Integrating Disability-Friendly Services in Hotels: Toward Inclusive Tourism Practices

Faridah Sahari[1,*], *Dyah Mustika* Wardani[2], *Darmaesti* Darmaesti[3], *Syaharrudin* Syaharrudin[2], and *Mezi* Julian[2]*Shaik* Hussain S.A[1]

[1]Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts, University of Sarawak Malaysia, Malaysia
[2]Tourism, Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika, Indonesia
[3]Hospitality Management, Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata Sahid Surakarta, Indonesia

Abstract. Inclusive tourism emphasizes equal access for all travelers, including persons with disabilities who often face barriers in accessing hotel services. Hotels play a strategic role in realizing disability-friendly practices as key pillars of the tourism industry. This study aimed to analyze the urgency of integrating disability-friendly services in hotels, identify implementation challenges, and explore potential opportunities for development. Using a qualitative approach through literature review, observation, and interviews with several hotels in Indonesia, the findings reveal that most hotels have provided basic facilities, such as wheelchair access and designated rooms, yet human resource–based services remain underdeveloped. The integration of digital technology is considered capable of enhancing accessibility and the overall guest experience. These results highlight the importance of synergy among hotels, the government, and society in fostering more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable hospitality practices.

1 Introduction

Tourism contributes significantly to economic, social, and cultural development.[1] In a global context, tourism is not only seen as a recreational activity, but also as a strategic instrument for realizing sustainable development.[2] This is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),[3] especially on goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) which emphasize the importance of equal access, justice [4].

Tourism has played a significant role in Indonesia. The WTTC (2024) noted that this sector is projected to contribute more than IDR 1,131 trillion to the national GDP and support approximately 12.5 million jobs. Furthermore, by 2025, international tourist spending is expected to reach an IDR of 344 trillion, surpassing the pre-pandemic levels. These figures confirm that tourism is not merely a recreational activity but also a strategic instrument capable of driving economic growth, creating jobs, and strengthening Indonesia's position in the global market.

One crucial aspect of sustainable tourism development is inclusive tourism, which is accessible, enjoyable, and beneficial to everyone, including people with disabilities. According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO 2021), around 15% of

*e-mail: sfaridah@unimas.my

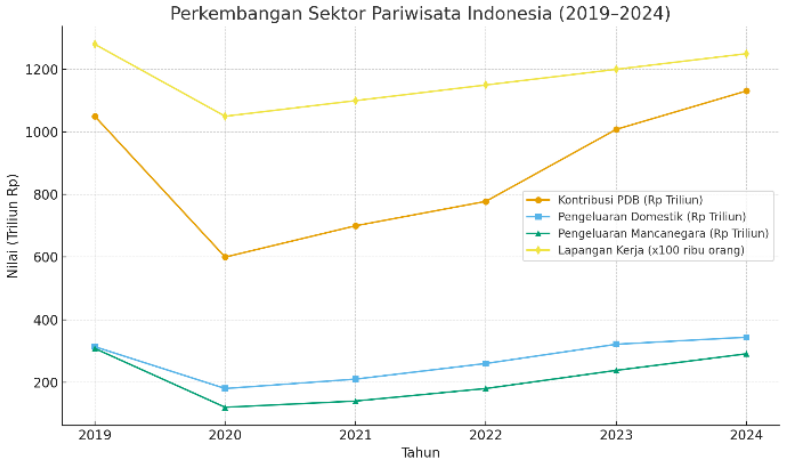

Figure 1. Development of the Indonesian tourism sector, 2024

the world's population or more than 1 billion people live with disabilities (Ministry of Health, https://kemkes.go.id/id/%20no-left-behind-memandang-hak-penyandang-disabilitas-dengan-layanan-kesehatan-inklusif.) This figure reflects the enormous potential of the tourist market but is still often overlooked in the planning and provision of tourism services, especially in the hospitality sector.

Based on the BPS 2023 data [36] the number of people with disabilities in Indonesia reached 22.97 million (approximately 8.5% of the total population); however, their level of participation in social and economic activities, including education and work, is still low, with only 44% participating and only 0.55% of the total national workforce being people with disabilities (Coordinating Ministry for PMK 2023https://www.kemenkopmk.go.id/pemerintah-penuhi-hak-penyandang-disabilitas-di-indonesia). In line with this, Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 8 of 2016 marks a paradigm shift regarding Persons with Disabilities, who are no longer seen as objects that need to be given assistance (charity-based) but as subjects who are given guarantees regarding Respect, Protection, and Fulfillment of Human Rights (human rights-based).

The Job Creation Law regulates companies' obligation to provide equal opportunities for people with disabilities to work in accordance with their abilities and qualifications [36]. The Job Creation Law regulates the improvement of work skills, which includes skill training for workers, including people with disabilities. However, the participation rate in the workforce is very low: only 763,925 people (0.55% of the total national workforce) have disabilities, according to http://www. kemenkopmk. go. id/pemerintah-penuhi-hak-penyandang-disabilitas-di-indonesia). From a tourism and travel perspective, people with disabilities face various obstacles when enjoying hotel facilities. Although some hotels have begun to provide basic infrastructure, such as wheelchair ramps, dedicated bathrooms, or braille signage, these services have not been fully integrated. Furthermore, there are still significant limitations to training hotel staff to serve disabled guests with inclusive hospitality standards. This indicates that the integration of disability-friendly services in hotels remains an issue that requires serious attention.

In addition, there is growing demand from the international community for tourism destinations to implement inclusive practices. World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2020) [5],

emphasized that inclusivity in tourism is not only a moral obligation, but also an economic opportunity that can expand the market base and increase the competitiveness of destinations.[6] Therefore, the existence of disability-friendly services in hotels is no longer optional, but rather an urgent need within the framework of sustainable tourism development [7]

Phenomenally, tourism development in Indonesia still places more emphasis on the number of tourist visits and the development of physical infrastructure without seriously considering the dimension of inclusivity. [8] Most hotels, especially in popular tourist areas, focus more on enhancing premium services to attract general tourists, while the needs of disabled guests are often not prioritized.[9]This phenomenon creates a gap between the real needs of disabled tourists and hotel service practices in the field [10]. In addition, although there are national regulations regarding the protection of the rights of people with disabilities, the implementation of these policies in the hotel sector remains weak.[11] Not all hotels feel obligated to provide disability-friendly services, especially those in the three-star category and below. This demonstrates a gap in the implementation between regulations, market needs, and actual practice [12].

Academic studies on inclusive tourism in Indonesia are still relatively limited, particularly those that focus on the hospitality sector. [13] Most research focuses on community-based tourism, destination sustainability, or digital tourism marketing. Research specifically addressing the integration of disability-friendly services in hotels is still limited [14]. However, existing research often focuses on physical facilities such as building accessibility, wheelchair ramps, or transportation. However, human resource (HR) aspects, such as hospitality attitudes, skills in serving guests with disabilities, and staff training, are rarely the focus of research. However, the success of inclusive tourism depends heavily on the quality of interactions between hotel staff and disabled guests [15].

This research gap shows that there is still ample room for in-depth studies on how hotels in Indonesia can comprehensively integrate disability-friendly services in terms of facilities, human resources, and internal hotel management policies. From a theoretical perspective, the concept of tourism [16] has been widely discussed in the international literature, especially through the accessible tourism approach.[39] emphasized the importance of universal access to tourism. However, most existing theories are oriented towards the context of developed countries with more mature infrastructure, regulations, and public awareness [17]. In the context of a developing country such as Indonesia, this theoretical approach is not yet fully relevant. There is a need to enrich the theory by considering local contexts such as limited hotel budgets, low management awareness, and minimal government support in the form of clear regulations.

Furthermore, conventional hotel management theory places greater emphasis on general customer satisfaction, whereas the satisfaction dimension of guests with disabilities has received little attention. Therefore, this study is expected to fill this theoretical gap by developing a new perspective on how integrating disability-friendly services can enhance inclusive customer satisfaction and strengthen hotels' positions within the framework of sustainable tourism resilience [18].

2 Literature Review

2.1 Inclusive Tourism in a Global Perspective

The concept of inclusive tourism is evolving in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda, particularly Goals 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities). According to UNWTO (2023, 2024), inclusivity is a key indicator of sustainable tourism.[19]. Travelers with disabilities are seen as a large market segment, but have

not been fully accommodated fairly, both in terms of accessibility and travel experience.[20] Global literature emphasizes that access to tourism is not only a technical issue, but also a human rights issue (Darcy & Buhalis, 2011; Poria et al., 2022).

2.2 The Role of Hotels in Realizing Inclusive Tourism

Hotels, as a core part of the tourism value chain, have a significant responsibility to provide disability-friendly services. Hotels serve not only as accommodations, but also as social spaces that shape the overall tourist experience.[21];[36]. The lack of accessible facilities can lead to implicit discrimination, which reduces the satisfaction of guests with disabilities. Thus, the integration of disability-friendly services is an important strategy to increase customer satisfaction, expand the market, and build a positive image [22].

2.3 Technical Aspects: Infrastructure and Technology

Many studies emphasize the importance of infrastructure that meets international standards, such as Universal Design (UD) and Accessibility Standards (ISO 21902:2021). Physical infrastructure includes ramps, elevators, accessible bathrooms, and Braille signage. On the other hand, digital technology is also playing an increasingly important role; for example, mobile apps with screen reader features, disability-friendly online booking systems, and the use of AI for service personalization [39].

2.4 Human Aspects: Human Resources and Service Culture

Service quality is determined not only by facilities, but also by the readiness of hotel human resources. Staff training in the etiquette of serving disabled guests is thus crucial. Cole and Morgan emphasized that attitudinal barriers are often more limiting than physical barriers. Hotels that have successfully built an inclusive service culture tend to achieve higher guest loyalty.

2.5 Regulations and Policies

International legal frameworks, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), serve as the primary basis for affirming the right to access. In Indonesia, Law No. 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities mandates that the public and private sectors, including hotels, provide equal access [40];[41]. However, implementation in the field often faces challenges in terms of cost, understanding, and oversight [41].

2.6 Global Best Practices

Developed countries have developed models of inclusive hotels that can serve as references, such as the Scandic Hotels chain in Europe, which has implemented Accessibility Standards at more than 150 service points. Case studies also show that hotels in Japan are accelerating the adoption of universal design in preparation for the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games to enhance their destination appeal. These practices demonstrate that integrating disability-friendly services is not only a social issue, but also a sustainable business strategy.

Although international literature has extensively discussed accessibility, research integrating a holistic approach to infrastructure, technology, human resources, and regulations in the Indonesian hospitality sector is still limited [23]. Most research in Indonesia still focuses on

the physical aspects of buildings, whereas the dimensions of service culture and policy implementation are often neglected [24]. The model that connects input–process–output–outcome with a feedback loop is an important contribution to filling this gap while also providing a dynamic framework for inclusive tourism development [25].

3 Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore in-depth disability-friendly service practices in hotels, the challenges of their implementation, and opportunities for development towards inclusive tourism [26]. A qualitative approach was chosen because it provides a comprehensive contextual understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and practices of both the hotel and guests with disabilities [27].

3.1 Participants

This research focuses on budget hotels in Jakarta. The subjects were hotel management (General Manager and Department Head), front-line staff, and guests with disabilities who had stayed there [28].

3.2 Procedures and measures

This study used a qualitative approach with three main techniques. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with hotel management, operational staff, and guests with disabilities to explore their experiences and perceptions of disability-friendly services. [29]Second, field observations were conducted to assess the condition of accessibility facilities and service interactions at the hotel. Third, documentation studies have reviewed SOPs, internal reports, and hotel promotional materials related to inclusive services [30].

3.3 Data Analysis

The obtained data were analyzed qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the interviews, observations, and documentation were categorized according to the research theme and then compared to identify patterns, meaning, and relationships between the findings [31]. The analysis was conducted interactively and continuously until a comprehensive picture of disability-friendly service practices in hotels was obtained.[32] To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study employed a triangulation strategy. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation, which involved comparing information from hotel management, staff, disabled guests, and official hotel documents [33]. In addition, method triangulation was carried out by combining in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies.[34]Data reliability was strengthened through systematic recording, use of interview and observation guidelines, and re-verification of findings with informants (member checking) to ensure data consistency and accuracy [35].

4 Finding

This study was conducted at 57 budget hotels in Jakarta that are known to have disability-friendly facilities. The analysis reveals that the implementation of inclusive services is still at a rudimentary stage, with varying levels of readiness among hotels. The findings are summarized in four main dimensions.

Table 1. Accessibility Indicators of Hotels

Indicator	Number of Hotels	Percentage (%)
Wheelchair ramp	48	84%
Special room for disabled people	35	61%
Accessible toilet	39	68%
Inclusive service trained staff	14	25%
Hotel without trained staff	43	75%

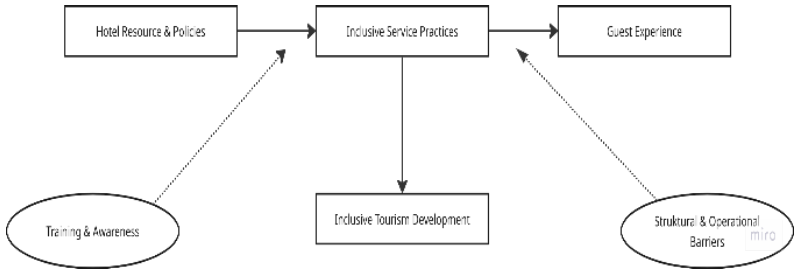

Figure 2. Accessibility Features

4.1 Provision of Basic Accessibility

Most hotels provided physical accessibility facilities such as wheelchair ramps (84%), designated guest rooms for disabled guests (61%), and toilets designed for increased accessibility (68%). However, these facilities are still limited in number and unevenly distributed. On average, hotels only offer 1–2 designated rooms for disabled guests, severely limiting accommodation capacity for guests with special needs

4.2 Human Resource Gaps in Inclusive Service Practices

Despite the availability of physical infrastructure, human-resource-based service delivery remains suboptimal. Only 25% of the hotels reported having staff who had received disability-friendly service training. The majority of staff (75%) lack specialized knowledge and skills, resulting in inconsistent service delivery that tends to be improvised

4.3 Structural and Operational Barriers

The integration of disability-friendly services is hampered by several factors, including:

a. The absence of standard policies at the budget hotel management level.

b. Budget limitations for additional investment.

c. The perception that inclusive services require high costs.

This results in efforts to implement disability-friendly facilities and services that are often merely symbolic and not yet integrated into the hotel's operational system.

4.4 Opportunities Through Technology and Collaboration

Despite these limitations, this study identified strategic opportunities through technological innovations such as reservation apps that include accessibility information, the use of voice-assisted room control, and braille-based signage. Furthermore, collaboration between hotels, the government, and the disability community is key to strengthening inclusive initiatives. Based on this data, it can be concluded that although basic inclusive infrastructure has begun to be available in most budget hotels in Jakarta, there are still significant gaps in human resources and operational policies

5 Theory development

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of disability-friendly services in budget hotels in Jakarta remains limited, particularly in terms of infrastructure (minimal space, limited accessible rooms) and non-physical aspects, such as staff training, which have not been prioritized. Only a small number of hotels provide facilities that meet international standards, and most still consider them as additional features rather than essential services.

Compared to the theory of tourism inclusivity according to [37], this condition shows a gap between the principles of universal design and practice in the field. This theory emphasizes that inclusive tourism must provide physical access, information, and attitudes (attitudinal access) that support the full participation of disabled tourists. In Jakarta, physical aspects have begun to be addressed, but aspects of attitude and staff competence are still far behind.

This finding is also relevant to the concept of sustainable tourism development emphasized by UN and UN Tourism WTO 2025, which is seen as a pillar of sustainability, as it ensures that all community groups, including people with disabilities, can benefit from tourism. However, research shows that budget hotels in Jakarta still face obstacles, such as budget constraints, a lack of strict regulations, and low managerial awareness of the importance of the disabled traveler market.

From a global perspective, developed countries, such as Japan, Australia, and the European Union, have already established strict accessibility standards through regulations and certification. For example, the European Accessibility Act 2019 requires service providers, including hotels, to have access to facilities for people with disabilities. In Japan, ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, the government offers incentives to hotels to improve accessibility. This comparison shows that Jakarta is still in its early stages, with initiatives relying on individual hotel awareness, rather than a robust regulatory system.

Furthermore, this finding confirms the resource-based view (RBV) paradigm for hotel management [38]. Accessible facilities and inclusive staff training are not only moral obligations but can also be strategic resources that differentiate hotels from their competitors. Travelers with disabilities represent a large global market, estimated to be worth more than USD 166 billion per year (ENAT, 2022). Thus, budget hotels in Jakarta that can integrate disability-friendly services can gain a long-term competitive advantage.

Practically, the results of this study indicate a significant gap between the ideals of global inclusivity theory and the practices of budget hotels in Jakarta. While there is an initial awareness, implementation is not yet widespread. This discussion highlights the urgency of collaboration between the government, hotel associations, and the disability community to promote measurable inclusive service standards

6 Discussion and conclusion

This study highlights the current state of disability-friendly services in budget hotels in Jakarta, drawing on data from 57 hotels that already provide basic facilities for disabled

guests. The findings indicate that most of these hotels have adopted basic physical facilities such as wheelchair ramps, dedicated guest rooms, and more accessible toilets. However, the distribution of these facilities remains uneven across budget hotel categories and the number of accessible rooms tends to be limited (an average of only 1–2 rooms per hotel).

Furthermore, a gap in human resource competency was identified. Of the 57 hotels, only a small proportion had staff that had received inclusive service training, while the majority still relied on improvised services without standard guidelines. This situation indicates that the availability of infrastructure has not been matched by the readiness of soft skills to provide an equitable stay experience for disabled guests.

Other barriers include structural and operational barriers such as the lack of standard policies at the budget hotel management level, limited budgets for investment in additional facilities, and the perception that inclusive services are expensive. However, this study also identified strategic opportunities through the use of technology (e.g., disability-friendly reservation apps and voice-assisted control) and cross-stakeholder collaboration (hotels, government, and community organizations), which can reduce costs while increasing service effectiveness.

Based on these results, the following recommendations are proposed:

a. Strengthening Regulations and Minimum Standards Local governments and hotel associations need to establish minimum standards for inclusive facilities that budget hotels must have by referring to the Minister of Public Works and Public Housing Regulation on the accessibility of public buildings and UNWTO standards on inclusive tourism.

b. Special Training for HR Structured training programs on disability-friendly services should be integrated into budget hotels' human resource management. This can be achieved through collaboration with tourism training institutions, universities, and organizations for people with disabilities.

c. Disability-Friendly Technology Innovation Hotels can utilize digital applications that provide booking features for special needs as well as equipping rooms with simple but inclusive technology (e.g., voice commands, visual alarms, or braille signage).

d. Multi-Party Collaboration Synergy is needed between hotels, the government, NGOs, and communities of people with disabilities to conduct outreach, facility trials, and joint evaluations so that services truly meet user needs

e. Inclusive Marketing Strategy Budget hotels that already have disability-friendly facilities can leverage this aspect as a competitive advantage in marketing, in line with global tourism trends that emphasize inclusivity and sustainability

By adopting these recommendations, budget hotels in Jakarta can not only increase their competitiveness but also make a real contribution to realizing inclusive tourism that is in line with the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 10 on reducing inequality and Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities.

7 Research Limitations

The study was only conducted on 57 budget hotels in the Jakarta area, so the results may not fully reflect the conditions of hotels in other regions in Indonesia, which have different characteristics in terms of regulations, infrastructure, and the level of public awareness of disability issues. Government regulations regarding inclusive tourism are evolving. One limitation of this study is that it does not thoroughly examine the impact of recent policy changes on hotel readiness to provide disability-friendly services.

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