Spatial Orientation under the point of view of accessibility: a Brazilian airport terminal case

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Introduction: Tourism is one of the most growing areas in many regions throughout Brazil. It has been verified that approximately one million of foreign tourists visited the country during the FIFA World Cup, in 2014. Having into account that the majority of passengers came to Brazil by plane and, also considering the elevated number of domestic flights, this paper aims at noticing the different spatial orientation by different users- in unknown environments; as well as revealing their difficulties and facilities though accomplished routes. It is understood by spatial accessibility the access to different places by any individual, as well as the identification of activities which take place there and the possibility of use of available tools independently and safely in these environments. In order that physical environments become accessible, four components are taken into account: spatial orientation, displacement, communication and use. This paper has focus on the first component, which is related to the capacity of the individual to place oneself and define its own route.

Method: After bibliographic research about fundamental concepts, two methods were used for development of this study, which aimed at analyzing the airport terminal of the international Airport of Pelotas, located in the south region of Brazil: focused interviews and accompanied strolls. The two methods were applied with different users of the environment: elderly people, handicapped individuals – wheelchair and crutches users - and people with visual impairment – blind and low sight individuals. The choice for this sample, as well as the applying of different techniques, took place so that the results can be confirmed in terms of limitations evidenced by users.

Results: It can be highlighted as result, despite the group of people with visual deficiency has emphasized that it usually orientates itself from oral information in complex environments, in the accompanied stroll was observed that, in case there is not tactile or sound signalization in the environment, the possibility of safe and autonomous orientation becomes almost invalid. In relation to elderly female individuals, it can be noticed in the stroll what it was described during the interview: they use oral information in case of doubts for orientation, even though the existing signalization in the building has contributed to reduce the number of questions. In the case of handicapped individuals the utilization of available signalization in the environment is the first and main resource used for orientation, according to what has been described in the interviews and confirmed during the stroll.

Discussion: Through applied methods, it can be concluded that each individual has its own way for orientation throughout the environment. The discussion of the obtained results from the different methods was really important for the perception that theory and practice not always work the same way. For instance, there is the case of elderly female individuals. Many of them state to use, as main orientation way, oral information – because there is, generally, legible signalization in the environments. Nevertheless, in the accompanied stroll the participant managed to accomplished the proposed tasks completely and following only, the existing visual signalization (signs).

Keywords: Spatial Orientation, Accessibility and Airport Terminal.
References:
