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Inclusive Tourism as a Form of Physical Activity and Rehabilitation: Accessibility of Main Tourist Attractions in the Świętokrzyskie Region, Poland

Abstract:

The growing number of people with disabilities in Poland and worldwide highlights the urgent need to adapt various spheres of life, including tourism, which constitutes both a form of physical activity and an effective tool for rehabilitation and social integration. The study analysed the accessibility of twenty flagship tourist attractions in the Świętokrzyskie Region, an area with considerable natural, cultural, and historical potential. The research included four categories of attractions: recreation and entertainment facilities, museums and open-air museums, sacral monuments and historical and geological sites. A mixed-methods approach was applied, involving surveys with managers, site inspections, photographic documentation, and interviews, with accessibility assessed using a 0–3 point rating scale. The results showed a differentiated level of adaptation. Recreation and entertainment facilities demonstrated the highest accessibility, while sacral and historical monuments were least adjusted. The majority of solutions were directed towards visitors with mobility impairments, while the needs of blind, visually impaired, deaf, and hard-of-hearing individuals were often overlooked. Identified barriers included high financial costs of adaptation and limitations imposed by the heritage status of many sites. Importantly, the study emphasised the role of modern technologies such as audio-description systems, QR codes, and induction loops, alongside the necessity of staff training in inclusive practices. The results underline that accessible tourism should not be perceived solely in economic or cultural terms, but also as a component of physical rehabilitation and health promotion. Strengthening accessibility contributes to improving the quality of life of people with disabilities, supports their active participation in society, and enhances the therapeutic potential of tourism as part of broader physiotherapy and sports medicine strategies.

Keywords: inclusive tourism, people with disabilities, attraction accessibility, rehabilitation, physical activity, Świętokrzyskie Region

Biography: Klaudia Marcelina Chwaja is an academic teacher at the Institute of Tourism, Faculty of Tourism and Recreation, University of Culture Physical in Kraków, Poland. She holds a master's degree in Tourism and Recreation and specializes in accessible tourism, spa and pilgrimage tourism, and modern technologies in tourism. She is a co-author of several peer-reviewed publications and has presented research at national and international conferences, as well as led student scientific initiatives. Current research focuses on inclusive tourism and the accessibility of attractions for people with disabilities.