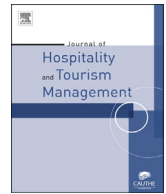




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The barriers to holiday-taking for visually impaired tourists and their families



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ABSTRACT

Although the provision of holidays for people with disabilities (PwD) and their families has been mainstreamed within social care policies in recent years, such a concern has not been given ample discussion in the tourism context. This investigation of the importance of accessibility factors from the point of view of both the PwD and their family members may direct future improvements in tourism destinations, with a special focus on the visually impaired group. It helps to provide an understanding of the factors affecting the decision-making process while evaluating a destination. It is hoped that, through recognising and raising awareness of equal travelling opportunities, PwD and their families will be encouraged to undertake more tourism activities. Thus, with a focus on the visually impaired group in Macao, this paper is an exploratory study that gathers insights from people with visual impairment and their family members. By conducting a qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews, the issues discussed are organised in three themes, namely structural, intrapersonal, and interpersonal aspects. A conceptual model is developed based on these themes, adding to it the perceived barriers that resulted from the interviews. The results contribute to a better understanding of these two groups as consumers in the tourism industry, leading to better enjoyment and more quality time at the destination. As indicated in this paper, the public's tendency is mainly to focus on structural aspects and typically underestimates the beneficial effects of intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects. The implications of the relationships among these three aspects can help tourism practitioners to acknowledge the most significant factors for better and more efficient resource management in tourism destinations.

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1. Introduction

Tourism development in Macao is mainly attributed to the expansion of its gaming sector, which has also become an important feature of Macao's economy. The blossoming of the gaming business is contributing not only to the visitor flow but also making the tourism industry an indispensable component of Macao's economy. With a population of 643,100 inhabitants, visitor arrivals for the whole year of 2015 amounted to 31,343,998 (Statistics and Census Service, 2015). Travelling is commonly perceived as an activity that is solely performed by those who are physically and financially healthy. It should be enjoyed equally by all people, regardless of their physical conditions. However, many tourism practitioners in destinations assume that people with disabilities

(PwD) are not interested in travelling or stereotype them simply as wheelchair users, therefore believing that if the attractions or facilities can accommodate wheelchair users, they can accommodate the needs of all PwD. They seldom consider the dynamicity of this population and the fact that people may possess different types (and levels) of disability.

According to the Macao population census in 2011, the resident population with disabilities in Macao consisted of 11,141 people (Statistics and Census Service, 2015), among a rough count of the 600,000 total population. The types of disability included visual impairment and blindness (10.1%), voice disorder and speech impediment (6.1%), hearing impairment and deafness (10.8%), impaired limb(s) or trunk (23.2%), mental disorder (19.8%), and chronic illness (41%), and 5411 PwD were over 65 years old. These data mainly come from voluntary self-reporting to government departments or social organisations; thus, the true number of PwD could be hidden (McKercher, Packer, Yau, & Lam, 2003). Even though the statistics appear to be small, the actual numbers are

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probably higher, and the population with disabilities could be bigger than expected. Furthermore, as a consequence of modern society's aging process, the elderly population may encounter constraints and problems similar to PwD. Between 2000 and 2050, the world population of people older than 60 years will double from 11% to 22% (Burnett & Baker, 2001). Frailty becomes increasingly common in older age groups and is associated with difficulties in mobility and other everyday activities (Gale, Cooper, & Sayer, 2015). Since visual impairment is also strongly related to the aging process (Small, Darcy, & Packer, 2012), there appears to be a significant relationship between aging and disability, with the disability rate increasing as people age (Vila, Darcy, & González, 2015). Inevitably, continuous growth in these numbers is to be expected. As a result, PwD may become a significant market segment for the tourism industry.

The academic interest in the field of disabilities has been growing in recent decades but, there is still limited research that attempts to address the dynamicity of PwD. Similarly, the tourism industry in Macao does not place sufficient emphasis on this potential market, which could be extended to include PwD's family members, as they usually require travel companions. Tourism is an important component, as having a healing effect and can improve the general well-being of PwD and their family members. However, they face many constraints/barriers at the same time. Although many studies investigate the relationship of physical barriers, disability, and the accessible tourism market, few examine in detail the emotional barriers and the relationships between PwD and family members during holidays. Thus, an investigation of the importance of accessibility factors from the point of view of both the PwD and their family members may direct future improvements at tourism sites. It will help to provide an understanding of the factors affecting the decision-making process while evaluating a destination. A destination can be marketed more effectively to visitors with disabilities, and tourist sites will be better equipped for serving travellers of all kinds. The different dimensions of disability are unequally recognised by tourism practitioners, whose focus in access issues is mainly on wheelchair users (Darcy & Pegg, 2011). In view of this, this paper focuses differently on the visually impaired and blind group. It sheds light on the concerns of people with visual impairment and their family when experiencing tourism and leisure activities.

Synthesising all these previous studies, the current study attempts to explore the needs and interests of people with visual impairment and their family in travelling both domestically and abroad and to highlight the presence of an interest in travel that might be restricted due to barriers or difficulties and other possible reasons. A conceptual model is developed to indicate the relationship between these constraints. This paper is the first attempt to expand the understanding of the nature of the barriers from the viewpoint of people with visual impairment and their family members. The contribution of this paper is threefold. First, it contributes to a better understanding of people with visual impairment and their family members as a consumer group of the tourism industry. Second, it fills the void in the existing tourism literature with a focus on the visually impaired group. Third, it can contribute to developing tourism planning in a more sustainable and comprehensive way. It provides the possibility to implement specific strategies that increase the accessibility, demand, participation, and positive experience of tourism activities among PwD, their families, and tourism practitioners. In conjunction with the concepts perceived by different parties, this paper attempts to enable the consideration of disability issues more comprehensively to achieve sustainable tourism development goals.

2. Literature review

2.1. Disabilities and visual impairments

Based on the definition provided by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (The National Archives, 1995), a 'person with disabilities' is a person who 'has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. Disability means that humans may have physical, cognitive/mental, sensory, emotional, developmental barriers or a combination of them. Visual impairment is one of those disabilities. The World Health Organization (2009) and the Tourism Review Digital Network (TRDN) (2010) estimate that 314 million people worldwide live with low vision and blindness, but they still enjoy life very much and discover new parts of the world, experience diverse cultures, and meet lifelong friends from other continents based on tailored holiday packages and tours. People with visual impairment not only have many difficulties in their daily life, such as currencies (all bills are the same size and colour), a lack of auditory elevator cues, inaccessible customs declaration forms, and safety when crossing roads (McKercher et al., 2003) but also generally face many barriers and obstacles in travelling, such as purchasing air tickets, searching destinations' information, and participating fully in tourism activities. They may not travel due to their inability to travel independently (Small et al., 2012). As such, members of this group are often considered or assumed to be not interested in travelling. However, some previous studies recognise that they have the same needs and desires for tourism as others (Yau, McKercher, & Packer, 2004). Disability research remains on the margins of tourism research; studies are recommended to explore the concept of people with visual impairment in experiences and interactions with tourism spaces, the environment, and other people (Richards, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2010). The Royal National Institute of Blind People (2009) points out that the national and local government agencies responsible for tourism development have also been charged with widening access to tourism opportunities, most recently as part of a social justice agenda that recognises tourism participation as a right of citizenship. In a preliminary survey conducted by Shaw and Coles (2004), the respondents express that travelling had provided them and their family members with a break and a means to release the stress from the usual routine. Meanwhile, in the study conducted by Nunes and Kong (2005), the interviewees (who possess some forms of disability in Macao) reflect on the importance of being able to travel and the role that it played in the rehabilitation process and enhancement of their quality of life. It can also help to harmonise the family relationship (Minnaert, Maitland, & Miller, 2009) and maintain social networks with the world.

Furthermore, Bi, Card, and Cole (2007) indicate that there is a kind of ethical obligation for tourism practitioners to provide travel services for PwD. Tourism has a significant influence on the understanding and appreciation of other people. PwD have the chance to mingle socially with others and become better acquainted through tourism activities. Tourism can therefore increase the awareness of each other's characteristics then build appreciation and respect between PwD and others. Most people consider that disability is related to wheelchair use, because accessibility barriers in the tourism industry still remain a significant issue for people who have difficulty walking (Takeda & Card, 2002). The market for travellers with disabilities is a misunderstood and under-appreciated segment of the tourism industry (Burnett & Baker, 2001). Tourism practitioners in destinations should identify PwD as a distinct market segment and should not assume that those in this group have the same interests and needs. Meeting the needs of

PwD is both a personal and a corporate responsibility. It involves awareness of the potential needs of customers with disabilities and the ability to communicate effectively (Chang & Chen, 2012). However, it seems that very few tourism organisations engage in such awareness training; even employees of large multi-national companies have a low level of awareness of the issues facing people with visual impairment (Richards et al., 2010). Meanwhile, many non-physical barriers related to PwD are ignored by the tourism industry. Thus, the barriers faced by PwD should be investigated further.

According to the World Health Organization (2009), the most frequently cited barriers are physical obstacles. Various barriers in fact influence PwD when they travel to a destination. Attitudinal barriers are another important issue in the tourism industry, because negative staff attitudes affect the leisure satisfaction of individuals (Chang & Chen, 2012). Removing emotional and sensorial barriers should be considered (Figueiredo, Euscúbio, & Kastenholz, 2012). Travelling is based on families' financial, physical, and psychological support, which means that families are considered as key determinants and may be the barriers as well (Packer, McKercher, & Yau, 2007). Furthermore, Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey (1991) state that three types of constraints may be associated with preferences and participation and propose the barriers to include structural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal barriers. The structural barriers are physical and material, the interpersonal barriers are symbolic and attitudinal behaviours through interaction with others (hosts, tourists, service staff, etc.), while intrapersonal refers to the psychological barriers that are defined by the individual impairment (Burns, Paterson, & Watson, 2009). Among these three barriers, intrapersonal barriers are suggested to present the greatest obstacle to participating in tourism (Yau et al., 2004) and are related to internal emotions such as stress, anxiety, and subjective evaluations of the appropriateness and availability of various leisure activities (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). Some scholars consider that the structural constraints relating to the physical environment are the overwhelming ones (Small et al., 2012). It is true that visitors tend to seek an environment in which they perceive themselves to have a sense of control (Duman & Mattila, 2005), particularly people with visual impairment. Often PwD also face interpersonal and/or intrapersonal barriers in travelling, and these constraints can be extremely difficult to overcome. As a result, tourism destinations need to address all three types of barriers.

2.2. Family and holiday

A holiday is defined as a distinct break away from everyday life and routines. People seek happy times (Seaton & Tagg, 1995). A holiday can help people to explore a new environment and engage in new activities, meet new people, face unexpected problems, and enhance their overall experiences (Minnaert et al., 2009). It can offer the participants the chance to encounter new situations, witness different social interactions, and compare these with their own behaviour pattern (Boydell, 1976). The motives of visitors are influenced by both internal and external factors, including personal needs, money, health, and social influence (Pearson, Morrison, & Routledge, 1998). The need for relaxation is considered to be central to a healthy and happy life (Beeton, 2001) and can be fulfilled by social activities among people in their everyday life (Richhorn, Miller, & Tribe, 2013). Holidays take on a purposive nature by facilitating family togetherness and bonding (Sayer, Bianchi, & Robinson, 2004). Since free time is becoming a scarcity (Loi, 2008), it is perceived as a way to reunite the family and for family members to spend quality time with each other. It is the prime source of happiness and the creation of unique family memories

(Schänzel & Yeoman, 2014). The aims for a family holiday include “the family gets shared experiences”, “they are having fun”, “relaxing”, and “reconnect as a family” (Gram, 2005). A family holiday can facilitate significant increases in social and family capital for the participants. Thus, it can enhance personal development and the quality of life by providing individuals with opportunities for learning new knowledge, improving inter-cultural communication, broadening their horizons, and maintaining social relationship skills (Yau et al., 2004). In particular, they can have a break from the demands and pressures of everyday life. Family holidays are considered as a way to escape from busy daily life, release stress, and spend pleasant time with family members.

Previous research shows progressive change in the social attitude toward disability and that PwD should participate fully in all aspects of life (Lee, Agarwal, & Kim, 2012), and this is mostly feasible with support. Support can come from a wide range of sources that include family members and friends, community agencies, peer support groups, disability associations, and professionals. With such support PwD may become more active in addressing their barriers (Minnaert et al., 2009). The Chinese culture has a strong notion regarding the importance of family. A person is not primarily an individual but part of a family cohort. This bond is particularly important for PwD, as their family is often their main source of support, and life tends to be more stressful for families with members with disabilities. Increased access to tourism and travel for PwD can develop travel experience, confidence, and a feeling of being less intrinsically constrained (Lee et al., 2012). Tourism's contribution in this context should be viewed as improving an individual's physical, psychological, and mental health (McConkey & Adams, 2000). It is considered not only as a basic human right but also as a tool to promote social inclusion (Richards et al., 2010). It is also perceived as a social “right” for those who are economically weak or otherwise disadvantaged in tourism participation (Haulot, 1981).

On the other hand, the family members of PwD may be a restriction, since they have to rearrange their leisure time and discretionary money away from pleasure travel towards the care of members with disabilities. This can cause resentment and sadness to a certain extent. Sometimes the media and society in general project an image that having disability (or family members with a disability) is a negative matter. Disability can have negative impacts on individuals' mental health, self-esteem, and confidence. These can add to the originally stressful situations of both the individuals and their families. In this case well-planned and facilitated family holidays can expand social connection, provide new learning opportunities, and change the behaviour (Kim & Lehto, 2013) of both PwD and their families. Tourism can foster equality between groups and society and add moral value, and it aims to benefit both the host and the visitors during the tourism exchange. The family is the prototype of all social organisations (Mok & Defranco, 2000). Travelling with family members more often may boost social skills and self-confidence. Even though family holiday-makers are not traditionally considered as higher-spending socioeconomic groups (Beeton, 2001), even less so for PwD and their families, the benefits should not only focus on economic gains. It is believed that PwD will grow more confident in their future quality of life by engaging more in tourism (Israeli, 2002). The benefits lie beyond the economic impact and range from increased levels of happiness, improved mental and physical health conditions, increased self-esteem, and higher levels of satisfaction in life (Figueiredo et al., 2012; McCabe & Diekmann, 2015). After all, tourism is increasingly considered as a necessity rather than a luxury. The government should help to ensure that PwD have access to tourism activities on an equal basis (Pagán, 2012). Given that tourism should be an equal opportunity for all, society should not isolate

PwD when it comes to tourism enjoyment. It is pointed out that PwD desire the same experiences as other tourists, can use travelling as a means of escape from their daily life, and can become more independent and confident (Blicheldt & Nicolaisen, 2001).

The family holiday market is one of the most constant markets in the tourism industry and is predicted to grow more than other forms of leisure travel (Obrador, 2012). It involves leisure travel away from home for more than one day undertaken by a family group (Carr, 2011). In particular, it is one of the key determinants of the quality of tourism experiences for disadvantaged families (Schänzel & Yeoman, 2014). Lack of access to tourism is not only related to financial issues but may also include other issues. Travelling is based on the family's financial, physical, and psychological support (Packer et al., 2007). For those who have recently acquired a disability, learning to adapt to the environment is another big challenge. It is crucial to identify the travel experiences and constraints of both PwD and their family members to gain a better understanding of this market and the issues that they face.

3. Methodology

The qualitative method was chosen due to its ability to understand phenomena in natural settings by giving emphasis to the meanings, experiences, and views of the respondents. The deductive approach was adopted in this study. This approach is useful when the researchers are already aware of respondents' probable responses (Bryman, 2004). Considering the exploratory nature of this study, the researchers can hear the voice of the respondents through the qualitative research approach (Poria, Reichel, Brandt, Buhalis, & Darcy, 2011). People with visual impairment and their family members were investigated using in-depth interviews. This qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews advocates critical thinking to analyse the ideas and dig deeper into the issues. Semi-structured interviews allow interviewees to bring issues into the discussion while having the flexibility to cover the key areas of research (Daldeniz & Hampton, 2013). They can explore the similarities and differences in opinions between PwD and their family members as well. To ensure that only the most appropriate sample could be solicited, purposive sampling was conducted. The respondents recruited were people with visual impairment or their family members. The questions for the interviews were developed based on Darcy's (2010) study to understand the challenges that the respondents face when they visit a destination. Examples of the questions are "Is travelling important in your life?", "What barriers do you face when you are travelling (with your family member(s))?", "How often do you travel every year?", and "How significant is travelling to you when you travel with your family member(s)?" The interviews were conducted in 2014, and each interview lasted for approximately 1 h. The interviewees were invited from the only association in Macao of which the organising committee members are all people with visual impairment and their family members. A total of 16 interviews were conducted, including 8 people with visual impairment and 8 family members from the organisation. The interviews were conducted in Cantonese by the authors themselves. Prior to conducting the interviews, two pilot interviews were conducted to test the appropriateness of the questions. All the interviews were audio-taped and Chinese transcripts were developed, which were later translated into English by senior university students trained for this purpose. The transcript of each interview was thematically analysed by the authors, who read the transcripts independently, noting common themes and categories, and then combined to check for consistency. The data were coded after reviewing the respondents' transcripts several times and alignment was achieved. The code names reflected both the content and the context of the

respondents' answers to allow more efficient coding and provide meanings for those themes. The emerging themes from the content analysis were sequentially compared, elaborated, and validated through discussion.

4. Data analysis

4.1. Respondents' profile

The total number of respondents was 16, of whom 8 were male and 8 were female; 2 were legally blind, 1 had medium vision, and 5 had low vision. The other 8 respondents were the family members of the visually impaired respondents. Most of the respondents were aged between 46 and 55 (5 respondents), followed by those aged 26–35 (3 respondents), 36–45 (3 respondents), 16–25 (2 respondents), 56–65 (2 respondents), and 66–75 (1 respondent) (see Table 1). All the selected family members were immediate family members, such as father, mother, wife, or daughter. These family members were selected as they admitted that they were the usual travel companions of the visually impaired respondents. Regarding their travelling patterns, most of them travel once per year, mainly travelling to Asia, such as Mainland China and Japan. The length of stay is between two and five days.

Using the studies by Burns et al. (2009) and Small et al. (2012) as a reference, several indicators were chosen for the thematic coding of the transcribed interviews. The themes were then grouped into the three categories of identified challenges ("structural", interpersonal", and "intrapersonal"). Basically, all the interviewees agreed with the benefits of taking holidays specifically in terms of spending quality time with friends and family members, breaking away from the daily routine, and being able to experience different parts of the world. However, echoing the previous studies, it was suggested that interpersonal or intrapersonal barriers were the greatest obstacle preventing them from participating more in tourism (Yau et al., 2004). Two sub-themes were identified for the structural aspect: (1) the usefulness of Braille signage and (2) the lack of assistive technology development. One sub-theme was identified for the interpersonal aspect: the attitudes from society. Three sub-themes were identified for the intrapersonal aspect: (1) a lack of leisure time; (2) the risk perception of family holidays with PwD; and (3) ignorance of their needs in travelling.

4.2. Interview findings

4.2.1. Structural aspect (physical barriers)

Usefulness of Braille signage

Many people with visual impairment want to participate in tourism activities; nevertheless, there are a number of physical factors that affect their participation. Many tourism practitioners consider Braille to be an important tool for people with visual impairment because it allows them to become literate and even to increase their chances of travelling independently. By providing Braille in major tourist facilities, they think that the needs of visually impaired tourists can be fulfilled. However, our research shows that most of the respondents do not know Braille if they have not been blind since birth. Braille is not as user friendly as many PwD and their family members may think, particularly when the Braille has been worn down over the years and has not been replaced, which makes it hard to read. Unclear information may increase the effort required to reach the destination and become another barrier for PwD. The importance of travel information is a foundation for tourism (Marston & Golledge, 2003). Giving and receiving information is a critical aspect, and they may feel even more frustrated if the

Table 1
Respondents' profile.

Interviewees with visual impairment				Family Members			
No.	Gender	Age	Visual impairment	No.	Gender	Age	Visual impairment
D1	M	36–45	Low vision	F1	F	46–55	Blind
D2	M	26–35	Blind	F2	F	46–55	Low vision
D3	F	66–75	Low vision	F3	M	56–65	Low vision
D4	M	26–35	Low vision	F4	M	46–55	Low vision
D5	M	36–45	Low vision	F5	F	16–25	Low vision
D6	F	16–25	Blind	F6	F	26–35	Low vision
D7	M	36–45	Medium vision	F7	F	46–55	Low vision
D8	M	46–55	Low vision	F8	F	56–65	Low vision

information that they gain during travel is worn, outdated, or incomplete. The following extracts illustrate this point:

The stereotype from the public is that people with visual impairment must use Braille. (D1)

I don't know Braille. I am old now and not worth to learn it. (D3)

I never learn the Braille. I don't think that it is useful. (D4)

She has learnt Braille but it seems that it is difficult for her. She is using computer with screen reading tool now. (F1)

My husband tried to learn Braille in Hong Kong before but it was very difficult for him. (F2)

Lack of assistive technology development

People with visual impairment meet barriers of all types. However, technology is helping to lower many of these barriers. Assistive technology, including hardware and software tools such as assistive listening devices/aids and augmentative communication, serve as the functional alternatives for them and their family members. The interview data show that the most important facility that affects people with visual impairment participating in tourism activities is in fact audio systems, such as assistive listening devices. Without the system, the tourism opportunities available to them will be restricted. Wayfinding is a major concern for people with visual impairment when they are in unfamiliar environments (Small et al., 2012). This is important, because many tourism activities will occur in an unfamiliar environment, and navigating in an unknown area without any or sufficient assistance can be challenging. A system with audio announcements in bus stations, airports, and even washrooms will not only enhance the experience of people with visual impairment but also have benefits in helping other people to use public transportation (e.g. the elderly). It can make travel easier for people with visual impairment and perhaps can motivate them to navigate independently. On the other hand, the ability to feel and touch the attractions (real or through objects such as models or prototypes assisted by hardware tools/technology) provides people with visual impairment with an opportunity to learn more about the attractions and destinations. More augmentative communication, like 3D printed miniature models/prototypes and different levels of sensory stimulation, will add interest and excitement to the current Braille/audio information. The following quotes describe these issues:

We travelled to Golden Gate Bridge. The cable was so big that we could not hold it tightly. What an experience! (D1)

It would be better if the airport has the audio system. (D2)

When travelling, (it would be) better to have the audio system. (D3)

Audio system is only for No. 4 bus route. If no one uses this route, does it mean that it is useless? (D6)

Audio system at bus stations and airports can be useful. (D8)

The main barrier during travelling is the washroom. I am male. If there is no toilet for disabilities, I cannot accompany her. I think that the audio system in the washroom may be helpful. (F3)

She is growing up. It is not convenient for a father to accompany her to the washroom. It is better to have audio system equipped in washrooms for both male and female. (F7)

4.2.2. Interpersonal aspect (attitudinal barriers)

Negative attitudes from society

Another factor that can affect PwD and their families in travelling is the negative attitudes of the host community. Negative attitudes towards disabilities and inconsideration can result in negative treatment of PwD. Both people with visual impairment and their family members continue to face challenges involving people's attitudes. People tease others in a harmful way because of their disability. Such mean and hurtful teasing can cause sadness, anger, and a dissatisfactory travel experience. Negative attitudes from the host community indicate that PwD are still not fully integrated within society. Negative attitudes and behaviours have an adverse effect on children and adults with disabilities, leading to negative consequences such as low self-esteem and reduced participation. People may feel unhappy because of their disabilities, then they may avoid going to places, change their routines, or just stay at home. Their family members are affected by the public display of negative attitudes as well. They may perceive grief, depression, and even shame that they are isolated from social activities.

I use a hand held magnifier to read the menu in the restaurants; sometimes, people in restaurants tease me because of such actions. (D4)

I tapped the sidewalk with my cane one day. A woman was stumbled by my cane because of her carelessness. She was angry and charged the fault on me. (D5)

I cannot accept her disability at first; I don't want to join any activity in the beginning. If we travel with other people, they look at us with curious eyes. (F1)

Attitudes towards PwD and their family members have changed gradually over time, but there are still several problems that need to be addressed. According to the quotes above, public understanding of disabilities still seems to be lacking. Negative attitudes may be due to inadequate knowledge. Therefore, knowledge and attitudes are important factors affecting all areas of service provision and social life. Raising awareness and changing negative attitudes are often the first steps towards creating more conducive environments for PwD. They can foster respect for the rights and dignity of PwD and their family members. On the other hand, the private sector in the tourism

industry should actively consult various disability groups and play an active role in raising awareness among their staff members, who can then cater to the specific needs of their various groups of customers.

4.2.3. Intrapersonal aspect (psychological barriers)

Lack of leisure time in gathering

Having a family member with disabilities may increase stress in the family, and it may affect the family members' mental and physical health and even the quality of the relationship between them. The tourism experience may be particularly meaningful for them. The interview data show that the respondents share similar ideas about family holidays. Spending time together as a family is important and enhances the communication among the members. There may also be times when the people with a disability and their family members need to take a break. The ability to spend quality time together, have fun, make happy memories, and escape stressful routines and circumstances are strongly linked with the quality of life and happiness (McCabe & Diekmann, 2015). These issues are described in the following extracts:

After I try to travel with other people with disabilities and their family members, I feel good. Therefore, I will join these activities again if possible. (F1)

We become close to each other when we travel together. (F4)

The meaning of travel is that we can travel together. (F6)

The priority for travelling is someone accompanies me to travel. (D3)

It would be better if the family members accompany me to travel. (D7)

I feel relieved when the family members accompany me to travel. (D8)

Disabilities affect the entire family. Meeting the needs of PwD can put family members under considerable pressure. The respondents demonstrate the desire to spend more time with their family members and would like take a trip together. Travelling plays a very important role in the life of PwD. It is a unique shared experience for family members and can enhance family cohesion, encourage connections among the members, and create unique family memories (Schänzel & Yeoman, 2014). Being accompanied by family members can create the atmosphere for relaxation and space for mutual communication. Meanwhile, those who voluntarily travel more with other PwD and their family members can share or be influenced by their positive attitudes as they experience similar issues. Such travelling experience creates additional meaning beyond the simple quest for relaxation.

Risk perception of family holidays with PwD

For the selection of attractions and destinations, similar to other visitors, PwD consider many factors when choosing a holiday destination, such as personal interests and locations. They are always eager to try new things. However, there may be a slight difference between family holidays with people with disabilities and those without people with disabilities in terms of the factors affecting the destination/attraction selection. Most of the respondents take extra safety precautions in family holidays. Safety becomes the main factor when choosing a destination.

I prefer to travel to destinations that I feel comfortable. (D1)

I don't dare to try the dangerous activities. (D7)

She is blind, I concern about the staircases in order to ensure the safety. (F3)

I need to remind him about the staircases and holes in the streets. (F5)

Moreover, it seems that they prefer to travel to more spacious attraction areas, such as natural sites. This echoes a previous study in which one of the motivations for PwD was the desire to be in a natural environment (Shi, Cole, & Chancellor, 2012). Short holidays (around 2 days) are more likely to match their needs and preferences. Even though people with visual impairment and their family members have different agendas regarding holidays, the people with visual impairment are usually the ones to make the decisions about travelling.

I think that natural environment is important to me. (D8)

I prefer the spacious areas and not crowded. (D6)

If she likes this destination; I will try to take her there. (F1)

I always ask him to look at the trees (during travel), the plants are good for his eyes. (F8)

Ignorance of the needs in travelling

Many tourism planners may assume that they know what PwD want, what they feel, or what suits them best. They may equally assume that PwD prefer to stay at home. In fact, many PwD and their family members are interested in travelling. McCabe, Joldersma, and Li (2010) rank the perceived benefits of travelling for groups who are economically weak or otherwise disadvantaged in tourism participation in the following order: (1) the chance to spend quality time together as a family, (2) the opportunity for fun and making happy memories; and (3) the opportunity to spend time away from difficult and/or stressful routines or circumstances. Travelling thus holds important meanings for people with disability and their family.

I like travelling. I feel happy after travelling. (D3)

Travelling is important; I enjoy it very much. I feel relaxed when I travel. (D4)

I like feeling the places physically. (D5)

I want to try something that is different. (D7)

5. Discussion and implications

Disability is part of the human condition. Almost everyone may be temporarily or permanently impaired to a certain extent during their lifetime, for example through the natural aging process. This underestimated market will inevitably grow in importance in the future due to the aging population phenomenon. Family members provide important support and are the main source of care for PwD. Therefore, when one tries to understand the needs and challenges of PwD, one should also look at the big picture and include the family members.

In terms of theoretical implications, this paper has attempted to expand the knowledge about the importance of family holidays and challenges faced by PwD and their families. It has built on the existing knowledge of this potential tourist market by reinforcing the findings of previous studies and filling the void concerning the insufficient attention paid to family members, with a focus on the visually impaired population. According to the literature review and interview findings, PwD and their family members face multiple barriers in travelling at the same time. Therefore, the three types of barriers are interrelated. A conceptual model linking the structural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal barriers is presented in Fig. 1. A closer investigation of these three types of barriers reveals that they may be analogous to the well-established pull and push theories of tourist motivation proposed by Crompton (1979) but in the opposite way (barriers instead of motivation). Crompton's travel motivational factors theory is applied to the mobility impairment context by Shi et al. (2012), who reinforce the idea that the motivational factors include push (escape from a perceived mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, enhancement of relationships with family and friends,

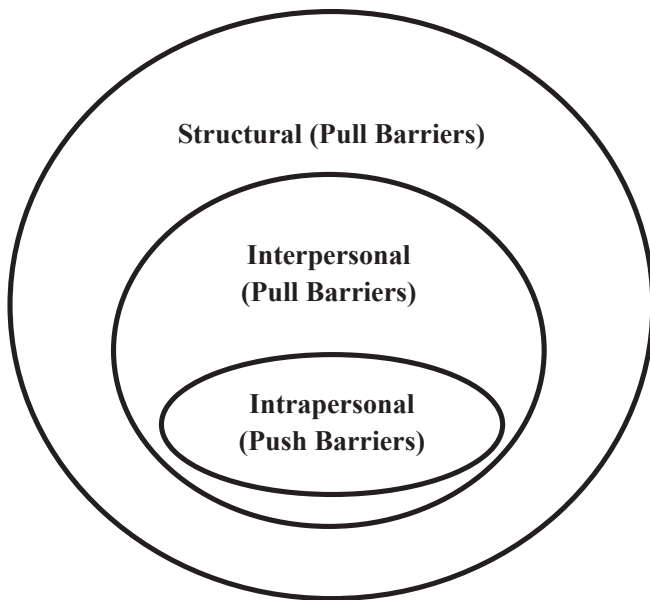


Fig. 1. The conceptual model.

facilitation of social interaction, independence, the desire to be in a natural environment, adventure/risk, do it today) and pull factors (novelty, education accessibility). Our argument is that demotivators can be interpreted as barriers. In fact, many tourism researchers include barriers and motivation in their studies for direct comparison and contrast (Chen & Hsu, 2000; Heung, Kucukusta, & Song, 2011; Huang & Hsu, 2005; Smith, 1987). In other words, the internal responses and feelings explained by the push factor theory are analogous to the intrapersonal barriers explained in this paper, which mainly concern internal reflection and the evaluation of whether/when/how/where to travel (or not). The structural and interpersonal aspects are more destination-related characteristics that are external to the tourists (hence analogous to the pull factors).

Our research findings show that people with visual impairment often desire to travel with their family members. In addition, although the structural aspects, such as the lack of Braille signs and information, sound, and physical accessibility, may affect their travel decision and experience, as reported by many other tourism researchers, interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects play an important role in (de)motivating PwD and their families to travel. The findings support Yau, McKercher, and Packer's (2004) work in which intrapersonal barriers are suggested as the greatest obstacle to participating in tourism. The results from the analyses give an insight into the needs of PwD and their family members in travelling to the destinations. However, both PwD and their family members are concerned more about safety when they make the decision to travel. PwD feel stressed if they travel without their family members. This explains why many PwD tend to travel less than those without disabilities. As a result, these data give direction to researchers regarding the importance of not only physical accessibility of the destinations but also the reduction of stress and anxiety before and during their travel. This preliminary hint indicates that the intrapersonal barriers might be lowered when they consider each other as travel companions rather than "patient and caretaker". Tourism practitioners need to put effort into removing such intrapersonal barriers and alleviating stress by making the destination a friendlier, more accommodating, and more universal place where everyone feels that they are alike and treated equally.

The results also allow researchers to extend the importance of interpersonal relationships as a facilitator of travel. Interpersonal barriers are the negative results of interpersonal interaction and relationships with others (mainly the host community in this case). In particular, undesirable attitudes from the host community have a large impact on respondents' decision-making regarding travelling. Bedini (2000) mentions that attitudinal barriers are another important issue in the tourism industry, because negative staff attitudes affect the leisure satisfaction of individuals. Even though previous research shows that tourism can provide mental and physical benefits to individuals with disabilities (Lee et al., 2012), the findings show that the respondents may lose confidence and feel helplessness as a result of negative daily experiences and create intrapersonal barriers to their participation in tourism. Their family is often their main source of support or bridge when faced with such an interpersonal relationship challenge. Therefore, the results echo the literature that asserts that a better relationship between the family members can reduce tension and enhance their quality life (Minnaert et al., 2009).

For people born with an impairment, it usually makes little difference to their quality of life, as they have nothing with which they can compare their current existence. People who become disabled due to injury or disease can feel depressed. In fact, many respondents expressed that they did not know what to do at the beginning and that it was not easy for them to adapt to their new deteriorated situation. Their family members also need to re-evaluate their attitude toward the disability and start coping with the changes in their daily life. Finding the new way and meaning of life becomes crucial for them. The negative attitude towards PwD and their family members is an area that requires attention. Thus, interpersonal aspects can be the facilitator to reduce the intrapersonal barriers in changing attitudes towards travelling. Intrapersonal barriers are considered as core barriers for both groups, while interpersonal barriers are the facilitators and contribute to the intrapersonal barriers.

On the other hand, the results indicate that travelling is meaningful from the interpersonal viewpoint. Relaxation is recognised as central to a healthy and happy life (Beeton, 2001). Understanding the constraints that affect people's intention to travel can promote their travel participation (Lee et al., 2012). A positive travelling experience can restore the confidence of people with visual impairment and their family members. It is crucial to ensure a pleasant travelling experience through positive attitudes from the host community towards travellers with a disability and their family members. The literature supports the assertion that positive experiences in holidays can bring benefits to mental health, physical health, well-being, happiness, and quality of life (Dolnicar, Yanamandram, & Cliff, 2012). Both groups can benefit from an improvement in their family relationship, which could lead people with visual impairment to have better self-esteem and behaviours. For their family members, it could encourage a more active and positive lifestyle for the family. After they have spent time together on holiday and engaged in new activities, such a new behaviour pattern is repeated at home (Figueiredo et al., 2012). Therefore, a pleasant travel experience may have a long-lasting impact beyond the trip itself by promoting family harmony in the long run. Another issue concerns social inclusion and equity. Tourism should be accessible for everyone. McCabe and Diekmann (2015) highlight the issue of how to ensure tourism opportunities for everyone in society. However, many destinations focus mostly on attracting "high-yield" tourists who are willing to spend more, so family holidays are being edged out by the push to attract higher-spending socioeconomic groups (Beeton, 2001). As a result, family holidays are important in daily life and enhance the togetherness with family members. A holiday with family members plays an

important role in enriching family relationships. The need is suggested to ensure fair participation of all groups of people within a universal setting that can both accommodate the group with special needs but at the same time be acceptable by most other people. Destinations need to become more aware of the demands of PwD and their family members.

In terms of practical implications, although family holidays have been mainstreamed within the social care policies of many countries in the world, there is still limited application in the tourism context. The interview data provide evidence to support the benefits to PwD and their families if the conditions allow or even encourage them to engage more in tourism activities. Most people with visual impairment can continue with their mundane lifestyle by only staying at home. However, with some slight changes by addressing the barriers mentioned in this paper, their life can be augmented considerably. With the information provided, tourism practitioners should be aware of customers' needs, regardless of their bodily conditions, and provide high-quality services for all customers. Structural barriers are basic obstacles in the environment that can limit PwD and their family members from travelling to a destination, and with little tricks these can be reduced significantly. Front-line service staff should be trained on the types of barriers that people with visual impairment may face and try to help them overcome such interpersonal barriers through their service provision process. Intrapersonal barriers are probably the most challenging ones to address, as they involve psychological responses. However, with increased awareness and understanding of the internal reflection and concerns of visually impaired people and their families, hopefully the situation can be improved. For example, by reducing the structural and interpersonal barriers, PwD may feel more confident about travelling (with or without companions). This can help to relieve their anxiety or stress towards travelling (an intrapersonal response).

People with visual impairment and with different levels of constraints will certainly have different needs; thus, it is challenging to satisfy everybody. According to the results, there should be no huge difference in servicing people with or without visual impairment. In fact, only small changes in the facilities, such as an audio system in the washroom, can remove many of the structural barriers, which is exactly the concept of "universal design", that is, a design that is conducive for all. Universal design is the design of an environment so that it can be accessed to the greatest extent possible by all people, regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability. Destinations should improve the quality of accessible provision by adopting the universal design approach (Vila et al., 2015), which can enhance the overall travel experience of all tourist groups. Sustainable travel is the future of travel. As the world's population grows, tourism participation from the mainstream market segments will continue to increase, putting even more pressure on the destinations' attractions and resources. People with visual impairment and their families are interested in travelling but prefer more spacious and natural environments, channelling their tourist activities to the less crowded and even under-used tourist areas. Moreover, travel is dangerous and expensive for most people (Whittington, 2014). Tourism seasonality is a major issue within tourism, and the implementation of strategies to extend the shoulder seasons in the destinations is suggested (Hinch & Jackson, 2010). Since people with an impairment and their families are often more concerned about trip safety, they may be more likely to choose to travel during low or shoulder seasons. Accordingly, the tourism capacity may be less stressful, as crowds are more evenly distributed both spatially and temporally. People can enjoy the attractions more and have better quality time on site. In conclusion, it can help to contribute to the overall sustainability and competitiveness of the destinations.

6. Conclusions and limitations

The public's view mainly focuses on physical changes in facilities for PwD and typically ignores or underestimates the beneficial effects of the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects explained in this study. Although those changes in a family holiday may seem small, they are fundamental for further development of the quality of life. Furthermore, the United Nations (2006) promotes a convention on the rights of persons with a disability and suggests that there is a need to empower people to have independent, dignified, and equitable tourism experiences. However, PwD usually have fewer choices than others. Most societies still have limited accessibility, like Macao. Meanwhile, PwD's higher reliance on others guarantees a risk-free leisure activity. They are more likely to rely on their family members and feel comfortable when they spend holidays with family members. Nevertheless, the travelling of both PwD and their family members has not received much academic attention. As a result, this paper recognises and addresses the challenges that both groups encounter. There is still a long journey ahead for Macao (and other destinations alike) to explore how it can become a better destination for accessible tourism.

Future research is needed to overcome some limitations of this paper. Because of the small number of participants and the exploratory nature of the study, the results may not be applicable to all travellers with disabilities. Therefore, there may be a lack of generalizability of the results. The results highlight the important role of families in determining how much physical activity PwD undertake. Implementing the strategies may encourage PwD and their family members to participate more frequently in travelling. Future studies should also consider other types of disabilities and the challenges faced by their family members for a better comparison and to determine whether the same three barrier themes (namely structural, intrapersonal, and interpersonal) prevail. In addition, if possible, future research can try to include a larger sample to increase the generalizability of the results to a wider population, including tourism practitioners and policy makers in the picture.

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