most viable travel options.

In terms of duration, the most suitable options are: 1) one-day sightseeing tours (allowing travelers to explore their local area or visit a neighboring region of Ukraine); 2) weekend tours (enabling quick trips to adjacent or nearby regions of Ukraine); and 3) tours or travel programs lasting up to two weeks (allowing for travel to any region of the country or abroad).

This classification presents tours best suited for people with special needs. Extending the duration may lead to increased fatigue and diminish the overall impression of the trip.

Among the various types of tourism, cultural-educational, recreational-wellness, gastronomic, event-based, and museum-focused tours are likely to be in highest demand among travelers with special needs. Niche forms of tourism – such as caving, urban exploration ("stalking"), and animal-assisted travel – can also meet their requirements. In terms of organization within Ukraine, inclusive tours can be categorized as either organized or independent, as well as individual or group-based.

Attention should be paid to the specific tour program and its nature. Experience shows [11; 12; 56] that not all routes can be adapted to the needs of people with disabilities. Therefore, these tours should be classified as follows: 1) universal (suitable for all traveler groups, with no significant limitations); 2) conditionally universal (suitable for general travelers and the majority of tourists with special needs); and 3) specialized (designed for a specific subset of tourists with special needs).

"Universal" tours are defined as those that include visits to city museums, theaters, galleries, religious sites, and exhibition complexes. This category also encompasses trips to health and wellness facilities, visits to parks and

gardens, culinary tours, and the like. "Conditionally universal" inclusive tours involve certain limitations and are not suitable for all tourists with special needs; for instance, some routes in national parks may be inaccessible to wheelchair users, and they might not be able to fully view the exhibits in certain large museums. "Specialized" inclusive tours involve designing an itinerary tailored to a specific group of tourists with special needs. Organizing such tours entails additional costs. For example, appropriate supplementary materials must be prepared for visually impaired tourists; these might include scale models of buildings described during the tour, tactile replicas of objects, or relief images that mirror the originals. It is important to engage other senses – such as allowing tourists to smell fabrics, paints, or wood. Culinary tours are highly sought after by this group, as they offer the chance to taste national dishes and participate in their preparation. Workshops on crafting souvenirs from clay, fabric, or other materials enable visually impaired tourists to gain new experiences and impressions (sensory tourism). Careful attention should also be paid to route planning, selecting sites equipped with special features such as tactile paving, Braille signage, and other accessibility aids.

The use of interactive technologies is set to become a key driver for the development of inclusive tourism, both during the war and in the post-war period. For instance, the authors propose supplementing physical travel with virtual experiences for tourist groups with limited mobility. Attractions that are not physically accessible can be made available through VR technology, allowing visitors to gain a comprehensive understanding of the location. Virtual tours can be accessed on-site or via a dedicated app, enabling tourists with special needs to explore accessible walking routes, understand the local accessibility infrastructure, learn about tours and events, and read reviews. It is also important to equip tourist information centers with interactive kiosks that provide comprehensive regional information – such as natural features, landmarks, transport routes, and potential hazards. These technologies will be particularly beneficial for individuals with visual or hearing impairments.

It is also worth focusing on gamified elements in tourism, as they have recently gained significant popularity. An analysis has identified the interactive tour formats best suited for inclusive tourism [7; 38; 40]. Tourists with special needs can participate in costumed tours, theatrical

experiences, game-based excursions, and workshops. To immerse oneself in a historical atmosphere, full period costumes are not required; simply using a single accessory – such as a fan, a hat, or a saber – suffices. This approach is easily accessible to all tourists, regardless of the nature or severity of their health limitations [2; 19]. Theatrical tours are accessible to a wide range of tourists. The format varies: the entire group, a portion of it, or solely the tour guide may be involved in the theatrical performance. Interactive, game-based tours are also engaging and educational; notable examples include searching for ancient relics, collecting code words and numbers, and solving rebuses, puzzles, and crosswords. All these formats play a significant role in fostering social interaction by facilitating informal communication and the exchange of ideas; they are suitable for all age groups, allow for a detailed study of the tour sites, and can be organized either indoors or outdoors.

Geocaching is one of the most popular types of tourism-based games that can boost interest in a destination (and it is accessible to tourists with health limitations). For instance, after collecting artifacts related to a specific site, tour participants place them in a cache box along with a task for the next game; they then hide the box in a secluded spot and mark its coordinates on an interactive map. The following group locates the treasure and begins the game. This activity has existed globally for over two decades yet remains highly relevant [22]. Participants can include tour groups, solo travelers, and families with children; the game can also be incorporated into corporate events. Caches can be set up in open areas or within museums, fortresses, or other tourist attractions.

In general, many tours either lack interactive elements or limit them to workshops, which is insufficient for organizing inclusive tours [32]. Tourists quickly lose interest when relegated to the role of passive listeners – negatively affecting their overall impression of the tour – so it is crucial to encourage active participation, allow them to discover answers for themselves, and create opportunities for them to unleash their creative potential.

Quest tourism represents a promising avenue for inclusive tourism, though its development across Ukraine's regions requires addressing a wide range of challenges. The country boasts numerous venues offering gaming entertainment and quests; notably, the quest market in major cities grew by

20–30% in 2025, with demand rising by 30%. Kyiv and Lviv lead in the number of quest rooms [5; 43]. These cities offer diverse quest formats, including immersive performance-based quests and virtual reality (VR) experiences. However, due to the ongoing war, not all Ukrainian regions can currently demonstrate such impressive results. Overall, there is a need to expand the network of quest rooms and create safe gaming spaces accessible to tourists with special needs. It is crucial to ensure barrier-free access to quest rooms for this group, create comfortable environments, and implement adaptations such as accessible restrooms, widened doorways, and special handrails [36]. Implementing these measures is difficult during wartime, as many quest rooms are located in basements or buildings lacking elevators. Opening new venues or retrofitting existing ones entails significant financial costs, and achieving a return on investment is a lengthy process. Market research has also identified a shortage of qualified personnel [21]. Quest tourism offers travelers a vast array of scenarios and themes, as well as a wide variety of implementation formats. Yes, tourists with disabilities can be offered the opportunity to visit escape rooms or go on a quest-style tour.

The authors believe that event tourism could become a promising avenue for the development of inclusive tourism. Designing such tours requires a specialized approach and additional expenditure from organizers. To date, modern academic literature lacks a clear definition that fully captures the specific nature of these tours; therefore, we propose the following interpretation: an inclusive event tour is defined as a trip undertaken by a tourist or a group of tourists with disabilities to a specific locality or destination for the purpose of attending a particular event. Inclusive event tours can be categorized by scale into: international (events of global renown, such as the Olympic Games, the Brazilian Carnival, or the Cannes Film Festival); national (events of state significance, such as ethno-festivals, culinary celebrations, arts events, and concerts); and regional (events significant to a specific locality, such as Transcarpathian wine tours, Lviv jazz festivals, Hutsul ethnic events, or sporting events in Dnipro).

Inclusive tours can also be classified according to the following spheres: 1) the business sphere (congress tourism, international trade fairs and exhibitions); 2) the cultural sphere (festivals, tours involving visits to exhibitions, fashion shows, auctions, theatrical productions, musical

performances, educational tours, etc.); 3) the sports sphere (tours involving attendance at international sports competitions, tournaments, regattas, and races of various levels); and 4) the spiritual sphere (tours timed to coincide with specific religious holidays).

Overall, both during and after the war, the development of inclusive event tourism will help stabilize the revenue of tourism organizations, as this sector addresses the issue of seasonal fluctuations in leisure travel. The number of engaging events in our country is growing year by year [27; 49] – with new festivals and productions emerging and new performing artists rising to fame – making the potential of this type of tourism virtually limitless. It is worth noting that many concert, sports, and arts venues are prepared to accommodate tourists with special needs (this applies primarily to the country's major cities, which saw high tourist traffic in the pre-war years).

Inclusive event tourism will have a significant impact on the economy of a given region by stimulating activity within the tourism industry and fostering the development of related sectors. The growth of inclusive event tourism will enable many travelers to attend their favorite events after the war and connect with like-minded people.

Organizing inclusive event tours requires meeting several conditions, such as: 1) the existence of an accessible environment; 2) heightened safety standards for tourists with special needs; 3) the proximity of accommodation and dining facilities to event venues; 4) the availability of specially adapted transport; 5) the presence of accompanying persons; 6) the availability of specially trained staff capable of meeting tourists' needs (including sign language proficiency); and 7) the capacity to provide additional services.

It should also be noted that the intensity of inclusive event tourism is influenced by the schedule of mass events in the region. An event calendar can greatly simplify the process of finding a specific event and determining when it takes place. Based on this information, one can book transport tickets and accommodation in advance. Hotels, hostels, and apartments must be prepared to accommodate guests with special needs.

CONCLUSIONS

Today, the absence of barriers in the tourism and hospitality sectors is a crucial condition for ensuring accessible and comfortable travel for

all segments of the population. Even amidst a protracted war, there is a growing public understanding of the need to guarantee equal rights and create non-discriminatory living conditions for persons with disabilities. This category encompasses individuals with physical impairments – such as those affecting the musculoskeletal system, hearing, or vision – as well as those with mental disorders resulting from either congenital conditions or the aftermath of traumatic events.

Every nation implements socio-economic policies to support persons with disabilities, tailored to its own level of development, available resources, and strategic priorities. At the same time, the principles of inclusion and the creation of a barrier-free environment require a unified and regulated approach. In Ukraine, this trend is reflected in the implementation of state building codes and standards that mandate the incorporation of inclusive requirements during the design and development of tourism infrastructure.

In the post-war period, when planning tourism routes, priority should be given to regions with favorable climatic conditions; furthermore, the development of specialized cultural and leisure programs must take into account the specific needs of tourists with visual and hearing impairments. Addressing the challenges of developing inclusive event tourism requires securing funding for infrastructure projects, supporting volunteer organizations and specialized services, providing staff training, and integrating these initiatives into regional development strategies (including for the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine). Overall, the development of inclusive tourism in our country is in its early stages. Much remains to be done to ensure that every region is prepared to welcome tourists with special needs. This sector has the potential to create new jobs and serve as a source of post-war income for local residents. It is crucial to develop the necessary documentation – including programs, regulations, and projects – aimed at creating a barrier-free environment. Addressing this challenge requires the involvement of both the business community and local authorities. Further research into this partnership is essential for the sustainable development of tourism.

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