

Removing “invisible” barriers: opening paths towards the future of accessible tourism

Rafael Cruces Portales

Rafael Cruces Portales is Researcher in Anthropology PhD Program at Universidad Miguel Hernández, UMH, Elche, Spain.

Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the analysis and grasp of accessible tourism, from its present into a medium-term future. It provides a socio-anthropological approach.*

Design/methodology/approach – *This paper uses the scenarios-planning analysis framework proposing four scenarios arising from the interaction of aforementioned driving forces. The author also use a trilemma to both form and evaluate scenarios. The criteria for the trilemma were (stakeholders, cooperation and prejudice).*

Findings – *The strength of combining a new set of driving forces, namely, empathy, apathy, certainty in economic profits and fear of economic losses, which would enable to draw four plausible scenarios into the future of accessible tourism within a scenarios-planning framework. The significance is to provide “food for thought” to address the future through a range of different concepts.*

Research limitations/implications – *The main limitation is the difficulty to obtain honest answers about why the lack of development of accessible tourism.*

Practical implications – *Participant observation on both groups and individuals in vacation atmosphere. Also, in-depth interviews to different stakeholder representatives.*

Social implications – *To try to explain to the stakeholders their wasted economic benefits and, at the same time, the opportunity of getting social prestige.*

Originality/value – *The main value is about considering the interplay of social concepts as empathy, apathy, “aesthetic prejudice” and fear of losses or faith in profits.*

Keywords *Prejudice, Benefits, Education, Empathy, Future, Apathy*

Paper type *Conceptual paper*

Introduction

Will tourism in the future be or not be accessible for all? Will people with disabilities, as well, be able to enjoy their travels and holidays as any other tourists nowadays do? Could accessible tourism become a niche instead of a segment within the tourism sector in the near future? Will technology, indeed, be able to remove barriers and show the path of faith in benefit of the tourism industry? And what about education? Will we know how to play its fundamental role so as to overcome attitudinal prejudices? And society, will it make its borders with diversity sufficiently flexible in the future?

In addition to these questions, we can add some other important considerations that might shed light on the issue of the future of a type of tourism characterized by very special requirements. Among such reflections, we can wonder if public bodies will carry on playing a timid and reluctant role or otherwise they are going to really involve themselves in order to create imaginative solutions of support to both the industry and people with disabilities in the future.

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We are in a world where specialization is the way that responds to the huge number of needs that our civilization has developed. Perhaps a future full-inclusive society where everybody would be able to have a satisfactory tourism experience needs to go through clearly planned different phases. Maybe an intermediate stage might be constituted by a specialization that is planned and carried out in an exemplary manner. Possibly in the future, all types of businesses that integrate the chain of travel and accessibility in a pleasant holiday experience must work altogether within a seamless system.

Following studies by Veil (1978) is possible to infer that specialization has nothing to do with marginalization and/or segregation. However, examples of good practices from businesses based on success in specialization in accessible tourism could be the best encouragement for others.

It is surprising that capitalism so far, despite its usual greed, has not made a greater effort to enhance productivity and development of this business segment within the tourism sector. So, what is the reason? Could it be that capitalism did not believe in tourism for people with disabilities as a real business opportunity? If so, what would it need to change this trend in the future?

A scenario-planning approach

Definitely, all these questions and uncertainties lead us to raise a number of scenarios where we can imagine not a perfect and preferred future but several possibilities depending on the interaction of different driving forces.

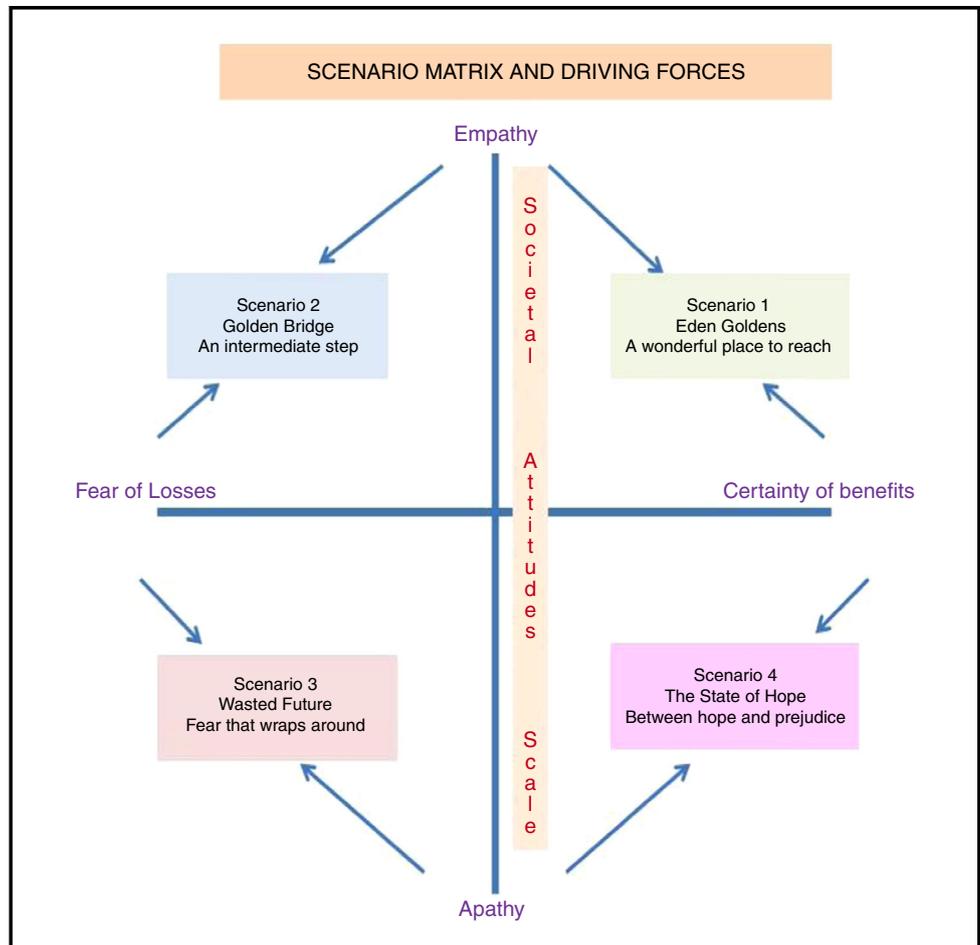
We intend to culminate in painting four scenarios as seen in Figure 1. They derive from a scale of two opposite societal attitudes toward disability in the future, such as empathy or apathy. To this we have added two more opposite driving forces related to the dynamic of the risk businesses are willing to assume. This depicts the typical dilemma between the certainty of investment costs and the uncertainty of benefits or – in other words – the fear of losses.

As a result of a varied and dynamical interplay among drivers arise the scenarios which represent all feasible future situations. The first scenario has been termed *Eden Gardens*. Here a destination is described where the driving forces relate harmoniously working together overcoming the barriers that prevented people with disabilities from enjoying tourism. The stakeholders grasped the importance of rowing in the same direction. As a consequence, success was immediate and the costs of investment so as to make the tourism experience accessible and likable were written off in the first year. Within the first six months, an important increase in overnight stays was noticed, with its positive effects on the entire local economy.

The second scenario dares to portray a transitory situation as a bridge to a longer term future based on specialization, as a niche but fueled by empathy toward disability and therefore, lacking any sign of marginalization. A close connection with people with disabilities in order to know their needs and expectations first-hand and its further participation in the process of making accessible the whole chain of travel and accessibility were decisive, as was suggested in Buhalis *et al.* (2012). Here, some of the key stakeholders openly expressed fear of economic loss but, at the same time, they believed in the message of people with disabilities to be willing to visit their facilities if the promises of adapting them were fulfilled. This scenario, which has been called *Golden Bridge*, is an attempt to move forward in the right direction of preaching with the example. Brinckmann and Wildgen (2003) recommend enhancing the know how about treating people with disabilities adequately, putting yourself in another's shoes, constitutes the best way to understand them and thus be able to provide a nice tourism experience.

The core of the third scenario draws a fatalistic picture where each stakeholder in the field of tourism for people with disabilities is sailing alone and paddling upstream. As a result, they are losing faith in the future success of accessible tourism because of the certainty of the investment costs to adapt their facilities and a constant fear of economic losses. Within such an environment apathy becomes contagious. This scenario has been called *Wasted Future*.

Figure 1 Scenario matrix and driving forces



Finally, the last scenario, number four, shows a hope for development of accessible tourism in the future because of this evidence: the ageing of the world population. Particularly in western developed countries and considering their relatively high-purchasing power, this group would be expected to be taken into account. The population in this area over 60 years in 2050[1] will be 417 million out of a total of 1,200 million, that is, a 34.75 percent. Life expectancy at birth of this group is estimated at 82.8 years. This scenario has been termed *The State of Hope*.

Whichever scenario unfolds, accessible tourism is currently facing a range of alternatives and decisions about its future. The scenarios drawn head toward the future in a sequential dynamic of the current reality, which is close to the circumstances described in the so-called *Wasted Future*. Today there is a significant disconnection between the stakeholders in the field of accessible tourism. Battles are held separately and efforts are not shared. The fundamental role of public authorities as promoters of an appropriate framework, as incentivators for the necessary aids, as coordinators of adequate strategies and guarantors of the rights of persons with disabilities is under the umbrella of political correctness. This translates into a timorous performance of their duties, which is very discouraging to take faith in this segment of the tourism sector. At the same time, the official discourse posits the need to approach a context like *Eden Gardens*. For this, a profuse, innovative and well-intentioned regulation have been created and however, reflects the gap between the situation of fact and law. This divergence corresponds to an apparent indifference on the part of the industry. Another deficiency of crucial importance is the lack of inclusion in the curricula of tourism studies of a subject as accessible tourism. Furthermore, a practical and continuous training program of both all staff levels and managerial is absolutely necessary.

All the scenarios attempt to travel to the future through different ways, trying to take into account the main elements of the history of accessible tourism so far. Some are bold and some quite radical, but the purpose is to dare to think differently.

The scenarios

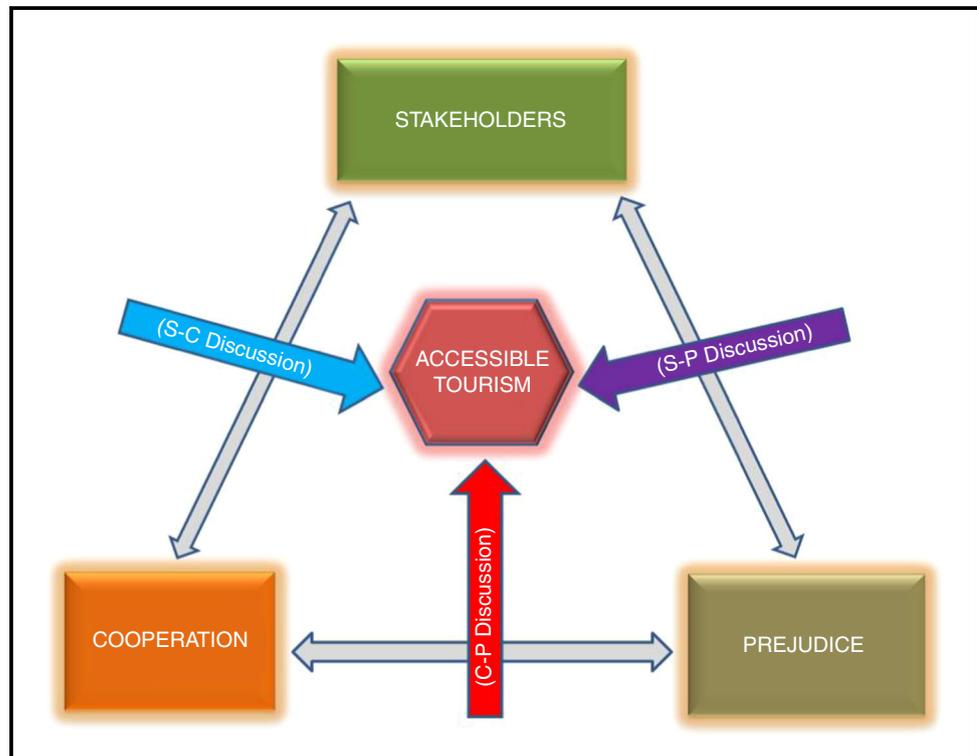
Four scenarios have been constructed to draw four different ways and outcomes for the future of accessible tourism. They were designed on the basis of an economic system whose dogma is to intensify the benefit. All scenarios have faced different situations which discussed if benefit and accessible tourism would be compatible. If there is, indeed, a segment or just a niche.

The methodological scenario-planning framework shows us the necessary introduction of several models of social behavior that alter or influence the environment where and why things happen, including its consequences, as can be seen in Oliver (1990). In addition, a schedule of changes is presented in each scenario. After that, a brief economic insight is provided to help understand the overall context better.

To this we must add a number of variants that interfere in the events crucially, namely, technology, stakeholders, education, prejudice, regulation, cooperation, specific training of staff and the appearance of facilitating agencies. Some of these variants have been clustered in a methodological trilemma structure where the achievement of any two depends on the third (Obstfeld *et al.*, 2005), as shown in Figure 2.

This trilemma includes accessible tourism's stakeholders, the necessary cooperation among them and the issue of prejudice that permeates all other circumstances. We can admit that any prevalence of prejudice in society would have an impact on cooperative attitude between people and thus the interests of the stakeholders would distance. On the other hand, the prevalence of cooperation might be expected to strengthen synergies between stakeholders and consequently reduce levels of prejudice. In such circumstances, the prioritization of

Figure 2 A trilemma for the future of accessible tourism



stakeholders' benefits would bring much progress in overcoming prejudices and the cooperative attitude of society.

By matching the way that the brain works, we use narrative to facilitate a better understanding of a given situation through storytelling. As in Yeoman *et al.* (2012), we employ scenario planning across a number of purposeful uses from prediction, prognosis, science fiction and utopia. However, the scenarios are conceived to improve the present based on plausible behaviors that could occur tomorrow. As Moriarty points out:

Scenarios are not solely about the future; they provide a basis for considering how current plans might be impacted or improved if subjected to some plausible situation in the future. After all, every improvement lies in the future (Moriarty, 2012, p. 10).

Scenario 1: Eden Garden

Summary

This scenario describes a future where consensus, cooperation and empathy prevail above all. It is an utopian community living in an ideal place where anyone would want to spend their holidays. From a tourism prospect, it is a destination characterized by beautiful natural landscapes, pleasant climate all year round, where establishments, products and services are adapted to all kinds of tourists. Diversity has been chosen as the backbone of a system that aims to reconcile social inclusion and economic prosperity.

All these circumstances are accompanied by the presence of nice, friendly and helpful people. Besides, the latest technology, such as smart vehicles and next-generation devices, are provided. They are capable of simultaneous multilingual translation, including sign language with virtual holographic assistance that can act as a personal assistant and serve as the perfect host.

Introduction

Such a destination could be shown as a place where both tourists and industry want to be. Multiple leisure attractions such as the very famous Le Cirque de Paradise, and some relevant cultural activities, such as itinerant exhibitions like Picasso's Dream for All, and collections of archaeological remains from the most important ethnological museums in the world are present here.

One of the most important factors taken into account by the authorities and those involved in tourism is the sustainability (Darcy *et al.*, 2010), or continuance of the project that has turned the town into a paradigm of tourism for all. For this, a balanced supply of occupation has been provided by offering available products, services and accommodation so that the quality of visitors' stays prevails as the major value. All values are summarized into its motto: "Excellence without exception."

Another cornerstone of this scenario is the recognized significance of education in the area of knowledge called "Tourism for All." As a result, an exclusive institute specialized in each of the areas related to a quality vision of tourism that includes it all without exception was created two decades ago. The consequence of that initiative has derived in the establishment of an educational worldwide reference center. Every year, stakeholders' representatives attend its training courses. Acquired skills are updated through a lifelong training process. Participants learn to deal with all kinds of tourists regardless their needs or requirements. Understanding and meeting their expectations is one of the main objectives. After all, tourists are people who simply want to make things interesting without discomfort. The matter is about creating an environment where you do not need to worry about anything but the demands of consumers.

What is taught is to create value through actions that increase the value of services, products and experiences, constructing an "Experience Economy" in the sense expressed by Pine and Gilmore (1998).

Scenario behaviors

The general behaviors spectrum in this scenario is chaired by a predisposition to cooperation between stakeholders looking for a win-win economic situation and supported on an empathic mindset.

Putting yourself in another's shoes helps to become aware of the need and the right that everyone has to have access to and be assisted with respect and dignity.

The combination among pursuing legitimate benefits and the necessary observance of fulfilling with excellence in the whole chain of tourism experience will keep the project in the sustainability line. An excellent service-minded behavior is continuously trained. But the cooperative behavior could not be spontaneous and harsh measures and penalties are intended for those who may be uncooperative.

There are shared beliefs and values in an innovative, technological and sustainable environment. In addition, the tourism policy is about getting the right to travel and enjoy memorable experiences for all, creating a distinctive added value.

The consequences of these empathic behaviors, mixed with a strong faith in the certainty of the benefits of adopting suitable changes, were addressed to a steady and accumulative growth in tourism for all kinds of tourists over the last 20 years. And, of course, it became a model to follow, getting numerous awards and worldwide recognition. Nowadays it is acknowledged as a tourism paradise where everyone, regardless of your personal, physical and cognitive conditions, is able to have an excellent stay and consequently an unforgettable experience.

Schedule of changes

2016: on December 13th, a solemn ceremony commemorating the adoption of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was held in New York. This ceremony was attended by the 170 countries that had ratified that convention so far. A commitment to strengthen efforts to improve the quality of life of these people through promoting their tourism experiences was specifically proclaimed.

2022: residual economic problems arising from the Great Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008 have led to a decline in the tourism satellite account in the main receiving countries. This has caused the industry to try to expand its results by reaching populations that had been ignored, including people with disabilities and older people, a collective that is increasing.

2030: *Eden Gardens* project is launched. The Tourism for All Institute began its life emphasizing aspects of social awareness about disability understood as diversity and never as inequality, and through practical workshops for direct and specialized treatment of people with all types of special needs.

2040: in the last ten years a remarkable change in attitude toward people with disabilities is observed. This has been possible thanks to the formative work carried out by the institute. Raising awareness on human diversity and its rich contributions to the entire society has been the main goal of the training courses. These were carried out through interaction with people with disabilities. Lanes for adapted vehicles have been built citywide, with abundant places to recharge their batteries and meeting areas, relaxation and fun in the spacious parkland scattered throughout the city.

2050: due to the increasing importance of the ageing phenomenon during last decades, 2050 has been proclaimed The Platinum International Year. On the occasion of this commemoration, multiple attractive events were scheduled all around the world. The alter-capable^[2] people (under the new name adopted by the UN) and those over 60 years will have all kinds of support: economic through important discounts, personal assistance and technological next-generation devices, to name a few.

Economic insight

The scenario started in mid-GFC and the world was embroiled in financial difficulties. Credit to businesses and homes was still very weak from traditional financial institutions. But the appearance on the scene of the so-called ethical banking with its special interest in funding initiatives that result in the benefit of society, especially interested in profitable projects considering those that are normally related to ignored collectives, brought the opportunity to launch the *Eden Gardens* project.

After the first impetus of ethical banking, the first positive results began to appear. This provided the stimulus for traditional banks to join the development of the project and further enabled its

consolidation as a reality. There was a 10 percent increase in overnight stays in the first year. From the second year onwards between 2 and 5 percent each year were achieved. An overall and steady 34 percent increase has been reached in the last two decades.

Meeting for human diversity: building a tourism for all

The meeting held on December 13, 2009 took place in the Madrid headquarters of the UNWTO. All tourism ministers of the signatory countries of the convention of 2006 met to give a new and definitive boost to tourism of diversity worldwide. Examples of progress in this field were especially shown and the case of *Eden Gardens* was presented as the paradigm, as an integral role model.

The meeting was opened by Spanish Queen Leonor I. Her speech was a summary of the changes in society over the past four decades putting the focus especially on the ageing world phenomenon and the universal model of quality life parameters in ultra-developed societies. The Queen said as follows:

I want to thank the ministers of tourism for attending this ceremony. Today we celebrate the 43rd anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Such rights improving their quality of life were recognized through leisure, rest and tourism. In the last four decades we experienced political, social and economic changes. These have resulted in a significant advance in technological innovation, the development of collaborative networks of socio-economic agents, progressive social awareness towards diversity through the general education of all layers of society and further specialized training for all professionals involved in tourism.

But the road has been hard, sometimes very hard. The tipping point came to put the focus on the unspeakable presence of what so many social scientists have termed "*aesthetic prejudice*" [3]. A sort of unconscious filter built with different stereotypes which is in the eye of manipulating the images, removing and pulling them out of the canon of normality, a kind of stigma as it was described by Goffman (1970/2012). This discovery was a major step to address the real problem of the hitherto negative social attitude toward diversity. Since then they have implemented educational programs to retrain the look towards difference, with magnificent results.

Innovation in technology has provided another cornerstone in the development of accessibility for all. Tourism has benefited from this progress. The emergence of a virtual world through holographic personal assistants contributed to definitely change the communication and information aspects in the tourism sector. Convertible electric vehicles with capacity to overcome obstacles have been a major push to expand the mobility of people with physical dysfunction. Here, we encourage you today to get lower costs to acquire these devices so that they are available to all.

Finally, I do not want to miss this opportunity to congratulate the promoters of the very laureate Eden Gardens Project for having offered its exemplary way forward for other initiatives that surely will join the one undertaken by them to consolidate a tourist industry based on Experience Economy.

This story shows us some different trends in a potential future society, like:

- dynamics of social change toward creating collaborative synergies between social, political, educational and technological fields;
- the ongoing assessment of education so as to solve old attitudinal barriers;
- technological application of innovative and sustainable devices;
- business awareness of the need to embrace the Experience Economy; and
- increasing consensus to adopt harsh measures for those who behave in an unsupportive way.

Scenario 2: Golden Bridge

Summary

Accessible tourism seems to be a diamond mine that few dare to exploit. Large numbers of business potential are given by some studies (Neumann and Reuber, 2004) that are quite likely to be suffering from a statistical bias. However, some other studies cast doubts on the actual existence of such a productive segment. Certain investment costs seem more important than the

uncertainty of promised benefits. This driving force reduces the number of businesses who dare to invest for fear of losses. And many doubt the fidelity of persons with disabilities to attend their establishments despite having made the adjustment costs. Nevertheless, a strong awareness about the relevance of education is present in this scenario these days. Consequently, education has become the backbone of society. In 2050, a deep knowledge about disability and strengthening the value of respect toward elderly people has become a priority.

As a result, empathy has emerged toward these groups and thus there have been a growing number of private initiatives that have seen in specializing a way to meet the needs and expectations of these groups. At the same time, they have seen a good business opportunity.

Introduction

This scenario intends to use specialization as a way to construct a necessary development of skills to attend a special kind of clients in order to meet their expectations when holidaying. It is not discrimination at all, but specialization as an easier and more direct way to satisfy them, instead.

For two decades there has been a great social debate about whether it was a way to segregate these groups separating them from the rest, or if instead it was to create opportunities in the absence of widespread inclusive dynamics.

Finally, a number of brave entrepreneurs with a high level of empathy and preparation decided to risk launching their initiatives directly to people with disabilities and the elderly with extraordinary economic results.

Taking advantage of this attainment, they have begun to consolidate *Golden Bridge* as a specialized brand to convey the idea of excellence. Customers are supporting the initiative with their testimonies. A niche has been built, but people are happy instead of marginalized or discriminated.

Scenario behaviors

The overarching behaviors here are shaped by friendly people who like to share time and experiences together. The GFC has eased the emergence of other aspects of relationships among people that have led to the awareness and ability to understand the needs of others better. This simultaneously has raised business ideas based on the satisfaction of others with the distinction of having their own special requirements.

This empathic behavior, at this time, coexists with others guided by fear of economic failure. The latter behavior leads us to close the door to business opportunities and understand the reality of other groups hindering their social inclusion.

The main consequence of this dichotomous situation, like Abberley (1997) noted, is the social polarization between those who believe in the opportunity to step up and change some old realities, and those who are afraid of changing the status quo for fear of the unknown, preferring the devil they know rather than what would be good to know.

Schedule of changes

2021. An international conference was held in Brussels so as to assess the results of the European Strategy 2020. As a result of the evaluation, it was decided, among other measures, to further enhance the specialization of education systems to improve results in the creation of new areas aimed at both young entrepreneurs and skilled workers. Powerful lines of credit are created to finance business initiatives related to tourism with priority on accessible tourism and the elderly.

2035. After two decades working hard in participation with disabled and elderly people through local associations sharing spaces and time in the neighborhoods, it is decided to use this expertise in workshops to train front-line staff and managers who were interested in specializing their tourism and leisure businesses. The initiative is exported to Europe and other developed and developing countries.

2050. After a journey of between five and ten years, all types of businesses were consolidated in the travel and accessibility chain that is accessible tourism through a strong specialization. Good results have begun to create synergies that are resulting in early fully accessible destinations.

Economic insight

The European Union realized that the European Strategy 2020 had not produced the desired results. It was decided to support youth, highly specialized education and to finance joint projects where strength and enthusiasm were attached to experience and participation.

Finally, although under supervision, young people stricken by overall unemployment in 2020 had the opportunity to train thoroughly and obtain the financial resources required to develop those joint projects and innovative initiatives at a very low interest.

In 2050, was proved and admitted that young people have no fear of economic losses and they prioritize enthusiasm for success. They are open to changes and have optimal predisposition to share practical knowledge.

The better specialization, the more satisfaction: the most direct way to excellence

As the United Nations Secretary General Elisabeth Harris said in her speech of 2050:

The social integration of disadvantaged groups is a major issue in 2050 as it was in 2006, when the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was approved. In those far-off days all of us thought that such a proclamation would work as an engine pushing our minds towards awareness about disability, as everyone would realize that from birth onwards there is a path full of situations where anyone can become disabled. But we never think it can affect us. Now because of ageing it seems to be much closer to reality than ever.

We encourage all countries, like the EU did over 25 years ago, to support and fund specialized education about disability and the elderly. Researching in technology will also be welcomed. As it was already promoted by the EU, it is absolutely necessary to join wills to get that social awareness, specific training and state-of-the-art technology to work together in an Experience Economy. In a world that constantly tends to the ageing of its population, we need the vigorous participation of our young people. They are the future in a world where diversity must be the main goal. From this rostrum I want to remember today our commitment with the entire society, we must never forget to work with "Excellence without exception."

This narrative reflects some trends in society, such as:

- An increasing empathic position toward disabled people, as the progressive ageing of the population presents us with the risk of suffering any kind of disability at some point in life with a very high probability.
- A clear penchant for specialization in the field of accessible tourism. It looks sympathetically at creating a niche business, free of discriminatory bias.
- To value youth as an instrument of change in the attitude toward disability. To trust their strength, enthusiasm and specialized training in accessible tourism.

Scenario 3: Wasted Future

Summary

The core of the third scenario draws a fatalistic picture where each stakeholder in the field of tourism for people with disabilities is sailing alone and paddling upstream, because they consider that their interests are incompatible. As a result, they are losing faith in the future success of accessible tourism on account of the certainty of the investment costs to adapt their facilities. There is a constant fear of economic losses that leads them to maintain a posture of apathy and ignore the economic potential postulated by specialized international organizations. Additionally, among the regulation and the institutions that are responsible for monitoring its compliance there is a deep gap. On the one hand, a permissive stance and, moreover, a glaring lack of interest in supporting the few private initiatives that are presented to them and require a great effort. Within such an environment, apathy becomes contagious.

Introduction

The scenario we have called *Wasted Future* tries to convey the risk of a society that remains unmoved because it is afraid of shifting and, therefore, refuses to undertake investments that open up new financial paths. Accordingly, a contrary mainstream position to overtake discriminatory situations will prevail instead of being openly interested in seeking business opportunities.

In such an environment, education is in decline moments where the lack of government resources is leading to reduced access to education and lower quality. This results in the strengthening of old prejudices.

At the same time, underfunding makes technology innovation projects set their focus on areas that have traditionally proven cost-effective, preventing the development of other fields which will open new and necessary possibilities.

A scenario like this one encapsulates the present situation and its impact on the future of accessible tourism as it needs important attitudinal and strategic changes. Poor education, low funds and conservative mindsets are not good counselors to develop an activity that needs so much from these elements.

Scenario behaviors

The main driving forces of behavior in this scenario refer to indifference (or “apathy”) toward injustice and “fear of risking.” This scenario portrays a future world where the GFC seems to prevent recovering the pulse of the past and the Islamic State (IS) is a global threat. Its terrorist activities extending from anywhere in the world have created a widespread feeling of fear which, in turn, have led to an excessive individualism.

Security requirements to prevent attacks would make the measures even more annoying and slower than nowadays. Eventually, this situation would result in an overall decline in tourism. There would be fewer people traveling and each tourist would spend less money on their stay.

The consequences of this global atmosphere would be a sort of gentrification of tourism. Tourism would be for tourists with high-purchasing power demanding all kinds of security measures, anonymity and exacerbated hedonism. In this context, a tourist segment as such, which could accommodate accessible tourism, would be unthinkable and unattractive.

Schedule of changes

2020. Several terrorist attacks worldwide in the last three years brought panic to travel. People with disabilities were the first group that contributed to the decline in tourism in traditionally major destinations.

2030. A protective environment for persons with disabilities results in a return to the past, losing a lot of the progress achieved in the last three decades in regard to overall disability.

2040. It has already been 20 years of involution due to the terror imposed by the IS. A social devaluation of disability in an attempt to overprotect disabled people has occurred.

2050. The GFC is already a part of our lives. There is a widespread feeling of pessimism due to the inability to overcome the Great Depression of the third millennium. Everything has stalled. The “development” concept has disappeared from the discourse and the practice.

Economic insight

An exaggerated economic protectionism has resulted in autarkic practices in many developed and developing countries. The lack of confidence in the recovery and the exit from the Great Depression of the third millennium has eliminated any possibility of financing new projects.

Ageing has further aggravated the situation as it is seen as a problem rather than an opportunity. At the same time, young people with a serious problem of apathy toward the future have lost their

traditional imaginative potential. This is a waste of talent and energy that only helps to worsen the chances of economic regeneration.

In this stagnation atmosphere, an egocentric behavior represented by “me first” has led to radical changes in the tourism market. Stakeholders do not seek synergies but their exclusive interest to the detriment of others. This behavior is strangling the chances of economic recovery.

Through a desert that seems endless

A few days ago, the President of the Global Platform for a New Economy, the Uruguayan Alejandra Portales, gave a speech that was widely reported in the international media. The world was shocked by her deep analysis of the current situation and her reflections on the steps that have led us to where we are today.

In her speech, she highlights issues as follows:

Today, on March 20th 2050, I would like to let you know about an invitation to reflect on our current reality. The states of the 21st century, both developed and developing countries have long since fallen into pessimism and distrust because of the GFC that began in 2007. But, do you know what actually happened to get here? The ageing phenomenon has contributed to obstruct the desirable economic expansion. We were advised of this risk, but we have looked the other way, ignoring the consequences. In addition, as everything can be good or bad depending on the approach, we failed to see the economic opportunities provided by this phenomenon.

With budget cuts on critical issues such as education, we have wasted the talent of youth, which was already reduced. The growing pessimism in the future brought the self-fulfilling prophecy of protectionism. The world has been constructed through a misgiving and distrust attitude that led to common apathy to start new businesses.

All of us have seen our quality of life diminish. Tourism as a superior expression of that quality of life has reduced its activity for the first time in its history. A group that was moving in the conquest of their rights and began to travel with encouraging improvements in the accessibility chain have seen how their claims were fading due to the aforementioned context. I am referring to people with disabilities. With this recoil, society abandons, almost from the beginning, its goal of inclusiveness and diversity. Here, we can see another consequence of a society driven by fear and indifference.

This narrative implies some trends, for instance:

- social apathy has the effect of distrust in the perception of the new economic opportunities;
- ageing is perceived as an irremediable and negative impact on economy;
- an education in decline breeds mistrust and fear of change; and
- the decrease in quality of life entails decrease in accessibility.

Scenario 4: The State of Hope

Summary

This scenario shows a hope for development of accessible tourism in the future because of certain evidence: the ageing of the world population. Particularly in western developed countries and considering their relatively high-purchasing power, this group would be expected to be taken into account according to the latest *World Population Prospects. The 2012 Revision*, published by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division of the United Nations, the population in this area over 60 years in 2050 will be 417 million out of a total of 1,200 million, that is, a 34.75 percent. Life expectancy at birth of this group is estimated at 82.8 years. We only see a hope, as apathy toward the image projected by this group is not considered attractive for the tourism industry and, consequently, they hardly see a real business opportunity. It is a struggle between hope and prejudice.

Introduction

This scenario has two driving forces. On the one hand, “apathy” produced by tradition and its associated prejudices that hinder see new opportunities in new realities. Elderly people do not

have the attractive image desired by the tourism industry, which is more interested in deploying and exploiting the canons of beauty that are commonly exposed and accepted. Moreover, the “certainty of benefits,” produced by businesses dedicated to meeting the many expectations of the growing number of elderly people with high-purchasing power, constitutes another major driving force in this scenario.

The combination of the two driving forces sometimes points at the hope for development of the accessible tourism industry, also including people with disabilities and all those with special needs. And sometimes it seems rooted in the prejudices, leaving initiatives that could arise breathless. But, could the ageing population become an engine for the economy in general, and for tourism in particular? Is it a problem or an opportunity? If it is an unstoppable reality, what will its impact on the economy be? And, tourism will interest or remain indifferent to the phenomenon?

Scenario behaviors

The scenario anticipates a necessary adaptation to a new reality. The consolidation of the population ageing phenomenon brings the occasion of a reconfiguration of values in society. As a result, elderly people are changing the type of holidays and the destinations chosen (Alsnih and Hensher, 2003; Reece, 2004).

They are beginning to be required to participate as advisors in private and mixed companies dedicated to meeting their expectations in this part of their lives, now fairly valued.

Childhood is considered a treasure and the whole society is working together in order to prepare future generations to be trained and aware about the importance of diversity and its economic and social benefits.

The consequence of this spectrum of behaviors is the emergence of hope in a society that is braver and more encouraged with entrepreneurship because of the flowering of faith in the certainty of profits. Apathy is residual and disappears through the effect of the collaboration between the elderly and the young. The close joint participation in projects makes it possible to know the singularities of the groups first-hand. This is considered the main tool in the new scenario.

Schedule of changes

2020. Against the pessimism that had plunged the GFC into the strongest economies until then, begin to emerge private initiatives in tourism begin to emerge, which believe in the opportunity that reality always contains. Association for the New Values is born in this year.

2030. After a decade of activity of the Association its example seeps and public authorities are beginning to see the need to support the model helping to fund the creation of Intergenerational Interaction Training Centers.

2040. As a result, the first Permanent Training Center in Accessible Tourism and Ageing is promoted by the Association. Actual practices are performed through participatory workshops where young people learn to deal with tourists belonging to either of the two groups with its multiple variations.

2050. Hope is becoming a reality. Several Permanent Training Centers in Accessible Tourism and Ageing have been created in the last decade. The Accessibility and Ageing Tourism Act 2050 was enacted to strengthen the model and force the Public Sector to promote and fund as a priority these Permanent Training Centers.

Economic insight

We are in a post-GFC world where confusion portrays the economic picture. But at the same time, optimism is strongly arising because of the meaningful role played by young people.

In this scenario, both traditional and ethical banking converge. The latter is seeing how every single day its significance is becoming decisive to fund projects whose goals relate to enhancing

the quality of life of those secularly discriminated groups. Although such banks do not forget the profitability of the projects that are presented to them and in the end get involved in lending.

Protectionism has been abandoned. Large companies of technology applied to leisure, healthcare and tourism in general and accessible and ageing tourism in particular are in the hands of young people who are less than 30 years old. The symbiosis between young and technological devices has generated a stream of confidence that has been ratified by highly successful inventions, such as the creation of holographic personal assistants. This has brought down barriers that seemed insurmountable. All these developments have resulted in the reduction in the prices of many products and services that make it easier to enjoy tourism.

Ageing, an opportunity – youth, hope

The Japanese Prime Minister and President of the International Confederation of Associations for New Values, Yoshiro Wakato, opened the first World Congress on Tourism and Diversity held in February 2050 in Madrid, with a speech from which we can extract the following highlights:

Let me begin by posing a question that each of us can answer honestly in his or her heart. Is it good to deny reality? When we ignore our elders we are somehow denying reality. A reality that we all want to reach, but not let it be forgotten and discarded as something that hinders and has nothing to contribute. In my country, on the contrary, for many centuries the teachings of our elders have been highly regarded in our society. For their long journey they deserve our love and respect. They shed light on the way that our young people will tour today, and tomorrow they will also illuminate the youth to come. And light is always an opportunity. Nowadays they are also a bright chance to develop our battered economies.

I encourage you to follow the path taken by the Association for the New Values some decades ago. Its constant work which resulted in the creation of the *Permanent Training Centres in Tourism and Ageing*, is now a successful example to follow for many. The intergenerational interaction has revealed a novel tool that promotes empathy, trust in others and understanding of the risk as a practical way to success.

Now I speak as Prime Minister of my country. Policy makers are forced to make a commitment to the society that has trusted us. We are bound to find formula that enable compliance with the *Accessibility and Ageing Tourism Act 2050*. Many of our efforts should be addressed to promoting initiatives that have proven to be so successful. We have no excuse for such evidence. Regulation needs to be accompanied by creative and imaginative measures. And these standards and initiatives should be informed by the main actors, that is, elderly and young people working together and interactively. That is the way to go. A path of empathy that generates all kinds of benefits.

This narrative highlights a number of trends, which are:

- assessment of older people extends as a source of expertise and social cooperation models;
- intergenerational interplay becomes a demonstrably effective tool to advance in empathy, paving the way toward a diverse and inclusive society;
- civil society has shown its rulers the path of commitment to cooperation so that they feel they cannot ignore their obligations any longer; and
- the conviction that the rulers who do not comply will be removed immediately and strongly sanctioned is installed.

Heuristic thoughts on accessible tourism and some of its future options. Strategic ideas and proposals

According to the description and examination of our four scenarios, it is feasible to highlight some ideas of strategic relevance which must be started together. Some of these strategic ideas act as common denominators and – therefore – their eventual absence would make the overall strategic formula surrounding the whole scenario inoperative.

Debating on these matters could place the accessible tourism sector in front of a number of new creative pictures. The introduction of new information can change knowledge and beliefs

(Daruwalla and Darcy, 2005) and that might suggest heuristic pathways toward future solutions. For instance:

1. Accessible tourism becomes an actual flourishing business: imagine if accessibility was considered a universal helpful requirement, not only for a few. Suppose that staff were well trained to treat all tourists according to their expectations and singularities as a quality expression to look for excellence without exception.
2. Every accessible destination adopts the service-minded principle: imagine that the entire population of a tourist destination was aware of its important contribution to the local economy while respecting diversity through an empathetic attitude to make the stay for all types of visitors comfortable. Hospitality and the welcoming of visitors becomes a guiding principle.
3. Accessibility has to be sustainable: imagine a destination where all its residents drove electric cars, of course including taxis and buses adapted for people with special needs. Where hotels, restaurants, museums, theaters and all kinds of leisure facilities were powered by clean, cheap and inexhaustible hydrogen energy. The progress in accessibility for the locals is a great way to start being prepared to receive disabled and elderly tourists in an accessible and sustainable city that is, at the same time, a tourist accessible destination.
4. Technology will change the concept of accessibility: new devices will allow you to obtain unique experiences through holographic travel and stay personal assistants that will be provided by facilitating agencies located in all parts of the travel and accessibility chain. Other innovations like GPS proxemia narrators are ongoing. The effects are: costs reduction, 24/7 availability, lack of fatigue in the companion or assistant.
5. Ageing, an unstoppable mainstream that will shape tourism: the arrival of a large group of clients/tourists, such as the elderly, will result in the introduction of new products, services and attractions that have not been developed yet. Practical implications: creation of new sources of employment related to tourism for the elderly. Development of new products to meet the needs of this group. Effects on the emergence of new business models that facilitate self-employment.
6. Effects of the GFC in habits and expectations: imagine if a good effect of the GFC, joined to the increasing impact of the internet, were changing work systems allowing new schedules and adopting the new standard of taking a different monthly vacation every year. The practical implications of these measures will be to overcome the problem of seasonality, reduce costs and avoid crowds.
7. Accessible tourism as a niche without prejudice or complex: imagine if people with disabilities and the elderly were seen as usual tourists but in places with facilities, staff, products and services specially thought for their enjoyment. If everyone could access and spend holidays jointly with them, would they feel discriminated? Or, on the contrary, would they be happy to have these opportunities? The consequence of a solid niche is to show a clearly successful way for tourism specialized companies, and others in crisis.
8. From early socialization to college: imagine if people were growing up in an environment where the elderly are valued and respected for their experience. And people with disabilities are seen as alter-capable, without aesthetic prejudice and their differences are valued as expressions of diversity. Imagine if accessible tourism were a major subject in the curriculum of university studies in tourism. A proper understanding of disability has the practical effect of removing attitudinal barriers and therefore a path to promote accessible tourism.
9. Intergenerational interplay standardization: imagine if the elderly and young people were interacting and exchanging experience and expertise with excitement and energy in a standard creative way. Imagine if, also, alter-capable and young people could participate in jointly activities so as to get to know each other better. As a result of interaction and co-participation, a better knowledge of each other arises and, accordingly, empathy appears. Empathy is the basis of a profitable accessible tourism.
10. Governments have to ensure cooperation between stakeholders: imagine if local governments were committed to the extent that is necessary to ensure the cooperation

of all parties involved in the travel, accessibility and quality chain of accessible tourism. Imagine if there was a team whose components had different and complementary qualities and they were all rowing in the same direction. The consequences of a coordinated, cooperative and in the same direction work are shared benefits for all parties.

Notes

1. Data from *World Population Prospects. The 2012 Revision* (United Nations, 2013).
2. By alter-capable people we understand those who are as valuable as anyone but have just different abilities to the most and, which enrich the whole human race in its diversity.
3. The concept of “aesthetic prejudice” was coined by Cruces (2014) and refers to the set of stigmatizing stereotypes that are projected through the eyes toward the physical appearance of certain groups of people with discriminatory consequences through rejection or indifference toward them.

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Corresponding author

Rafael Cruces Portales can be contacted at: rcruces.cm@gmail.com

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