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**To cite this article:** Andreia Moura, Celeste Eusébio & Eugénia Devile (2023) The 'why' and 'what for' of participation in tourism activities: travel motivations of people with disabilities, *Current Issues in Tourism*, 26:6, 941-957, DOI: [10.1080/13683500.2022.2044292](https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2022.2044292)

**To link to this article:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2022.2044292>



Published online: 01 Mar 2022.



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# The ‘why’ and ‘what for’ of participation in tourism activities: travel motivations of people with disabilities

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to identify the motivations that lead people with disabilities (PwD) to make the decision to participate in tourism and to ascertain whether there are differences in these motivations between PwD with and without tourism experiences. To achieve this goal, a guiding research model was created based on the mechanism of self-determination theory (SDT). A mixed methodology approach was used. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of PwD living in Portugal (N = 28). Second, a questionnaire was administered to a sample of Portuguese with disabilities (N = 348). The results obtained highlight that PwD are motivated to participate in tourism activities, mainly because of the benefits they expect to gain from these experiences. However, a great number have never had the possibility of participating in tourism activities. Intrinsic or self-determined motivations such as pleasure, increased knowledge, well-being and personal development, stand out. Moreover, PwD who have never had the opportunity to participate in tourism activities perceive more benefits than those who have already participated. The paper ends with the theoretical and practical implications, the limitations and future research to increase knowledge in an area that has been little explored in the literature.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 23 September 2021  
Accepted 15 February 2022

## KEYWORDS

Accessible tourism; people with disability; travel motivations; self-determination theory (SDT); mixed methods

## 1. Introduction

PwD represent about 15% of the world population (World Health Organization [WHO], 2011) and are expected to represent an even more significant number, considering the trend of world population ageing (United Nations [UN], 2015) and improvements in healthcare, which allow higher survival rates for those born with disability (WHO, 2011). In the European Union in 2014, about 138.6 million people had some type of access needs (European Commission [EC], 2014), with the expectation that, by 2020, this number would reach 154.6 million (Alves et al., 2020). A recent European Commission report notes that in the EU 27 in 2018, there were about 87 million people with disabilities, aged 16 and over living in private households, stressing the impossibility of collecting more recent information due to the pandemic outbreak of COVID-19. Simultaneously the report forewarns of limitations in access to health care and the deterioration of economic activity due to COVID-19 is expected to increase the prevalence of disability in the coming years (EC, 2020). In Portugal, the trend is similar, with 18% of the Portuguese population in the last census reporting having great difficulty or being unable to perform at least one of the following activities of daily living: walking, seeing, remembering, hearing, bathing/dressing, understanding (Alves et al., 2020; INE,

2011). The interest and importance in better understanding this rapidly expanding market are therefore understandable, especially regarding their travel motivations.

The motivations for tourism, or what drives people to travel, have been studied through various research studies (e.g. Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Iso-Ahola, 1982; Pearce & Lee, 2005; Suhud et al., 2021; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Zhang & Walsh, 2021), which may focus on societies (Maslow, 1943), destinations (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Yoon & Uysal, 2005), travel partners (Iso-Ahola, 1982), or even individuals themselves (Ahn, 2020; Kim & Lehto, 2013; Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, it appears that specific research on this topic regarding disability is still limited and tourists with disabilities represent a scarcely studied group in the literature (Allan, 2015; Bauer, 2018; Bergier et al., 2010; Chikuta et al., 2017; Devile & Kastenholz, 2018; Kim & Lehto, 2013; Özcan et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2017; Zhang, Cole et al., 2019; Zhang, Gao et al., 2019).

In general, individuals are not always aware of the results of their involvement in tourism. However, they are very much aware of what they seek (Bauer, 2018; Quintana & Ortuzar, 2018): rest from work; new experiences; broadening horizons; learning opportunities; contact with other cultures; intercultural tolerance; personal and social development; visiting family and friends; and physical and mental health. Finally, the overall improvement of well-being and quality of life are mentioned by several authors (Alves et al., 2020; Blichfeldt & Nicolaisen, 2011; Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004; Kastenholz et al., 2015; Moura et al., 2018; Shaw & Coles, 2004).

Tourism is therefore a means of stimulating the pleasure of discovery and conviviality, fulfilling desires, needs and expectations. The mechanism of self-determination theory (SDT) is a theoretical model which advocates the existence of intrinsic or self-determined motivations (internal and personal to the individual, such as autonomy, competence, or relatedness) and extrinsic or controlled motivations (external or environmental, such as social recognition).

Although the SDT mechanism was introduced by Ryan and Deci (2000) at the beginning of the millennium, its application in tourism has been limited and recent (Yousaf et al., 2021). Noteworthy are the studies of Dolnicar et al. (2012), Aschoff and Schwabe (2014), Bosnjak et al. (2016), Yu et al. (2019) and Chen et al. (2019). Dolnicar et al. (2012) establish a hierarchical model of the importance of holidays to quality of life and Aschoff and Schwabe (2014) conduct a literature review on how online communities can support tourists' needs using SDT. Bosnjak et al. (2016) apply SDT to the context of sports tourism, Yu et al. (2019) to suicide travel and Chen et al. (2019) to backpacking, verifying its applicability to niche markets. Specifically, in the case of accessible tourism, the studies by Zhang et al. (2017; Zhang, Cole et al., 2019; Zhang, Gao et al., 2019) stand out. Zhang et al. (2017) identify increased perceptions of autonomy, competence and relatedness as intrinsic motivational factors for travel by individuals with mobility impairment. The more recent studies by Zhang, Cole et al. (2019) and Zhang, Gao et al. (2019), maintain their focus on addressing the need to psychologically empower people with mobility challenges (PwMC) to travel through the premises of SDT. In both studies, under different levels of challenge or contrasting scenarios, the authors identified the psychological aspects needed to support and influence the various dimensions of motivation that can effectively facilitate PwMC's travel intention and persistence.

SDT is progressively being used in explaining travel motivations; however, tourists are diverse, and this heterogeneity should be considered (Ying et al., 2020). The few existing empirical studies have rarely examined PwD motivations as a whole, including several individuals with different types of disability, as a group. Furthermore, previous studies applying SDT in the context of tourism and hospitality have mainly focused on other geographies (e.g. USA, Australia, China) (Japutra & Keni, 2020), and hence it is relevant to consider its application in a European country like Portugal. Finally, the knowledge that there is no work that allows the motivational differences between groups of disabled individuals with and without tourism experience to be ascertained in the light of SDT justifies the interest and relevance of the present research. In this sense, a guiding research model was created based on the SDT mechanism, through which it was possible to increase and deepen knowledge about two fundamental and controversial questions in motivation: the 'why' (intrinsic or self-determined motivations) and the 'what for' (external or controlled

motivations). Responding to this purpose, a mixed methodology was used, combining a qualitative approach by conducting semi-structured interviews with PwD living in Portugal (N = 28), with a quantitative approach by applying a questionnaire survey to a sample of Portuguese PwD (N = 348).

From a theoretical point of view, this study contributes to (1) broadening knowledge within the scope of tourism motivations and (2) extending knowledge scientifically gathered about the group of tourists with disabilities. From a practical perspective and considering the pandemic crisis we are going through, the results allow (1) an understanding of the 'why' and 'what for' for tourists with disabilities participating in tourism and (2) identification of the travel decision-making triggers, so that tourism strategies and marketing policies may be adjusted to the reality. This should encourage revitalization, upgrading and internationalization of the tourism business and boost sustainability and accessibility for all tourist destinations in a post-pandemic period. Hence, the results of this study are of interest to national and international researchers and policymakers.

## **2. Background – the 'why' and 'what for' of participation of PwD in tourism activities**

Motivation is the basis of decision-making, i.e. it is the ignition of the whole process of tourism and travel consumption (Blichfeldt & Nicolaisen, 2011). The most conventional motivation theories are based on the hierarchical model of Maslow (1943), whose approach defines motivation into a hierarchical ladder of needs satisfaction. In the case of tourism, the motivation of an individual to travel evolves systematically according to the level of their tourist experience and the stages or contexts of their life (Kim & Lehto, 2013). Thus, tourist motivation, in theoretical terms, has been predominantly studied based on Iso-Ahola's tetra-dimensional scheme (Iso-Ahola, 1982), Pearce's evolutionary travel 'career' (Pearce, 1982), and Dann and Crompton's socio-psychological 'push' and 'pull' factors (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981).

Traditionally, within tourism motivation research, Dann and Crompton's theory is adopted, distinguishing between 'push' factors, related to tourists' desires, and 'pull' factors, related to destination attributes (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). However, Ryan (1994) argues that intrinsic motivations and leisure experiences theoretically overlap between leisure and tourism and suggests that Beard and Ragheb's (1983) leisure motivation scale (LMS), derived from Maslow's (1970) hierarchical needs, could also be applied to examine tourism motivations. Thus, the four factors of the LMS, applied to the specific context of tourism were established: (1) intellectual components (exploration, learning and discovery), (2) social components (interpersonal relationships and friendship), (3) mastery of skills (the ability to face challenges, participate in competitions and accomplish tasks), and (4) stimulus avoidance (relaxation and avoidance of daily stress) (Kim & Lehto, 2013).

More recently, and based on the LMS, the self-determination theory (SDT) mechanism has emerged, suggesting two types of motivations: (1) intrinsic or self-determined motivations; and (2) extrinsic or controlled motivations (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The first type of motivations takes place when people engage in tourism activities freely out of individual interest and internal value, facilitated through the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ahn, 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Specifically, autonomy can be achieved when subjects' behaviour is internally and independently derived, satisfying the need for self-initiation, implying engagement in behaviours that reflect their interests or values; competence is associated with self-development, individuals' needs to feel capable and effective, responding to the desire to feel efficient and influential; and relationship is satisfied when people feel connected to others during their tourism experiences, satisfying the desire to feel connected, to bond with others, to feel accepted and cared for by others, as well as to care for them (Ahn, 2020; Buzinde, 2020; Ying et al., 2020).

On the other hand, the second type of motivations happens when individuals expect to obtain external outcomes, such as social recognition (Gunnell et al., 2014). At one extreme, one is presented with amotivation, i.e. the lack of motivation to participate in an activity, while at the other extreme,

we have intrinsic regulation, or the intense intention to participate purely for hedonic outcomes. Within the two extremes, SDT encapsulates extrinsic/controlled regulation, related to an external outcome, such as a reward (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Yousaf et al., 2021). This external regulation only generates motivation due to the inherent consequences, guiding people through rewards or punishments (Yousaf et al., 2021). These rewards, however, can influence individuals' status quo, for example, by increasing feelings of pride or self-esteem (Yousaf et al., 2021); for example, travelling for social appreciation (Cook & Artino, 2016), for the achievement of personal goals or beliefs (Yu et al., 2019) or to achieve subjective well-being (Bosnjak et al., 2016; Buzinde, 2020; Japutra & Keni, 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

According to Ryan and Deci (2000), frustration of the fundamental needs produces disengagement, unease, and feelings that motivations are being controlled by external factors. Intrinsic motivation occurs when certain behaviours are congruent and endorsed by the whole self. Since people focus more on target goals under intrinsic motivation, this type of motivations motivates people more efficiently than extrinsic ones (Ying et al., 2020). Extrinsic control over individuals tends to diminish their intrinsic interest and may lead to conflict or other psychological pressures (Ying et al., 2020). Thus, it is possible to suggest that:

**H1** – The dominant travel motivations for PwD are intrinsic or self-determined.

SDT thus allows the psychosocial characteristics of individuals to be considered and provides insight into how individuals negotiate their presence or participation in various contexts (Buzinde, 2020). Unfortunately, there is not much research that emphasizes the travel motivations or influencing factors of holiday decision-making of tourists with disabilities (Allan, 2015; Bauer, 2018; Bergier et al., 2010; Blichfeldt & Nicolaisen, 2011; Chikuta et al., 2017; Kim & Lehto, 2013; Özcan et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2017; Zhang, Cole et al., 2019; Zhang, Gao et al., 2019). Shi et al. (2012) indicated that travellers with disabilities have their own unique motivations and concluded they consider travel a way to regain independence and return to being 'normal' again.

Bergier et al. (2010), in addition to identifying the main benefits of accessible tourism for individuals, assessed their importance according to the degree of disability. Thus, it was found that subjects with a higher degree of disability reported changes to a sedentary lifestyle as being more relevant than subjects with milder disabilities, and that concerns about the accessibility of means of transport were more important for participants with severe disability. At the same time, they observed that the main determinants for selecting tourist and recreational activities were price (45.5%), companionship (39.6%), recommendation by a doctor (27%), and distance from residence (20.2%). Kim and Lehto (2013) investigated the motivations of leisure travel and activities of Korean families with disabled children. Thus, they identified five motivational factors: 'children's intellectual competence', 'socialization', 'family closeness', 'relaxation and escape' and 'physical competence (mastery) of disabled children'.

In turn, Allan (2015) argues that there are intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for individuals with disabilities, and found that intrinsic motivations are related to escape, relaxation, enjoyment, and knowledge acquisition, while extrinsic motivations are related to social, cultural, and recreational advantages. In this study, the internal and personal motivations of individuals with disability in making the decision to participate in tourism were evidenced. Corroborating these findings, Chikuta et al. (2017) conclude that PwD show a high propensity to travel off the beaten track and participate in much more challenging activities, such as outdoor adventure activities, than their so-called able-bodied counterparts in order to prove themselves to society.

In the same vein, Zhang, Cole et al. (2019) and Zhang, Gao et al. (2019), extended the applicability of SDT mechanisms to accessible tourism, and validated their use in this context, finding that individuals with varying levels of travel experience may differ in their motivation. In the case of PwD, the more difficult the goal, the more intrinsic or self-determined motivation is required to facilitate its pursuit, with intrinsic motivation proving to be a more consistent facilitator than extrinsic motivation. Özcan et al. (2021) ascertained the determinants of travel for wheelchair users and corroborate

this theory by advocating that internal or intrinsic values to individuals affect motivation, namely (i) psychological and individual participation; (ii) social status and incentives: family, government, health and education, employment, income level and society; (iii) travel identification: process and outcome relationship; (iv) companionship: family or assistance; (v) emotional touch: awareness, responsibility, empathy and sensitivity. Also, in this context, Huang and Lau (2020) conducted a study applied to tourists with visual impairment and when analysing the integration of gamification in tourist destinations (in smartphone applications), they observed an increase in their motivation to travel abroad and more autonomously, in expectation of improvements in terms of self-confidence and quality of life.

Thus, motivations may differ among individuals with disabilities according to various factors: type of disability, degree of disability, life cycle or tourism experience (Bergier et al., 2010; Pearce & Lee, 2005; Suhud et al., 2021), allowing us to suggest:

**H2** – Tourist experience influences travel motivations.

In sum, by recognizing that a person's disability does not restrict their travel motivations (Michopoulos et al., 2015), it becomes crucial to identify them and understand the 'why' and 'what for' of their participation in tourism. The SDT presents the appropriate and necessary theoretical framework to identify the motivations that lead PwD to make the decision to travel or participate in tourism and to ascertain whether there are differences between the motivations of PwD with and without tourism experience.

### 3. Methodology

A two-stage, mixed-methods approach based on self-determinant theory was used to examine the travel motivations of a sample of Portuguese PwD who travel or wish to travel. This methodological approach allows a deeper analysis of a complex topic, enhancing the voice of a growing group of the population that has been insufficiently studied.

This research was undertaken in the context of a broader research project on accessible tourism (ACTION: Accessible tourism: co-creation of tourism experience through a web-based Intelligent System). This project aims to develop an innovative information system to facilitate the knowledge transfer among all stakeholders of the accessible tourism market.

#### 3.1. Data collection methods

The data collection process occurred in two stages. Firstly, a semi-structured interview was conducted with a sample of Portuguese PwD. Secondly, a questionnaire was also administered to a sample of Portuguese PwD. In both cases, the aim of the sampling technique used was to include variety in the sample in terms of type of disability and not to obtain a statistically representative sample of Portuguese PwD.

##### 3.1.1. Interview

A purposeful sampling approach was adopted and the collaboration of social organizations providing support to PwD was obtained to identify the interviewees. The snowball sampling technique was used to increase the number of participants. In total, 28 adults (between 18 and 74 years old) with different types of disabilities were interviewed, between February and April 2019. The interview script included three main groups of open questions related to (1) previous travel experience; (2) travel motivations; and (3) sociodemographic profile. Following Quivy and Campenhoudt's (1992) suggestion, the interview script had a scant structure, marking the contents, but conferring freedom of speech to the interviewees so that they spoke freely on their travel motivations and benefits.

The interviews were taped with the participants' permission and transcribed in full. The interviews were conducted by the same researcher, in the Portuguese language, and the quotes presented in this paper were translated to English. In some cases, the interview was carried out with the help of a caregiver (mainly in the case of respondents with intellectual disabilities) or a Portuguese sign language translator (in the case of respondents with hearing disabilities), to facilitate the communication. On average the interviews lasted 40 min.

### **3.1.2. Questionnaire**

Based on the results obtained in the interviews carried out in the first stage and on the literature review, a questionnaire was developed and administered to a sample of Portuguese people with different types of disabilities (hearing, visual, mobility and intellectual), aged 18 years or more.

Due to the characteristics of the population under study and the difficulties in surveying PwD, various methods of questionnaire administration and sampling techniques were used. Hence, a combination of a snowball sampling technique with a convenience approach was used to ensure variance in the sample in terms of disability type. The questionnaire was administered between 23 July 2019 and 31 January 2020, through qualified interviewers and also using an online platform (LimeSurvey). A group of social organizations providing support to PwD (formal caregivers) were involved in the administration of the questionnaire. Portuguese sign language interpreters were also used to apply the questionnaire to deaf people and the questionnaire was translated into Braille to facilitate its fulfilment by blind people.

The questionnaire was designed based on the results of interviews conducted with PwD and an extensive literature review. The questionnaire included questions related to: (i) previous travel experiences; (ii) travel motivations; and (iii) sociodemographic profile. Regarding previous travel experience, respondents were asked to answer the following question: 'Have you ever been on a tourism trip before?' Based on the results obtained in this question, respondents were categorized into two groups: (i) PwD with tourism experience; and (ii) PwD without tourism experience. The first group of respondents was questioned about the number of domestic trips and international trips undertaken in the last five years. In turn, the second group of respondents was asked the following question: 'If you have not yet been on tourist trips, would you like to do so in the future?' To analyse the 'why' and 'what for' for PwD to carry out tourism trips or wish to carry out tourism trips, respondents evaluated 20 items using a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The 20 items used were identified through an extensive literature review (e.g. Allan, 2015; Blichfeldt & Nicolaisen, 2011; Chikuta et al., 2017; Figueiredo et al., 2012; Kastenholz et al., 2015; Kim & Lehto, 2013; Zhang et al., 2017; Zhang, Cole et al., 2019; Zhang, Gao et al., 2019). The questionnaire ends with questions related to the sociodemographic profile and with the type and intensity of the disability of the respondents.

To examine the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study with a group of PwD was carried out during June 2019. Consequently, the questionnaire was slightly modified for better comprehensibility. A total of 348 complete questionnaires was obtained. From these, about three quarters (71.5%) had already been on some tourism trips, while more than one quarter (28.5%) had never made a tourism trip but wished to do so. These data clearly reveal that for many PwD, participation in tourism activities is a dream that is often difficult to achieve.

### **3.2. Data analysis methods**

Due to the nature of the data obtained, both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods were used. Data from the interviews were examined through content analysis of thematic-categorical type. Content analysis is a widely used technique in the analysis of communications, which aims to validate and giving meaning to texts regarding a specific phenomenon under study (Krippendorff, 2004). This involved three phases: (1) pre-analysis, corresponding to the organization of the material and definition of procedures; (2) the exploration phase, where categories arise and intersect, with

amplitudes and more or less narrow connections; and finally, (3) the treatment of results, in which the raw data are interpreted and gain meaning. For this, a manual coding procedure was used.

The process of coding information, or in other words, the production of a system of categories, was based mainly on the conceptual framework, but trying to capture all the insights of discursive material with relevance to our research goals. Thus, the initial categories were: knowledge and socializing, relaxation and well-being. After a dynamic process between theory and evidence flowing from the discursive material, some themes were divided or renamed. Thus, the content analysis was based on four categories: (i) expanding knowledge; (ii) escape/relaxation; (iii) socializing and closeness to family; and (iv) well-being.

The data obtained from the questionnaires were examined using the SPSS software package. Univariate, bivariate and multivariate techniques were used. First, frequencies and mean values were calculated to characterize the sample of PwSN analysed in this research. Second, to compare the two groups of PwD analysed in this research (PwD with tourism experience and PwD without tourism experience), a t-test on independent samples was used. Finally, a principal component analysis (PCA), with varimax rotation and the eigenvalue equal or higher than one, was used to identify dimensions of travel motivations.

## 4. Findings and discussion

### 4.1. Results obtained from the interviews

#### 4.1.1. Sample profile of interviewees

The profile of interviewees is summarized in Table 1. There were more male respondents (nineteen) than females (nine). Concerning age, fourteen respondents are in the 25–60 age group, eight are between 18 and 24 years old and seven are aged 60 years or over. In terms of the type of disability, eleven participants have mobility disability (11), seven have intellectual disabilities, four hearing

**Table 1.** Sample profile of interviewees.

Type of disability	Age	Gender	Occupation	Participant code
Intellectual	45	Male	Occupational Activities	Interviewee 1
Intellectual	24	Male	Occupational Activities	Interviewee 11
Intellectual	63	Male	Occupational Activities	Interviewee 12
Intellectual	22	Female	Occupational Activities	Interviewee 16
Intellectual	51	Female	Occupational Activities	Interviewee 19
Intellectual	53	Female	Occupational Activities	Interviewee 21
Intellectual	44	Male	Occupational Activities	Interviewee 22
Intellectual	25	Male	Occupational Activities	Interviewee 26
Intellectual/Visual	49	Male	Occupational Activities	Interviewee 2
Intellectual/Mobility	57	Female	Occupational Activities	Interviewee 6
Visual/Diabetes	67	Male	Retired	Interviewee 9
Visual	35	Male	Employed	Interviewee 14
Visual	38	Female	Employed	Interviewee 18
Mobility	67	Male	Retired	Interviewee 3
Mobility	74	Male	Retired	Interviewee 4
Mobility	61	Male	Employed	Interviewee 5
Mobility	24	Female	Unemployed	Interviewee 8
Mobility	27	Male	Unemployed	Interviewee 13
Mobility	18	Female	Student	Interviewee 17
Mobility	23	Female	Occupational Activities	Interviewee 15
Mobility	23	Male	Retired	Interviewee 20
Mobility	55	Female	Occupational Activities	Interviewee 23
Mobility	38	Male	Occupational Activities	Interviewee 24
Mobility	28	Male	Occupational Activities	Interviewee 25
Hearing	68	Male	Retired	Interviewee 7
Hearing	55	Male	Employed	Interviewee 10
Hearing	21	Male	Student	Interviewee 27
Hearing	20	Male	Student	Interviewee 28

disability, and only three have visual disability. Of the total sample, three had more than one type of the abovementioned disabilities.

#### **4.1.2. Travel motivations of PwD identified in the interviews**

The focus of the qualitative study was specifically oriented towards understanding the internal and personal motivations of PwD for participating in tourism. The coding process, based on the literature review and on the empirical material, allowed to categorize the internal motivations into four main categories: (i) expanding knowledge; (ii) escape/relaxation; (iii) socializing and closeness to family; and (iv) well-being.

**4.1.2.1. Expanding knowledge.** Expanding knowledge emerged as an important motivation for all interviewees. This is traditionally one of the main motivations for the tourist demand, whether or not people have a disability, and could be reflected in different ways, such as learning new things, experiencing different cultures and ways of life and exploring new places:

The enrichment between peoples, knowing why they are different, ... the exchange of views on food (Interviewee 3, male, 67 years old, mobility disability)

Knowledge of people and monuments ... Getting along with people internationally (Interviewee 12, male, 63 years old, intellectual disability).

There seems to be no difference between the type of disability and the learning dimension of travel. People with intrinsic motivation behave with a sense of drive and choice based on innate interests or aspirations for life goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The curiosity to learn and the meaning attributed to the pleasure of discovering new cultures is a personal attribute that was also referred by the interviewees with different types of disability:

To learn ... she has trisomy 21. But she learns ... she is very curious (Interviewee 16, female, 22 years old, intellectual disability (mother)).

What drives me to travel is discovering new spaces, new things. I am a person who is a good foodie; I like to know new cuisines, new tastes ... enjoy the landscape (Interviewee 14, male, 35 years old, visual disability).

According to SDT, expanding knowledge comprises the basic psychological needs of autonomy and competence. This quest for knowledge reflects the personal and internal interests of individuals and offers them the possibility of feeling able to understand what they are experiencing and even learning from these tourism experiences, responding to the intrinsic desire to feel capable and effective (Ahn, 2020; Buzinde, 2020; Ying et al., 2020).

**4.1.2.2. Escape & relaxation.** Another important category is associated with the need to escape and to take a rest from everyday life. Although this is an important motive for all leisure tourists, some studies call attention to the fact that the need to escape seems to be felt stronger by PwD, as it represents an opportunity to escape and to forget problems and challenges they face every day. Consistent with the findings of Devile and Kastenzholz (2018), this may be because the majority of disabled people's everyday life is highly structured and dependent on helpers and caregivers. Although some of them have to bring their caregivers when they travel, the change in their routines is seen as positive.

I think it's an escape. With the problem, it was obligatory, we felt it. A need to go out, to see other people (Interviewee 16, female, 22 years old, intellectual disability (mother)).

To relax your mind, to rest (Interviewee 7, male, 68 years old, hearing disability)

Escape from the routine and stress of everyday life (Interviewee 19, female, 51 years old, intellectual disability).

The opportunity to change from routines is also highly valued by our interviewees. Some of them have the support of disability associations (especially those with intellectual disabilities) where they work and carry out other activities on a daily basis. Sometimes, the level of social participation is limited, so tourist activities seem to have an increased importance in the quality of life of PwD:

Escape from the routine and stress of everyday life (Interviewee 19, female, 51 years old, intellectual disability). I need to go, to meet other people, see other places ... It is good and makes me feel better. (Interviewee 12, male, 63 years old, intellectual disability).

Considering SDT, the motivation spectrum also contains internalized extrinsic motivations, where external incentives are integrated into the individual sense of self or accepted as one's own values (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This seems to be the case with escape & relax motivations. The need to escape from the usual everyday context is also related to the basic psychological needs for autonomy and competence. Corroborating other studies in the accessible tourism context (Allan, 2015; Devile & Kastenholz, 2018; Huang & Lau, 2020; Kim & Lehto, 2013), individuals with disabilities seek to feel free and independent from their caregivers and, above all, capable and efficient in a different environment.

**4.1.2.3. Socializing and closeness to family.** There is growing evidence of the critical need for social relationships in the lives of PwD, as social isolation and dissatisfaction with social life are often identified as a social and individual problem. Participation in tourist activities can play a key role in integrating into the community, allowing PwD to develop social relationships and improve their social skills. The pursuit of relatedness (SDT basic psychological need) is obvious:

Getting along with other people is usually a good thing to me, I can learn something from another perspective (Interviewee 18, female, 38 years old, visual disability)

Brings new experiences, new contacts with other types of people ... new friends (Interviewee 14, male, 35 years old, visual disability).

In this context, holidays allow the development of social contacts, an increase in self-confidence and trust in others, which are important to potentiate improvements in terms of interpersonal communication. On the other hand, the opportunity to spend more time with the family seems to be an important benefit associated with holidays:

Being with my family, talking to my family, I adore holidays because of that (Interviewee 11, male, 24 years old, intellectual disability).

**4.1.2.4. Well-being.** From different perspectives, the participants refer to the positive impact that travel experiences have in their life. According to previous studies, the meaning attributed to tourist experience contributes to reducing feelings of weakness, vulnerability and lack of control and therefore, it is important for the self-efficacy of the person with a disability and their self-empowerment (Blichfeldt & Nicolaisen, 2011; Iso-Ahola, 1982). The following statements highlight this conclusion.

I felt so light, so light-headed ... my soul came out different ... because I had no worries (Interviewee 18, female, 38 years old, visual disability)

I feel relieved and strong to overcome my problems (Interviewee 15, male, 23 years old, mobility disability)

Most of the narratives highlighted positive emotions and feelings related to travel experiences:

I feel fulfilled (Interviewee 23, female, 55 years old, mobility disability)

I'm always happy when I travel, it makes me feel stronger (Interviewee 17, female, 18 years old, mobility disability)

I feel happy and I feel my friends feel happy too (Interviewee 21, female, 53 years old, intellectual).

Or, in the voice of the mother of a girl with intellectual disability:

She likes to walk, she likes to know, (...) it brings her happiness, she loves to promenade (Interviewee 16, female, 22 years old, intellectual disability (mother))

In addition to these, participation in open space activities, in contact with nature, can have results in terms of increased strength and physical endurance, which lead to an increase in energy and vitality, and for these reasons, tourist activities may have important benefits to psychological well-being:

I feel so good breathing that pure air from the trees and all that stuff, being with the animals. I feel happy (Interviewee 26, male, 25 years old, intellectual disability).

Travel, is then an important aspect, representing a relevant opportunity to promote the quality of life of PwD, as previously suggested by other studies (Figueiredo et al., 2012; Pagán, 2015). In sum, it was possible to validate some pre-identified themes from the literature review, such as the intrinsic motivations for relatedness, quickly clarified in the context of socialisation or the desire to be with people, friends and family. Nevertheless, we were able to identify emerging themes especially related to expanding knowledge, which is necessarily related to the intrinsic motivation of autonomy and competence. However, interviewees suggest a number of dimensions that may be the subject of further research in the future.

## 4.2. Results obtained from the questionnaires

### 4.2.1. Sample profile of respondents

A total of 348 PwD answered the questionnaire, 99 of whom had never been on a tourist trip but wished to do so and 249 of whom had already been on at least one tourist trip (Table 2). The majority of respondents are single, with low levels of education, aged between 25 and 60 years old and are

**Table 2.** Sample profile of respondents – questionnaires.

Profile	Total		Tourism experiences*		Chi-square test	
	N	%	Without experience (N = 99, 28.4%)	With experience (N = 249, 71.6%)	Value	p-value
Gender						
Male	160	46.0	42.4%	47.4%	0.703	0.402
Female	188	54.0	57.6%	52.6%		
Marital status						
Single	231	66.6	66.7%	66.5%	0.001	0.981
Other	116	33.4	33.3%	33.5%		
Education level						
Less than secondary education	187	55.7	<b>81.5%</b>	45.9%	41.108	0.000
Secondary education	88	26.2	18.5%	<b>29.1%</b>		
Higher education	61	18.2	0.0%	<b>25.0%</b>		
Economic status						
Employed	70	20.6	7.1%	<b>26.0%</b>	16.999	0.000
Retired	50	14.7	13.3%	<b>15.3%</b>		
Other	220	64.7	<b>79.6%</b>	58.7%		
Age						
[18–24]	72	21.4	21.7%	21.3%	0.013	0.994
[25–60]	228	67.9	67.4%	68.0%		
+60	36	10.7	10.9%	10.7%		
Type of Disability						
Hearing	20	5.7	2.0%	<b>7.2%</b>	<b>15.308</b>	<b>0.004</b>
Visual	48	13.8	<b>14.1%</b>	13.7%		
Motor	113	32.5	22.2%	<b>36.5%</b>		
Mental	133	38.2	<b>52.5%</b>	32.5%		
Multiple	34	9.8	9.1%	10.0%		

\* Percentage in column.

Values in bolding correspond to the highest values when statistically significant differences exist.

not professionally active. These data are in line with the results obtained in other studies (e.g. Figueiredo et al., 2012; Kastenholtz et al., 2015; Michopoulou et al., 2015; Moura et al., 2018; Özcan et al., 2021; Shaw & Coles, 2004), revealing a strong exclusion of PwD in terms of employment and educational opportunities.

Statistical differences in education level, economic status and type of disability can be observed between the two groups under analysis. People with intellectual disabilities, with low educational qualifications and with no professional activity are more likely to belong to the group of PwD who have never been on a tourism trip (Table 2). There are various reasons for this low rate of participation of PwD in tourism activities, including high financial constraints, the need in most cases of a caregiver (formal or informal) to plan the visit and to accompany them during it, and also the lack of tourism products adapted to their needs (Carneiro et al., 2022; Darcy & Dowse, 2013; Lövgren & Rosquist, 2015)

#### 4.2.2. Travel motivations of PwD identified in the questionnaire

The results obtained in the questionnaire corroborate the results of the interviews, not only demonstrating that people with disabilities are strongly motivated to participate in tourism experiences but also reinforcing the importance of 'why' (intrinsic or self-determined motivations) (Table 3).

A principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted to identify dimensions of travel motivations (Table 3). Three dimensions were identified: (i) F1 – personal development: abilities, autonomy and social relationships; (ii) F2 – escape and well-being; and (iii) F3 – expanding knowledge and pleasure. The PCA accomplished all the criteria defined by Hair et al. (1998) to be considered a good analysis, namely the value of KMO, Bartlett's test of sphericity, factor loadings, communalities (all above 0.5) and internal consistency of the factors (Cronbach's alpha above 0.7). Comparing these results with those obtained in the interviews, it can be observed that, although the main motivations coincide, the results of the questionnaire reinforce the relevance of tourism trips in expanding knowledge and pleasure, escape and well-being and in personal development of respondents (developing abilities and promoting autonomy).

**Table 3.** Travel motivations of PwD: Principal component analysis.

Travel motivation	Mean	Com.	Factor loading	Eigenvalue	Cumulative variance explained (%)	Cronbach's alpha
F1: Personal development: abilities, autonomy and social relationships	3.99			6.704	24.048	0.872
To challenge myself	3.93	0.626	0.725			
To develop skills in areas that are important to me	3.94	0.594	0.709			
To develop friendships	4.07	0.647	0.704			
To be more autonomous	3.87	0.739	0.661			
To feel that I am capable	4.11	0.625	0.655			
To meet different people	4.20	0.570	0.644			
To have exciting experiences	4.23	0.504	0.539			
F2: Escape and well-being	4.06			1.603	41.876	0.734
Be in a calm environment	4.11	0.605	0.759			
Relax and rest	4.35	0.611	0.717			
Improve my health/ well-being	4.17	0.547	0.652			
Show others that I am a dynamic person	3.59	0.586	0.631			
F3: Expanding knowledge and pleasure	4.51			1.183	59.308	0.761
Have fun	4.63	0.677	0.773			
Be happy	4.65	0.607	0.632			
Learn new things	4.48	0.463	0.627			
Experience different cultures and ways of life	4.32	0.525	0.624			
To explore new places	4.49	0.564	0.576			
N = 330	KMO = 0.905					Bartlett's test of sphericity = 1874.586 ( <i>p</i> -value = 0.000)

Note: Com. – Communality.

PwD are strongly motivated to participate in tourist trips. From the three identified dimensions of travel motivations, that with the highest average level of agreement is F3 – expanding knowledge and pleasure (mean = 4.51), followed by the dimension F2 – escape and well-being (mean = 4.06). The items with the highest average belong to F3 ('have fun' and 'be happy'), showing the relevance of tourism trips for the happiness of people with disabilities and to have a more enjoyable life, occasionally forgetting many of the problems and challenges they have to face in their daily life.

Although dimension F1 – personal development: abilities, autonomy and social relationships, presents a lower average (3.99 on a scale from 1 to 5), the results show that tourist trips can have an important role in the development of skills that can contribute to PwD becoming more independent, as well as in the development of social skills, given that the items with the highest average in this dimension are: 'to have exciting experiences'; 'to meet different people'; 'to feel that they are capable'; and 'to develop friendships'.

The findings obtained in the questionnaire administered are in line with the results obtained in the interviews and corroborate the literature, since intrinsic motivations involve high autonomy, referring to the driving forces behind engaging in a task or stimulus for taking genuine pleasure or personal satisfaction from it (Ying et al., 2020).

The SDT refers to autonomy and competence as being the most significant motivating factors (Deci & Ryan, 2000). However, when experiences are not inherently interesting or enjoyable, the feeling of being valued by others and a sense of connectedness (e.g. family, friends, and colleagues; Deci & Ryan, 2000), or the need to connect with others, intervenes as a precursor to motivation (Zhang et al., 2017). This is confirmed by the results, since abilities, autonomy and social relationships were naturally gathered within the same dimension.

#### 4.2.3. Differences in travel motivations according to tourism experience

To identify whether there are statistically significant differences in travel motivations between PwD who have already undertaken tourism trips and those who have not yet but wish to do so, t-tests for independent samples were carried out as presented in Table 4. The results highlight that people who have never undertaken tourism trips are more motivated to do so, showing the relevance that

**Table 4.** Differences in travel motivation according to tourism experience: t-test.

Travel motivations	Total		Tourism experience				T test	
	N	Mean	Without experience		With experience		Value	p-value
			N	Mean	N	Mean		
<b>F1: Personal development: abilities, autonomy and social relationships</b>	323	3.99	74	<b>4.35</b>	255	3.88	<b>3.917</b>	<b>0.000</b>
To challenge myself	305	3.93	69	3.94	236	3.93	0.051	0.959
To develop skills in areas that are important to me	283	3.94	65	<b>4.35</b>	218	3.81	<b>3.260</b>	<b>0.001</b>
To develop friendships	323	4.07	73	<b>4.55</b>	250	3.93	<b>4.821</b>	<b>0.000</b>
To be more autonomous	284	3.87	64	<b>4.44</b>	220	3.70	<b>4.380</b>	<b>0.000</b>
To feel that I am capable	305	4.11	72	4.32	233	4.05	1.715	0.089
To meet different people	324	4.20	72	<b>4.60</b>	252	4.09	<b>3.742</b>	<b>0.000</b>
To live exciting experiences	309	4.23	68	4.47	241	4.16	1.960	0.051
<b>F2: Escape and well-being</b>	322	4.06	74	<b>4.32</b>	255	3.99	<b>2.879</b>	<b>0.004</b>
Be in a calm environment	323	4.11	74	<b>4.35</b>	249	4.04	<b>2.283</b>	<b>0.023</b>
Relax and rest	326	4.35	73	4.45	253	4.32	0.917	0.360
Improve my health/well-being	315	4.17	70	4.39	245	4.11	1.829	0.680
Show others that I am a dynamic person	299	3.59	69	<b>4.12</b>	230	3.43	<b>3.571</b>	<b>0.001</b>
<b>F3: Expanding knowledge and pleasure</b>	323	4.51	74	4.62	256	4.47	1.652	0.099
Have fun	326	4.63	74	4.76	252	4.59	1.813	0.072
Be happy	324	4.65	74	4.70	250	4.64	0.643	0.521
Learn new things	325	4.48	72	<b>4.75</b>	253	4.40	<b>3.615</b>	<b>0.000</b>
Experience different cultures and ways of life	297	4.32	69	4.43	228	4.29	0.939	0.348
To explore new places	325	4.49	74	4.49	251	4.49	-0.027	0.979

Note: Values in bold correspond to the highest values when statistically significant differences exist.

tourism trips have for this group. Statistically significant differences were obtained in F1: – personal development: abilities, autonomy and social relationships and in F2 – escape and well-being, with PwD who have never participated in tourist experiences attributing greater relevance to the role that tourist trips could play in their well-being and personal development than PwD who have already participated in tourism activities. Moreover, statistically significant differences were observed in several items, with the largest differences in the following items: ‘to be more autonomous’, ‘show others that I am a dynamic person’ and ‘to develop friendship’. Hence, these results highlight that PwD without tourism experience are highly motivated to participate in tourism experiences because of the benefits they expect to receive from such experiences. In this context, it is crucial to create opportunities for PwD who have never undertaken tourism trips, so that they can fulfil their desire to participate in tourism activities, contributing to the improvement of their well-being and personal development.

Consistent with the SDT, these results identify the intrinsic motivation of individuals’ behaviour from the satisfaction of their basic and underlying psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ahn, 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2000), which can give rise to varied decision-making procedures and outcomes, and mainly psychological or subjective well-being (Buzinde, 2020; Japutra & Keni, 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

## 5. Conclusions and implications

The results allowed validation of hypothesis H1 – The dominant travel motivations for PwD are intrinsic or self-determined. The qualitative study revealed four types of motivations for tourism participation: Expanding knowledge, Escape and relaxation, Socializing and closeness to family and well-being. Of these, according to SDT, it is possible to conclude that only well-being is an extrinsic motivation, the others being considered intrinsic motivations. Specifically, within the scope of intrinsic motivations, autonomy and competence stand out through expanding knowledge and escape/relaxation, and relatedness through socializing and closeness to family. The same occurred in the context of the quantitative study, which in turn uncovered three categories of tourist motivations: Personal development (abilities, autonomy and social relationships), Expanding knowledge and pleasure and Escape and well-being. In the light of SDT, it was concluded that Escape and well-being are included in the extrinsic motivations and that the remaining motivations fit into the context of intrinsic motivations, particularly at the level of autonomy and competence.

Thus, through the integration of the two studies and considering the assumptions of SDT, it was possible to determine the ‘why’ (intrinsic motivations) and the ‘what for’ (extrinsic motivations) for PwD to make or wish to make tourist trips. Why? Seeking the satisfaction of three psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relationship, particularly in pursuit of personal development, expanding knowledge and pleasure, escape and relaxation and socializing with family and friends. What for. To pursue psychological well-being and hence overall quality of life. These results corroborate the literature, reaffirming the importance of intrinsic motivations as facilitators of PwD’s participation in tourism (Allan, 2015; Chikuta et al., 2017; Özcan et al., 2021; Zhang, Cole et al., 2019; Zhang, Gao et al., 2019). However, it is also important to note that the results also allow us to conclude that individuals do not make a clear and unequivocal distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, leaving apparent an intertwined link between the two. In general, intrinsic motivations are preponderant in decision-making, but the search for overall well-being (extrinsic motivation) is always latent.

At the same time, it was possible to validate hypothesis H2 – Tourist experience influences travel motivations. The interviews carried out allowed us to ascertain that most PwD, especially those with intellectual disabilities, depend on helpers and caregivers even during their leisure time and tourism, thus their tourist experience is inevitably different from those who can enjoy it in full freedom and autonomy, influencing their intrinsic motivations of inclusion and development of social

relationships and improvement of social skills or reduction of feelings of weakness, vulnerability and lack of control. In turn, through the questionnaires applied to a sample of disabled people, it was possible to ascertain that PwD who have never undertaken tourism trips are more motivated to do so.

Therefore, this study provides relevant theoretical and practical implications on a topic that has been neglected in the tourism literature. In theoretical terms, this study contributes to expanding knowledge about PwD's tourism motivations, proving that they are particularly strongly motivated to engage in tourism activities. Our results add information to SDT, validating the importance of intrinsic motivations for PwD audiences and demonstrating the existence of an intertwined link between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, particularly the search for well-being. There do not appear to be relevant differences in relation to the tourism motivations of people without disabilities; however, engagement in tourism experiences may be relevant for PwD, who are less likely to access enjoyable activities. In this sense, results indicate that more tourism destinations and companies should provide accessible tourism, and that PwD should be fully included by the tourism industry and also by the academic community.

An important difference of this research compared to previous studies on tourism experiences of PwD is the sample size, considering the heterogeneity of this population, the theoretical background used as reference (SDT) and the methodological approach used. Under the guidance of SDT, our study uses evidence from an emerging market to integrate knowledge into travel motivation, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the subject.

In terms of practical implications, this study draws attention to the importance of the participation in tourism activities for PwD, which includes a dimension of rest, relaxation and fun, but also a therapeutic, personal development, socialization and educational dimension. These dimensions should be integrated and addressed by governments and national and international policy-makers in creating policies that help to mitigate the consequences of disability and promote social inclusion, health and rehabilitation through tourism. Concomitantly, destination management organizations (DMOs), tourism companies and other stakeholders of tourism destinations should consider them when creating new marketing and communication schemes (for DMOs) and tourism products and services (for tourism companies and stakeholders), properly adapted and adjusted to the participation of all. For example, knowing that the main motivations of PwD are related to the socialization/relationship factor, they could encourage visitors to interact with each other and with local communities, for instance by developing opportunities for tourism experience co-creation (e.g. handicrafts, wine tourism or gastronomy workshops). In the case of the motivational factor of expanding knowledge, another example would be the creation of tourism programmes that allow tourists to feel useful and competent at the destination itself, promoting volunteer tourism, for example (Japutra & Keni, 2020).

Despite the relevant contributions of this study to extending knowledge on the topic, some limitations can be highlighted. Firstly, the empirical study was conducted in only one country – Portugal – and reflects only the benefits sought by PwD through participation in tourism experiences. In this context, one area of future research is to investigate the benefits of tourism activities, for example, for families with disabled persons. Caring for disabled family members can contribute to increased stress, depression, deterioration in caregivers' health status and some resentment about the loss of leisure opportunities. Another suggestion for future research is to address the experiences of other family members, such as the caregivers and parents. Secondly, the sample size and the sampling technique used can also be identified as possible limitations of this study. However, due to the characteristics of the population under study and the difficulties in surveying PwD, the most appropriate techniques were used to obtain a diverse sample in terms of types of disability. Thus, it is suggested that future studies in this field may use probabilistic sampling techniques and also larger samples. Finally, it is considered that due to the scarce research on 'why' PwD participate in tourism activities and 'what for', it is essential to intensify and diversify the research in this area.

## Acknowledgments

This work was financially supported by the project ACTION – Accessible Tourism: Co-Creation of Tourism Experiences Through Web-Based Intelligent Systems, funded by FEDER, through COMPETE2020 – *Programa Operacional Competitividade e Internacionalização* (POCI-01-0145-FEDER-030376), and by national funds (OE), through FCT/MCTES (PTDC/EGE-OGE/30376/2017).

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Funding

This work was financially supported by the project ACTION – Accessible Tourism: Co-Creation of Tourism Experiences Through Web-Based Intelligent Systems, funded by FEDER, through COMPETE2020 – *Programa Operacional Competitividade e Internacionalização* (POCI-01-0145-FEDER-030376), and by national funds (OE), through FCT/MCTES (PTDC/EGE-OGE/30376/2017).

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