

Universal Accessibility in Azores and Madeira – Education and Policies

Presentation abstract

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Expressions like accessible and inclusive tourism, tourism for all, universal design and accessibility are present at several communications and presentations of diverse personalities, entities and institutions. It should be noted that universal accessibility to places is, first of all, a human right protected by several laws as it is also a social responsibility towards those who temporarily or permanently have reduced or conditioned mobility or any kind of deficiency and special necessity. Considering that education of these issues can contribute significantly to a greater awareness, we intend with the future PhD thesis to investigate if the universal accessibility and similar expressions are present in tourism courses, as well as to investigate if it is present in the Touristic Plans and Financial Support in the Azores and Madeira archipelagos, Portugal.

Universal accessibility in tourism, as well as in other areas and sectors, should be taken into account in planning, but also the importance it has in affirming and promoting social sustainability and the development of societies and territories. If tourism can contribute to the affirmation of universal accessibility, it will be this same accessibility that can contribute to social sustainability since it allows everyone to participate actively in the society where they are inserted, regardless of the type of need, disability or other human conditionality, avoiding and minimizing the feeling of exclusion to which many are subject.

The existing legislation on accessibility theme is quite broad and far from accordance, and it is unanimous that "the most effective way of achieving inclusion should emerge from the change of behavior and perspective of tourism managers" (Devile, 2017, p.65). Whether the current and new students and / or trainees are the future managers and decision makers, will be essential to apply the universal accessibility theme in courses. We refer here to a generalized approach to universal accessibility, not wanting to affirm that there are no complements, courses, actions or others in the perspective of a theoretical, technical and practical deepening in the themes under consideration. We clearly and unequivocally argue that there should be a change in behavior, attitudes and visions, but on the side of tourism education (as well as other cross disciplines). Thus, if the future professionals are sensitized to these issues, the creation of working groups and committees specialized in tourism and universal accessibility should not be expected. For this purpose tourism education is a fundamental pillar for the sector's success (Amoah & Baum, 1997; Cervera-Taulet, 2008, Cooper & Shepherd, 1997, Jafari, 1990; Wang, Ayres, & Huyton, 2010). If we find that universal accessibility in tourism is extremely important in the perspective of differentiation and responsibility of destinations and agents, the education and training in the area of universal accessibility in the sector must also be considered.

Thus, in the last years, the theme associated with accessible, inclusive and universal tourism as well as universal accessibility have been affirmed, both in the theoretical field and in the practical field, as a result of various contributions from a wide range of authors and researchers. However, the studies and publications analyzed here refer only to universal accessibility and accessible tourism in an "economistic" perspective in the sense that market data are presented (Darcy, Cameron, & Pegg, 2010), growth potential, (Buhalis, Eichhorn, Michopoulou, & Miller, 2005), opportunities and destination differentiation (Small & Darcy, 2011). From the analyzed articles, we feel a shortage of teaching about universal accessibility or the teaching of accessible tourism, but the importance and

need of training in this area is unanimous among the authors (Darcy, 2006; Dehople, Darwish, Darcy, Ambrose, & Buhalis, 2006; Souca, 2008).

There is publications and articles about universal accessibility in tourism and its importance for the differentiation and competitiveness of destinations, but is this thematic present in teaching and strategic plans? In order to answer this question, the future research will cover training provided in tourism schools, as well as in the universities of the Azores and Madeira. We will also, and in order to complement our research, choose to analyze regional strategic tourism plans and financial instruments in both regions.

Considering that we will approach a tripolar vision (universal accessibility, tourism and education) we have chosen mixed methods research since we consider that this is the adequate strategy to this investigation and we expected to present the final results in 2020.

Lead speaker : Tiago Valente

Organisation : Access Azores

City (Country) : Horta, Faial Island, Azores(Portugal)

Biography : Tiago Valente, married with 2 children, holds a degree in tourism and a master's degree in leisure and local development from the University of Coimbra and studding for a PhD in Social Sustainability and Development from Aberta University. President of Access Azores - Regional Association for the Promotion of Accessible Tourism in the Azores; Director of Infoturazores; and Coordinator of IDITUR - Research, Development and Innovation in Tourism. He's collaborated in the most diverse entities and institutions, both in the public and private sector, also working as an independent. In addition to publications, presentations and articles, he is responsible for organizing the Regional Forum for Entrepreneurship in Accessible and Social Tourism.

2nd speaker :

Organisation :

City (Country) : ()

Biography :