
Social Barriers in the Area of Tourism

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Abstract:

Purpose: Tourism is the act and process of spending time away from home in search of recreation, relaxation and pleasure, while enjoying the commercial provision of services. This text pays special attention to social barriers having spatial expression, although the spatial expression of a social barrier is not always physical.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The article, is an excerpt from a broader study under the banner of universal design (Design for All), initiated by participation in a university project (Accessibility zone POWR.03.04.00-00-KP04/21-00). Closer to the final section there is an attempt to portray the tourist and there is an emphasis on the need to level and remove social barriers evident in the relationship between parties with conflicting interests, between the seller and the buyer. Various methods were used to write the text, among which the most important are heuristic methods and techniques, desk research and questionnaire research.

Findings: The text shows tourists not only as a source of financial streams, but also as an active partners (customers) of purchase-sale transactions, who in case of dissatisfaction assert their rights. On the example of the content of the statements of tourists on vacations.pl and the UOKiK (Office of Competition and Consumer Protection), the importance of (especially) social barriers in the degree of buyer satisfaction is shown and emphasized.

Practical implication: The results obtained should contribute to a better understanding of the intricacies of personalized, real causes of tourist demand and satisfaction, taking into account the role of the conscious tourist in market transactions, and to an appreciation of the research workshop of socio-economic geography as a science predisposed to speak more decisively on issues of shaping open, tourist-friendly tourist space.

Originality/Value: In order to develop tourist-friendly spaces, it is important to focus on social barriers first; as they are the starting point for both achieving better market performance and reducing the negative impact of existing architectural and digital barriers on tourist satisfaction.

Keywords: Financial stream, accessibility, otherness, design for all.

JEL Codes: Z32, Z13, A13.

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1. Introduction

Tourism is the act and process of spending time away from home in search of recreation, relaxation and pleasure, while enjoying the commercial provision of services (Picard and Di Giovine, 2014). As such, tourism is a product of social arrangements and cooperation between entities (public, private and social sectors) and individuals (including residents of the visited destination) providing services to tourists with different travel experiences and strategies in giving the tourist experience an authentic dimension.

The search for authenticity is becoming a vital cultural motif and tourism is proving to be one of those areas where it is nurtured with particular care (Wieczorkiewicz, 2008). Tourists follow the beaten path, use established supply systems and, as befits pleasure seekers, are (should be) generally isolated from difficulty, danger and embarrassment. The most tourist-oriented spaces can be metaphorically described as places where the world has been temporarily turned upside down. At the same time, the history of the development of tourism proves that it uncovers many general points about tradition, diffusion, mutation and conflict (Blane and Bachelor, 2022).

But also the residents of tourist destinations profit from the marketability of their customs, and sometimes even become actors themselves in a highly competitive tourist market with small business, with historically significant customs and dress popularizing their own locality as a destination, providing visitors with a (difficult to overestimate) tourist visual experience (the Open Air Museum of Slavic and Viking People in Wolin, Poland).

Bringing out customs, heritage and authenticity are among the many difficult and endangered attributes that tourism uses to sell intangible assets (such as the fishing village that has been planned for years, or the reconstruction of the narrow-gauge railroad station and the restoration of the historic steam locomotive in Niechorze, Poland). The global footprint of tourism - its economic, environmental, demographic and cultural importance (Borek *et al.*, 2022; Prokopowicz, 2023; Seweryn *et al.*, 2017; Seweryn 2017; Derek *et al.*, 2005; Majewska, 2019; Abram, 2004) – has been and continues to be enormous and grow exponentially.

Tourism can take many forms, and yet it remains itself – that is, the act and process of spending time away from home. It overlaps with other activities, interests and processes, such as pilgrimage, business, sports, health, medicine, or even sleeping, etc. This leads to the emergence of common categories such as pilgrimage tourism, business tourism, sports tourism, health tourism, medical tourism, and the recently developing sleep tourism, considered a major trend for 2023, which refers to any type of vacation with a program focused, on a good night's sleep (Perez, 2023; Gifford, 2023). These and other adjectives added to tourism stress the activation of services from this industry, which is indicated alongside tourism.

Also to be mentioned here are such important factors enabling the proliferation and democratization of tourism and its eventual globalization, such as the Schengen pact, transportation innovations² and the computerization of both tourism services and any partial services purchased or merely browsed by pleasure, rest and relaxation seekers. Even the connecting (not dividing) function of the border has created previously non-existent tourist attractions, such as the ability to sleep simultaneously in two countries (Ros, 2023).

As a result, tourism has become one of the most important industries in the world. Its influence has definitely become visible from the Arctic to Antarctica. Among the 194 countries of the world, none eliminates tourism from their economic development strategies; instead, there are some countries that have trusted the tourism industry to the extreme and have become tourism monoculture countries (Kędziorek, 2017; Jasinski, 2008) the economy of these countries is definitely dependent on and sensitive to fluctuations in the number of visitors, on the export of tourism product, on the pace and stability of the streams of tourists.

Countries of tourism monoculture, more than 40% of tourism in GDP generation and employment structure of the population in 2018: Macau (72.2%), Seychelles (67.1%), Maldives (66.4%), St. Kitts and Nevis (62.4%), Grenada (56.6%), Vanuatu

²Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon, after returning from a tourist flight to space with his brother and two passengers on 20 July 2021 (NOIZZ, 2021), stated that he wants to open the first hotel in space. The opening date of the first orbital hotel with a view of Earth is now known – it is expected to be in 2027 (Alba, 2023). Something that until recently seemed a figment of the imagination of science fiction writers may become a reality. The company Above Space Development (formerly: Orbital Assembly Corporation) which specializes in space station design and construction, is working on two space hotels on the Pioneer (smaller) and Voyager (larger) stations. The first will offer enough room for 28 people (due to open in 2025), while the second, more spacious, is expected to accommodate a minimum of 280 guests (400 people max. It is scheduled to open in 2027). The expected length of stay at the hotel can range from four days to two weeks. The length of stay, according to company manager Rhonda Stevenson, will depend on the cost and ability to get acclimatized to the space environment. The main element of the whole experience is supposed to be the total or partial absence of gravity; there are plans for an entertaining "space game" of basketball. The functionality of artificial gravity affects the overall layout of the station and the design of the elements, says Tim Alatorre, chief operating officer and chief architect of Above Space Development, just as artificial gravity will be generated through rotation, which introduces new and also unique structural variables for the space environment. The price of a room in the space hotel is unknown; given the context of other private missions by companies such as SpaceX, Blue Origin and Virgin Galactic, it could settle in the range of \$500,000. However, the Above Space Development team believes that as space tourism develops and becomes more widespread, the price is expected to become more affordable for everyone. Also notable, in 2021 Voyager Space received \$160 million in funding from NASA to develop the Starlab space station. NASA announced a partnership with the Hilton Hotel to design suites on the Starlab space station (Biega, 2022).

(48,0%), Cape Verde (46.2 %), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (45.5%), Belize (44.9%), Antigua and Barbuda (44.1%) (knoema.com).

Organized trips with accompanying infrastructure, sightseeing and an emphasis on the most important places and experiences can be considered the backbone of tourism. For the importance of the relationship between what the tourist sees and the actual meaning of the visited site, in the context of the authenticity of the tourist experience, "most often the visitor's first contact with a tourist site is not with the site itself, but with some representation of it" (MacCannell, 2002) made in the description of the offer or verbally provided by the service provider or through the tourist's opinions made on a specially prepared website after consuming the tourist good.

Modern tourism is an increasingly intensive, commercially organized, business-oriented group of economic and social activity operations, requiring cooperation and multilateral collaboration, including activities and parties (like: the seller and the buyer) for which it becomes a revenue stream (Table 1; Footnote 4 List of professions).

2. Literature Review

The issue of accessible culture, i.e., the effort to ensure equal access to tourism for people with various medical conditions, is universal. In modern countries, the prevention of any discrimination and social exclusion is becoming increasingly important, and this topic is breaking through as one of the basic social issues (Karcz-Kaczmarek, 2020). The phrase "social barrier" in the title is borrowed from the concept of universal design (Thematic report..., 2007).

Universal design aims to remove architectural, digital, and social barriers from our spaces. Ultimately, the architectural, digital and social infrastructure is to be adapted to every person, regardless of age, height, weight, sight, hearing, physical, or and mental ability. In tourism, the principles of universal design have given rise to the name of accessible tourism (Cerutti *et al.*, 2020; Michopoulou *et al.*, 2015).

Accessible tourism is a form of tourism that involves collaborative stakeholder processes that enable people with access needs, including mobility, visual, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the provision of universally designed tourism products, services and environments (Adamopoulos and Thalassinou, 2020).

This definition adopts a lifecycle approach, with people benefiting from accessible tourism throughout their lives. These include people with permanent and temporary disabilities, seniors, the obese, families with young children, and those who work in safer and more socially sustainably designed environments (Ambrose *et al.*, 2012).

Tourism is driven by meeting the needs of the people who pay for their travel. With the implementation of universal design in tourism, the group of tourists is expanded to include people who are marginalized due to their proximal physical, mental, social abilities; on the other hand, this means that the group of people who pay to have their needs met is becoming more numerous, which will definitely boost tourism and the tourism business economically.

Over the past decade, Accessibility and Inclusive Tourism Development has been the focus of many researchers and practitioners (Darcy *et al.*, 2020; Scheyvens, 2018). These include texts that examine the tourism industry in the context of design-for-all tourism (TAD, 2023).

There are also studies that describe and discuss how the industry can tap into the lucrative disability market for tourism and travel management businesses. In essence, the focus is on what the tourism industry's intermediaries can do to satisfy the needs of travelers with diverse groups of people, while generating substantial revenue from operations (Terry *et al.*, 2017).

Some of these tourism sector facilitators are: providing seats in travel agency reception areas, providing visible registration forms, providing walking stick holders for elderly people at the service counters, and eliminating restrictions for people with disabilities in tourism sites, hiring training services on accessibility and design, implementing appropriate marketing strategies such as involving people with disabilities in the product development stage and participating in shows and exhibitions at annual disability consumer conferences (Terry *et al.*, 2017).

In a nutshell, satisfying the needs of people with disabilities is not only an economic stimulus for the tourism and travel industry (Ambrose *et al.*, 2012; Jasiński 2008; Wieczorkiewicz 2008); it is not only the fulfillment of the obligation to guarantee access to tourism or the fulfillment of international obligations, but it also contributes to the cultural development of the country and the building of an open society without barriers and social prejudices (Cerutti *et al.*, 2020; Karcz-Kaczmarek, 2020; Darcy *et al.*, 2020; Howard and Ulferts, 2017; Kędziorek, 2017; Zajadacz and Stroik, 2016; Michopoulou 2015; Picard and Giovine, 2014).

For this reason, more and more regional, national, EU and international bodies, as well as public, social and private entities, are working towards full accessibility for all, through activities in the transport, hotel, restaurant, educational, legislative and consumer protection sectors, as well as institutions that rank cities for accessibility or tourist offices, etc.

The literature cited in this text is an insignificant fraction of the literature available on the web on tourism, accessible tourism and universal design in tourism for people with disabilities and accessible culture.

3. Touristic Projection of Financial Streams

Tourism (along to IT), one of the fastest growing areas of the economy, is an important factor in the economic development of individual entities, places, regions and countries. Its particular importance stems from the fact that, in addition to tourism market players, it activates many other sectors of the economy (transportation, communications, industry, construction, agriculture, banking, insurance, and also the local community as an institution) (Szadziński, 2018).

The "activation of parties" of the seller and the buyer involved in buy-sell transactions includes not only the analog facts but also the digital twins of all that is being traded to make the transaction. The financial stream arising from the expenses incurred by tourists from the moment the idea for a trip is conceived to the moment they return and unpack their suitcase sets in motion a whole chain of reactions that create additional benefits in the various economic sectors that cooperate with the tourism industry in the form of attracting tourists themselves and through cooperation with analog and digital tourism institutions.

In order to visualize where the financial stream based on the expenses incurred by tourists reaches and what these funds are spent on, Table 1 has been prepared. The first column enumerates the industries of the local economy in which the tourist makes purchases, the second column lists the institutions providing partial services in a given industry of the local economy, and the third column specifies those spheres on which the money received from tourists is spent.

Table 1. Tourists are the source of the financial stream

Industries of the local economy	Partial services purchased by tourists by analog or digital means (directly or through an intermediary) and consumed at the place visited	The money obtained from tourists is spent on:
1	2	3
Accommodation	Hotels, motels, guesthouses, rooms and houses for rent (penthouse apartments), guest rooms, agritourism accommodations, vacation homes, travel lodges, vacation homes, youth hostels, hostels, campgrounds, camping sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – salaries, – payroll taxes, – social insurance, – commissions, – license fees, – administrative fees, – professional services, – grocery shopping, – purchases of semi-finished products and raw materials, – purchase of goods for commercial purposes,
Food Catering	Premises or food service establishment on or off site: restaurants, cafeterias, bars, small catering, food stores.	
Transportation	Local transportation, city bicycles/scooters/motor scooters, rickshaws, buses, minibuses, cabs or fuel for personal transportation.	
Security	Insurance (one of the few partial services that can only be purchased from an	

	institution authorized to sell insurance).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – purchase of furnishing materials, – purchase of cleaning products, – repair and maintenance, – technical inspections and evaluations, – advertising and promotion, – public utility facilities, – local transportation, – licenses and permits, – insurance premiums, – equipment and device rentals, – rental of premises and land, – loan handling costs, – income taxes, VAT and other taxes, – maintenance of fixed assets, etc.
Grocery shopping	Alcohol, beverages, ice cream, candy, fruit, snacks, half products in grocery stores and also neighborhood stores, etc.	
Other shopping	Cosmetics, clothing, eyeglasses, personal belongings, suitcase and travel bag, etc.	
Memories	Gifts, postcards, books, albums, photographs, videos, etc. Gifts, postcards, books, albums, photographs, videos, etc.	
Leisure	Sightseeing, excursions, cruises, kayaking, sports attractions, equipment rentals, pilot, guide, etc.	
Entertainment	Cafes, nightclubs, casinos and other gambling such as car racing, cinemas, theaters, parties, performances, exhibitions, etc.	
Taking care of health and appearance	Beauty parlors, hairdressers, massages, spas, wellness, etc.	
Medical services	Medical advice, dental services, pharmacies, outpatient assistance, etc.	
Communication	Internet, mobile, landline, traditional mail, translator, etc.	
Technical service	Car repair shops, tourist equipment repair, etc.	
Local fees ³	Tourist tax, parking lots, etc.	
Financial services ⁴	ATMs, payment cards, transfers, etc.	

Source: Own source.

Multi-fold expenses incurred by tourists, are used to cover disparate costs, only some of which are listed in the last column of Table 1. Tourist expenditures are allocated in a negligible proportion to strictly tourist institutions (such as the tourist office, including the CIT, tourist agency, tourist organization, tourist association). Even more numerous and more widespread is the group of professions that benefit from the expenses incurred by tourists, because these expenses translate into earnings for these groups⁵.

³Local fees are one of the few partial benefits that can only be paid at a duly authorized institution.

⁴Financial services are one of the few partial services that can only be provided by financial institutions of the institution authorized to do so, although, a small amount of money can also be withdrawn in stores of the Žabka chain.

⁵List of professions: “Organizers of events and activities with respect to local tourist attractions. Travel agents. Operation of a tourist information center. Managerial staff. Rental, sales, brokerage sector. Advertising and marketing specialists. Employees of accommodation and catering facilities. Farmers, gardeners, fruit growers. Bakers, dairymen,

The development of tourism unequivocally affects the economic development of the place and the region, increasing income to household budgets, SGUs and the country as a whole. Besides, tourism stimulates job creation and the development of analog and digital public offerings (cultural, entertainment, recreational and sports, etc.), the emergence of new investments and businesses. All of these together have an impact on social satisfaction, which in turn translates into the realization of public expectations and economic and social goals (Speth, 2023).

4. Tourist Attitude

The intention to travel mobilizes would-be tourists to ultimately set aside financial resources, while the spending by tourists in a given destination is a stream of money that feeds the wallet of the individual, the family and the economy (Table 1 and Footnote 4). On the one hand, the group that prepares for and spends money is clarified, and on the other, the party that earns money from these expenses. These are the conflicting interests of opposing parties of the sellers' and the buyers' forming market transactions.

To be able to satisfy both sides with conflicting interests, there is a need to strike a balance to regulate the relationship between the parties. The party who spends, buys (not anything, but) that thing (tourist offer or partial service) that will satisfy and meet their needs and requirements, give them the opportunity to visit, learn something new, acquire new experiences and emotions (rather) positive (Picard and Di Giovine, 2014).

Thus, it pays not to spend the amount saved on the livelihood of the selling party, but for fulfilling its needs and goals, gaining sensations, experiencing emotions or satisfaction. The party that makes money on these expenses is probably aware that

butchers, fishermen. Transportation professionals. Retailers and cashiers. Doctors and nurses. Owners of commercial buildings. Retailers and cashiers and other trade personnel. Local, regional and central administration. Owners and employees of restaurants and other catering facilities. Repairmen, electricians, mechanics, and other technical personnel. Carpenters. Construction workers, painters, plumbers. Gatekeepers and security personnel. Engineers, architects, designers. Suppliers of technical, medical equipment, etc. Cleaners, janitors. Insurance agents. Cleanliness maintenance services. Laundry workers. Suppliers of office equipment. Gas stations and car services. Printing and publishing houses. Operation and service of sports and recreational equipment. Accountants and owners and employees of accounting offices. Owners and employees of spas and spa & wellness centers. Athletes, coaches, activity organizers. Lawyers. Car mechanics. Bank employees. Charitable institutions. Film makers, writers. Publishers of maps, guidebooks, brochures. Fashion designers. Dentists. Employees and owners of exhibition halls. Teachers. Craftsmen and tailors. Road workers. Police officers and city guards. Rescuers. Sign and label manufacturers. Transportation and traffic workers. Equipment manufacturers, equipment suppliers and repairers. Wholesalers. Processing and manufacturing companies. Local, regional and central administrative staff, etc.” (Migdal, 2020 p. 19-20).

(colloquially speaking) it does not have to make every customer or visitor happy, but take care to – first – provide reliable information, then – allow (or help) the buyer to understand and form their own opinion about the proposed service, then – fulfill what was communicated earlier in the form of information.

The documents indicating and regulating the service provider's duties and work ethics are primarily relevant laws and regulations and guides, while the service recipient's behavior is governed mainly by awareness of existing laws and personal conduct and the code of customary culture.

A review and analysis of the statements made by people commenting on travel portals after the trip has already been consummated, as well as the nature of complaints and claims in favor of tourism on the website of the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection, prove that there is a problem with striking a balance between the seller and the buyer (parties) with conflicting interests.

From a marketing standpoint, the tourist is looking for benefits. One (not the only) such benefit is information. The Customer-Tourist Handbook (Andrzejczyk *et al.*, 2020) argues that tourists at all five stages need information: (1) the moment a tourist gets an idea of where they would like to go and starts looking for information on how to plan that trip, (2) while traveling to the destination, (3) while staying there, (4) while returning home, (5) after returning, when they share their memories, impressions and feelings with loved ones and others.

The final stage is when a very extensive information base is created, showing what tourists liked and didn't like by either (a) filing complaints with the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection or (b) expressing their opinion online.

Perhaps the lack of balance is an expression of the lack of correspondence between the product or service offered and what is realistically behind the product or service being sold? Or is it (i.e., the balance) to indiscriminate and treat every buyer/customer/guest equally, regardless of age, height, physical or mental ability or disability, both before, during and after the purchase-sale transaction?

With new guidelines in place since 2006 (EAA), the current new guidelines mandate that all people and institutions be treated equally and that digital and social architectural barriers be removed from public spaces (Zajadacz and Stroik, 2016; Zajadacz and Rutz, 2020; Pirveli, 2023). In this text, the emphasis is primarily on social barriers, the removal of which can lead to the detection of the aforementioned balance between the parties to a purchase-sell transaction.

The UOKiK (OCCP - Office of Competition and Consumer Protection), among specific types of market practices, stresses unfair market practices⁶ and aggressive market practices⁷ applied to the customer (here) of the tourism market.

Unfair market practices include practices of misleading the customer (e.g., disseminating false information, recording true information in a way that may mislead the customer; using reputable trade names or other designations in one's offer that individualize the entrepreneur or suggest that it is this manufacturer's products that will be used, failing to comply with a code of good practices to which the entrepreneur has voluntarily subscribed and even shows them in the offer) and omissions applied to the customer (e.g., the entrepreneur has concealed or not communicated clearly and unambiguously or has not communicated important information concerning the product at the right time).

The trader concealed or failed to clearly and unambiguously communicate, or did not communicate at the right time, important information about the product, the entrepreneur failed to disclose important commercial information, hiding behind trade secrets, causing the consumer to decide to buy the product, etc.) while aggressive market practices applied to the customer are primarily associated with the service provider taking advantage of the customer's low level of understanding of the operation of leisure facilities for their own benefit, and disregarding the customer's opinion (e.g., the entrepreneur has tricked the consumer into believing that they cannot leave the territory of the facility without purchasing a pass, the organizer makes visits to the accommodation, ignoring the consumer's request to leave or stop such visits, the service provider induces the consumer to purchase products by telephone, fax, e-mail or other means of remote communication).

Many tourism websites encourage tourists to add reviews of trips, hotels and travel agencies. On wakacje.pl, the total number of reviews on 53 travel agencies is 20295, the oldest review is from 2008, and the newest is from March 2023. Entries are made mostly in Polish, but also in English, German and Russian.

The number of reviews assigned to agencies is not equal. There are three agencies that have no reviews (Interhome, Tourist Polska, Wieszło Travel) and there are six travel agencies with the most reviews: Grecos (1827 reviews), Exim Tours (1945

⁶ **Unfair market practice:** a market practice applied by entrepreneurs to consumers is unfair if it is contrary to good practice and materially distorts or is likely to distort the market behavior of the average consumer before, during or after the conclusion of a product contract

⁷ **Aggressive market practice:** a market practice applied by entrepreneurs to consumers that exerts unacceptable pressure, significantly restricts or is likely to restrict the average consumer's freedom of choice or behavior with respect to the product, and thus causes or is likely to cause the average consumer to make a contractual decision that they would not otherwise have made.

reviews), TUI (2257 reviews), Rainbow (2372 reviews), Coral Travel (2484 reviews), Itaka (3142 reviews).

Between these extremes there are travel agencies that have up to ten reviews, fourteen agencies have between fifty and one hundred reviews and eight travel agencies have between one hundred and one hundred and fifty reviews and another group of travel agencies with between four hundred and eight hundred reviews. The ratio between positive and negative statements places a travel agency on a ten-step ladder; with tourists rating a travel agency in three categories: Rating of residents, Value for money and Compliance of the offer with the description.

Browsing through most of the reviews, and analyzing only about a thousand reviews from 2022 and 20 March 2023 year, it can be deduced that both positive and negative reviews (sometimes mutually exclusive) issued under the banner of the agency, concern:

- the reliability and legibility and timeliness of the information provided,
- the manner of organizing transportation (it is or is not on time, it is or is not convenient, you can or cannot get the kind of place you are asking for),
- the resident (who comes or does not come on time or does not come at all, who solves or does not solve the problems that have arisen, knows or does not know the language, is or is not communicative),
- the correspondence or discrepancy between the accommodation purchased and what was found in reality,
- the quality of the accommodation and hotel room paid for,
- the possibility of receiving a refund if something paid for was not realized.

A common feature of all reviews is that: (a) satisfaction is expressed toward a specific person (less often an agency). In fact, the tourist evaluates the person with whom he has been in contact; (b) many times there is a situation when the positive and negative reviews of the same travel agency (so the same institution) in one period are very good and a year earlier or later – extremely negative.

Staying true to the fact that "the tourist reviews not the agency but the person with whom they have been in contact," it can be assumed that every now and then the various agencies are staffed with the right personnel to contact customers; (c) just as often, the same agency and the same trip by some tourists is rated very positively, and by others negatively. Trying to interpret similar behavior of reviewers is complex and needs much deeper research.

5. Summary and Discussion

Earlier features of the tourist portrait placed the tourist in the position of a buying party who puts off to pay for new experiences, positive emotions, relaxation and satisfaction (Picard and Di Giovine, 2014). The last two paragraphs add new features

to this portrait. They show the tourist-customer as they are seen by the party that sells them a tourist product or a partial service or provides an already purchased service.

The answer to the question "and how does the party selling and profiting from the sale see the tourist-customer" can be gleaned from the content of the reviews given by tourists on the wakacje.pl website, presented above, as well as in the complaints presented above (and resolved in favor of tourists), filed with the Office for Competition and Consumer Protection.

What emerges is a not very flattering portrait of the tourist-customer, who can be lied to and whose ignorance can be attempted to exploit for his use or whose right and position can be abused, especially after a sale has already been made, etc. Many times the tourist-customer does not remain in a passive position (which is probably what the service provider is counting on) and reacts to the undignified behavior of the party providing the service – this is rather evidenced by the complaints filed, but also by statements on the Internet, which rush to thank or stigmatize the service provider and guard future customers from contact with such a person or company.

There is also a third side, little described in this text, characterizing tourists, customers or simply people who are potential tourists and buyers of tourism offers and services. These are the characteristics of a person referred to in the non-discrimination act. In Polish anti-discrimination law, the key is, Act of August 27, 1997 on vocational and social rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons.

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of December 13, 2006, drawn up in New York constituting the primary international anti-discrimination legislation. European Accessibility Act (EAA) of March 13, 2019, approved by the European Parliament under the name Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council (EU) 2019/882 of April 17, 2019, which is a directive aimed at creating common standards for goods and services adapted to the needs of people with various disabilities throughout the European Union.

The requirements in 2019 of the adopted directive are expected to take effect on June 28, 2025 and apply to the business sector. The accessibility requirements apply to operators who offer, among other things: computer operating systems and hardware, payment terminals and self-service terminals, devices that enable telecommunications services, e-book readers.

The directive also includes services provided to consumers, these include, for example, electronic communication systems, retail banking, e-commerce services, distribution of e-books (EAA). In all the documents, the basis of discrimination is architectural barriers, digital barriers and social barriers, the minimization or

removal of which depends on compliance with the law, but above all depends on social acceptance of otherness⁸, increased tolerance and self-awareness.

In the aforementioned documents, there are no provisions accentuating tourism and tourists, as it is assumed that it is about equal treatment of Man and the arrangement of public space without physical, digital and social barriers. Whereas on the European Commission's website, where the results of a competition that has been running since 2011, honoring and ennobling cities that adapt their spaces for use by all people on an equal level (Access City Award), are compiled, it is clear that cities are concerned with public spaces with a clear tourism significance. It is also worth mentioning here that among Polish cities, Gdynia and Poznan, as well as Warsaw and Krakow, stand out very positively.

The list of persons to be treated equally includes, wheelchair users, those using crutches, canes, blind and visually impaired, deaf and hard of hearing, people of short and tall stature, people with intellectual disabilities, people with mental disabilities, people with temporary disabilities, pregnant women, parents with children, the elderly, children, foreigners who do not speak the local language (EP; Thematic report..., 2007).

The specific tourism product mentioned above, which is called "satisfaction", is (besides the multifaceted nature of the services provided to tourists) no less an important factor placing tourism among the fastest growing areas of the national economy. Each of the several billion inhabitants of Planet Earth is a potential tourist; many of them become tourists several times a year. From this generalized statistical picture indicating the number of potential buyers it is (almost) not exhaustive.

The digitization of the economy and society makes it easier to both reach and create information for and from tourists. It also provides an opportunity to express one's satisfaction and dissatisfaction on public forums. These statements are many times the basis for emphasizing the quality of a given venue or service, which is highly appreciated by tourists, tourism operators or researchers (scientists and practitioners of a given industry). These statements are extremely powerful in their promotional power, capable of promoting a place, venue or service in a highly competitive market or business environment.

6. Conclusion

Surrounding tourist spaces are not without architectural, digital and social barriers. In order to develop tourist-friendly spaces, it is important to focus on social barriers

⁸*Otherness, as a social phenomenon, is reflected in the legal, political, customary, ideological, cultural, social spheres, and is manifested in both physical and social space – both objective and subjective (Pirveli, 2023; Pirveli, Rykiel 2007). In the context of this article, "others" for the seller is the buyer, and for the buyer is the seller.*

first, as they are the starting point for both achieving better market performance and reducing the negative impact of existing architectural and digital barriers on tourist satisfaction.

For better understanding of the hipper-personalized tourist demand and satisfaction and the role of social barriers for the tourist conscious in market transactions the research workshop of socio-economic geography as a science predisposed to speak more decisively on issues of shaping open, tourist-friendly tourist space is very important.

Focusing on social barriers first is therefore a starting point for both achieving better market performance and reducing the negative impact of existing architectural and digital barriers on tourist satisfaction.

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