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Travel agents as facilitators or inhibitors of travel: perceptions of people with disabilities

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Abstract

Travel agents remain the primary source for people with disabilities to purchase travel products. How effectively travel agents perform this task has a direct impact on the ability of people with disabilities to travel. A good travel agent can facilitate travel, while a poor one creates another obstacle to participation in travel by people with disabilities. This paper examines the perception of people with disabilities towards the effectiveness of travel agents in Hong Kong. For the most part, respondents suggest that travel agents are largely deficient in catering to the needs of this specialist market. Two causes were identified: attitudinal and structural. Travel agents are largely ignorant of the needs of people with disabilities, which leads to overt or subtle discrimination. In addition, the financial realities of the retail travel sector in Hong Kong force agents to push high commission, easy to book packaged tours that may not be suitable for the tourist with a disability.



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Keywords

Disability; Travel agent

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