

Explore The Preferences of Seniors in Study Tours Community

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the travel behaviors and challenges faced by disabled individuals in Shanghai, a city rich in tourism resources. It identifies gaps in existing research regarding the selection of disabled subjects, country scenarios, and constraint correlations. Using questionnaires, the study finds that disabled Shanghai residents travel infrequently, prefer traveling with family and friends, and face financial and psychological barriers. They also encounter accessibility and safety issues in transportation, attractions, and accommodations. The paper suggests improvements in removing internal constraints, increasing tourism information, and enhancing safety to better serve disabled tourists, contributing to a more inclusive society and the development of accessible tourism.

KEYWORDS

Seniors; Study Tours Community; Preferences

1 Introduction

Disability is an unavoidable price to be paid in the development of human society and the disabled are indeed an important contributor to social development (Suntikul & Wantanee 2014). Hence, the quality of their overall living conditions reflects the level of civilization of a society. The tourism market is in fierce competition with creative market segmentation and since tourism activities are already a popular way of recreation involving all citizens, the disabled also have the needs and desires for travelling. The market designed for this vulnerable group is a very important market segment in the development of tourism. Though huge market potential exists, it has been ignored for a long time (Zajadacz 2017).

According to the Statistical Bulletin of the China Disabled Persons' Federation (2019), at the end of 2019, over 40 million disabled persons with certificates had been included in the basic data of the national population of disabled persons, accounting for about 3% of the total population. This further indicates that relatives and friends of the disabled, who are 4 times the total number of disabled persons, will also be a huge potential group that cannot be ignored in the tourism market. Another survey (Cheng et al 2015) shows that more than 60% of the disabled people in China have a strong desire to travel. Therefore, the development of tourism for the disabled is an opportunity for the disabled themselves and tourism service sector.

At present, disabled tourism market in China accounts for a small share of the entire market but it has huge development potential. Many factors restrict the fully display of this potential (Hu et al 2019). Disabled people normally have special travel needs and behaviours. For example, they have higher requirements for the travel environment, and the choice of destination is limited to scenic spots and areas with high safety factors. However, the corresponding social environment is imperfect, which weakens the development of tourism for them. Typical constraints arise like the

development of accessible catering systems, accommodations, transportation systems, scenic spots and tourism information systems are not standardised, thus increasing the difficulty of travel for the disabled.

Throughout the research progress of tourism for the disabled, there are many achievements have made in the meaning, needs, information acquisition, and constraints of tourism for the disabled. These studies are in-depth and professional, involving the economic and social values of tourism for the disabled, the phenomenon of barrier-free tourism itself and its essence, from tangible research to intangible psychological research. And according to the needs of the disabled, these studies provide a theoretical basis for the tourism sector and enterprises to design corresponding products and market development. However, there are still three key considerations:

- 1) The subjects in most cases are focusing on the physically disabled while few on deaf-mute and visually disabled people.
- 2) The research area with a large amount of surveys is mainly concentrated in developed countries while the tourism situation of the disabled in developing countries is not much covered.
- 3) There are fewer deep analyses on the weights and correlations of various factors affecting tourism behaviour of the disabled.

Therefore, in order to study the common tourism behaviours and constraints encountered by persons with disabilities before and during travel, this paper selects Shanghai, which has abundant natural tourism, cultural tourism and social tourism resources as a typical tourism city, and proposes specific solutions for providing better service for the disabled. The result of this study is expected to be of great significance for building a harmonious society and promoting the development of tourism for the disabled group as well as the diversity of the tourism sector.

2 Literature Review

In terms of solution strategies of these constraints, many scholars like Tao et al (2019), Bowtell (2015) and Zajadacz (2017), they have devoted themselves to studying the solutions to environmental constraints, while the constraints, especially the physical or psychological constraints, are rarely involved. For example, Tao et al (2019) found that previous studies tend to subdivide and count tourism barriers, rather than elaborate on the interaction mechanism between various tourism barriers. They used a comparative model to analyse the travel notes of disabled tourists and found that in the travelling, the constraints faced by the disabled and the solution strategies are complementary rather than hierarchical. Bowtell (2015) suggests that tourism manufacturers should develop new or improved auxiliary products to meet the special needs of disabled tourists, such as portable wheelchairs suitable for outdoor sports. Zajadacz (2017) believes that the services of travel agencies fail to meet the needs of disabled tourists due to attitude and structural reasons. Meanwhile, he pointed out that educating travel agency employees about better service on the disabled can solve the attitudinal problems, but problems hidden in the industrial structure need further improvements. He elaborated on the strategies for solving attitude and structural problems. He further proposes three effective ways to change attitudes towards the disabled, namely: equal relationship, close contact, simulation training and providing accurate information. Cloquet et al. (2018) believe that the method of communicating with the disabled is more effective in changing attitudes than just the method of providing information. At the same time, they point out that training the tourism practitioners on the awareness of the disabled plays an important role in forming and changing the attitude of the able-bodied towards the disabled. When Bowtell (2015) researched whether the websites of British hotels could meet the needs of online disabled tourists, he found that most of the websites failed to meet their special needs, and stated that in order to

meet the special needs of the disabled, the website must be designed to be compatible with assistive network technology. At the deeper root level of solution, the disabled must first accept the fact that they are disabled, which is the basis for them to actively travel, while self-acceptance is affected by both empathy and family support. Dominguez et al (2015) found that the establishment of associations for the disabled is beneficial for the disabled participants to overcome self-doubt and redefine themselves. When Bowtell (2015) studied the tourism policy for the disabled in UK, he mentioned that taking into account the needs of disabled tourists, the expectations of local industry development, market conditions and regional culture, all luxury hotels need to provide corresponding accessible housing for disabled tourists.

In addition, many scholars like Moura et al (2018) and Zajadacz (2017) they have carried out comprehensive and in-depth research on the positive significance of disabled people's participation in tourism activities. For example, Moura et al (2018) found that tourism for the disabled can improve the mental maturity of the disabled themselves and strengthen the degree of social recognition of the disabled. Moreover, it can also prevent and alleviate the mental illness of young people with disabilities. Meanwhile, some scholars have studied the influence of the disabled on the development direction of the tourism market. Zajadacz (2017) believes that disabled people are potential participants in tourism. As a potential customer group in the tourism market, they have an important influence on how the tourism market develops further. In addition, there are also scholars from the perspective that the development of tourism for the disabled has a major role in promoting the progress of social civilization. Among them, Huang & Crofts (2019) conducted research on the promotion of social and cultural equality by disabled tourism and the formation of an inclusive society; Tao et al (2019) believe that disabled tourism has a significant impact on the degree of economic development and opening up of developing countries.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research design

This study considered a mixed methods approach to research on guests with disabilities. Quantitative studies attempt to determine the strength of associations or correlations between variables across samples, generalize and objectify results for inference in populations (Fernández, 2002). Kitchin (2000) pointed out that while the survey method can be beneficial, it often constrains people with disabilities to a set of responses. Qualitative methods using interviews are appropriate when addressing specific sensitive issues (Kvale, 1996).

As a well-known first-tier metropolis in China, Shanghai, with more than 900,000 persons with disabilities, accounting for 6.2% of its total population in 2019, takes the lead in services for the disabled (China Disabled Persons' Federation 2020). The level of employment and housing for the disabled in Shanghai is not much different from that of ordinary people, and majority of attractions in the city are well equipped with accessible facilities.

However, there are still few media reports on the tourism of the disabled because the overall willingness for them to participate in cultural and recreational activities is critically low. From a survey in 2020, Shanghai citizens are gradually accepting people with disabilities to integrate into social life with an understanding attitude. 73% of the interviewees affirmed the benefits of accessible facilities in Shanghai and have confidence in building an accessible city, while 75% of the interviewees believed that imperfect tourist facilities and services for the disabled are still factors restricting the tourism of the disabled (China Disabled Persons' Federation 2020).

In order to find out deep constraints behind the accessible tourism, this study uses questionnaires to obtain relevant data and conduct an in-depth study on the behaviours and

constraints of the disabled tourists.

On the basis of referring to the status quo of disabled community and tourism services in Shanghai, this paper first determined the initial variables of the questionnaire through literature reading (Hu et al 2019). After discussing with some volunteers who are caring for the disabled, these variables were supplemented and perfected to form a preliminary questionnaire. In order to verify its effectiveness, a preliminary survey using the draft questionnaire was conducted in Putuo District of Shanghai. Through this exercise, some of the questions that may lead to misunderstanding by the disabled were adjusted and thus the final questionnaire (as shown in the following Appendix 1) was formed. It mainly investigates the behaviours and constraints of the disabled tourists, with designed questions such as the number of outings and the main obstacles encountered during travel.

3.2 Phase one-quantitative data collection

A total of 300 questionnaires will be distributed in this survey plan. The survey will be conducted from September 2024 to October 2024 in various districts of Shanghai. Questionnaires will be placed at the office window of the Disabled Persons' Federation of each district and be filled out voluntarily by the disabled. Meanwhile, in order to expand the channels to obtain further feedbacks, questionnaires are also distributed through the WeChat group of the disabled. During the survey, the purpose of the survey, and the meaning of each question is detailed clarified before each respondent fills out the questionnaire to ensure that there is no profound deviation.

4 Findings

The survey was conducted from September 2024 to October 2024. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed with 300 returned, and 286 valid obtained. The efficiency is 95.3%, meeting the basic sampling requirements. The results of the questionnaire survey are summarised as follows.

4.1 Basic Information of the Survey

The overall information of the disabled persons surveyed is shown in Table 1. The proportions of men and women in the survey are 66.43% and 33.57% respectively, which is similar to the proportion of men and women with disabilities in Shanghai (61: 39). Respondents aged 18-30 account for the majority and most of them have a relatively high level of education with 88.11% graduating from a technical secondary school or above. The average income level of the disabled is not high, with only 11.19% of them obtaining more than 4,000 yuan monthly while less than 1,000 yuan accounting for 37.76%.

The response rate of the physically disabled is 37.5%, the visually disabled is 16.2%, similar to that proportion of disabled people in China while the hearing and speaking disabled is as high as 46.3%, higher than that proportion of disabled people in China due to the lower difficulty for them to participate in the questionnaire survey.

4.2 Tourism Situation of the Disabled in Shanghai

(1) Attitudes of Shanghai disabled persons to travel abroad

Judging from the surveyed disabled people's attitude towards travel, more than 80% believe that tourism occupies a relatively important position. 50.35% say it is important, and only 11.89% think it is optional. Through cross-analysis, it is concluded that the income situation has a greater impact on this result. Among the disabled persons with a monthly income of more than 4,000 yuan,

over 80% believe that tourism is important, significantly higher than the average value, which can be reflected to a certain extent that economic income is the basis and motivation for disabled people to travel.

(2) Travel frequency of the disabled in Shanghai

The result shows that nearly half of the disabled have not travelled recently. It was found that income issues are still the main factor affecting the travel frequency of persons with disabilities. 84 persons with a monthly income of less than 2000 have never travelled, accounting for 62.7% of the total number of tourists who have never travelled. 71.6% of the physically disabled have never travelled, while 19.75% of the physically disabled choose to travel for 1-2 times, which indicates the physically disabled travel less frequently, due to their mobility.

(3) Motivation of Shanghai disabled people to travel

The result shows that the main motivations for people with disabilities to travel are recreation and scenic sightseeing. More than half choose these two options, followed by visiting relatives and friends and rehabilitation. It can be seen that the disabled, like ordinary people, want to go out for relaxing though tourism. It was found that due to different types of disabilities, the motives for travel are also different. 77% of the physically disabled and 87% of the language disabled prefer scenic sightseeing, 91.4% of the visually disabled and 72.7% of the hearing disabled tend to choose recreation.

(4) Scope of destinations for the disabled in Shanghai

The survey shows that disabled people's choice of travel destinations is more casual. Nearly half want to go to places with unique attractions in the domestic, followed by this city and surrounding areas. Through cross-analysis, it is found that 51.61% who have travelled more than 5 times chose the city's scenic spots. This indicates that the actual travel range of persons with disabilities is relatively restrictive as most of them choose to travel nearby in actual travel. Among the disabled who have never travelled, 68.66% chose the places that they have always wanted to visit in China, indicating that although the disabled have physical defects, they are still full of yearning for the outside world. In addition, the survey found that the income problem is still the main reason that affects the travel range of the disabled. Among the respondents who chose to travel in this city or suburbs, 80% have an income of less than 2,000 yuan.

(5) Favourite ways of travelling for the disabled

The survey shows that disabled people most like to travel with relatives and friends, and the remaining number of travel options is roughly the same. Due to the physical inconvenience of the disabled, traveling with relatives and friends can not only ensure safety, improve travel efficiency, but also relax the mood of their families. Therefore, many choose to travel in groups, especially those that are attractive in China. Among the disabled who travel long distances locally or abroad, 80% choose to travel with relatives and friends.

(6) Sources of travelling funding for the disabled in Shanghai

The survey shows that the main source of travel expenses for persons with disabilities is their own expenses, accounting for 67.13%, followed by support from relatives and friends and sponsored by non-profit organizations.

(7) Sources of travel information for the disabled in Shanghai

Table 1 Sources of travel information obtained by the surveyed persons with disabilities (ranked)

Category	Recommended by relatives and friends	Television broadcast	Books and Magazines	Internet	Travel Agency	Disabled Persons' Fed- eration	Others
The average score	1.97	4.25	3.54	3.92	1.41	1.39	0.69
Rank	4	1	3	2	5	6	7

This survey adopts a ranking system, and the calculation method of the results is: average score = $(\sum \text{frequency} \times \text{weight}) / \text{the number of people answering this question}$, where the weight is determined by the position of the option. If there are 7 options involved in sorting, the weight in the first position is 7, the second position is 6, and the third position is 5. The survey shows that the main sources of travel information for persons with disabilities are television broadcasting, followed by the Internet, books and magazines. As part of the questionnaires, this survey used online inquiries, and there are some people with disabilities who are familiar with the use of the Internet among the disabled people surveyed, so the results may have certain deviations. However, with the continuous social development and the popularisation of the network environment, the Internet will inevitably become an important way for disabled tourists to obtain travel information.

(8) The expenses that Shanghai disabled persons are willing to spend for a satisfactory tour

The result shows that 37.06% of respondents chose about 500 yuan, of which 81.13% of them are self-funded persons. It can be seen that the price of travel activities by persons with disabilities is still very highly sensitive, especially when it is necessary to squeeze funds out of daily life expenses to participate in tourism activities.

(9) The general overview of the accessible facilities in Shanghai for the disabled tourism

The survey shows that the vast majority of persons with disabilities are quite satisfied with the current accessible facilities in Shanghai. Only 4.9% think that there are almost no available accessible facilities.

4.3 Main Constraints to the Disabled Tourism in Shanghai

Table 2 The main constraints encountered by the surveyed persons with disabilities during travel

Type of constraints	Number	Proportion
Fear of causing trouble to others	90	31.47%
Fear of others looking strangely	52	18.18%
Not feeling up to going out	216	75.52%
Too expensive	146	51.05%
Lack of time and energy	76	26.57%
Inconvenient traffic	74	25.87%
Incomplete barrier-free facilities	38	13.29%
Lack of information, don't know where to go	22	7.69%
Poor service attitude	90	31.47%

The survey shows that the main constraints that people with disabilities encounter in the process of travel are excessive spending, insufficient time and energy, followed by fear of causing trouble to others, fear of other people's strange vision, inconvenient transportation and incomplete accessible facilities. 64.86% of the visually disabled chose incomplete accessible facilities, while 50% of the visually disabled chose inconvenient transportation. It can be seen that accessible facilities and traffic conditions greatly affect the travel of the visually disabled. Furthermore, it can be drawn from the table that the external constraints they encounter are much higher than the attitude hindrance of service staff.

5 Conclusion

Through questionnaire survey, this paper finds that the overall travel frequency of Shanghai disabled people is not in a high level with large travel range and low income, and they like to travel with relatives and friends. Such a group seldom participates in tourism activities due to lack of funds and psychological constraints. Even if they can travel with the support of relatives and friends, the

travel experience will be affected by the lack of accessible facilities and safety factors in transportation, scenic spots, catering and accommodation. Based on the constraints to tourism for the disabled found in the questionnaire survey, this paper further proposes suggestions for the development of tourism for the disabled in Shanghai from aspects such as removing internal constraints, increasing tourism information and improving safety.

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About the Author

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