

Questioning the Stakeholders' Perceptions To The Availability of Facilities for Disability Tourism: A Case Study in Bunaken Island

Benny Irwan Towoliu*¹, Diana Tangian², Bernadain Dainty Polii³,
Dianne O. Rondonuwu⁴, Maryke Alelo⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}Politeknik Negeri Manado
E-mail: benny.tourism@gmail.com

Article History	Abstract
Accepted: 25 April 2025 Revised: 11 June 2025 Published: 15 June 2025	<p><i>Inclusive tourism remains a challenge in Indonesia, particularly in marine destinations such as Bunaken Island, where accessibility and facilities for people with disabilities are lacking. This study aims to explore stakeholder perceptions, including government officials, tourism businesses, and local communities, regarding the availability and need for disability-friendly tourism infrastructure in Bunaken. A mixed-method approach was applied, combining quantitative surveys of 321 respondents with qualitative interviews and field observations. The findings reveal that stakeholders strongly agree (>4.1) on the urgency of providing access for disabled tourists and moderately agree (>3.7) on the importance of supporting facilities, including accessible toilets, communication aids, and modified transport. However, some respondents raised concerns related to renovation costs and implementation feasibility. The study concludes that inclusive tourism in Bunaken is both necessary and economically promising. Specific recommendations include prioritizing basic accessible infrastructure, engaging disabled persons organizations (DPOs) in planning, and leveraging public-private partnerships to fund improvements. This research contributes to the discourse on sustainable and inclusive tourism by offering empirical insights and practical strategies to make Bunaken Island a more accessible and welcoming destination for all.</i></p> <p>Keywords: <i>Income Audit, Daily Revenue Report, Occupancy Rate, Hospitality Finance, Internal Control</i></p>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

INTRODUCTION

Tourism develops because of human activities to find something that is not yet known, explore new areas, new atmospheres or new trips. During these activities, humans will spend a lot of money for an activity that is enjoyed at a new destination. Currently, Indonesia has placed tourism as a commodity, which is expected to be able to replace the oil and gas sector in terms of having an impact on the country's foreign exchange earnings (Pitana, 2005; Pendit, 2002). Of course, the rationale for this is because of the wealth of ecological potential and socio-cultural resources owned by Indonesia. One indicator that shows the progress of a country or region is the increase in the number of tourists visiting (McIntosh & Goeldner, 1980). This means that the more tourists who visit reflect the progress of the country/region. Many things have been taken by the Indonesian government to make tourism a leading sector. One policy that is considered quite radical is to encourage all related sectors to support tourism development as a leading sector (Pitana & Gayatri, 2005).

This policy has penetrated almost all regions in Indonesia, namely placing tourism as the main priority in terms of future income for the region and by opening various accessibility of transportation infrastructure and various other facilities improvements, empowering various ecological and socio-cultural potentials of the community to be used as tourist attractions. However, one aspect that is often overlooked in the development of tourism infrastructure is the availability of facilities for persons with disabilities (Daruwalla & Darcy, 2005; Elfrida & Noviyanti, 2019).

Disabled-friendly facilities are sometimes found in established tourist destinations, but are largely absent in less developed areas. This may reflect either neglect in the planning phase or the assumption that the disabled tourist market is too small to be economically viable (Popiel, 2016). The 2020 Paralympic Games in Tokyo, however, showed that persons with disabilities are capable of achieving feats equal to those without disabilities, provided they have adequate space and facilities (Hano, 2011). In tourism, this “space” is often denied, not due to capability, but due to lack of access.

Until now, people with disabilities often face marginalization and limited access to tourism experiences due to physical, social, and economic barriers (Domínguez Vila, Alén González, & Darcy, 2019). Studies have shown that people with mobility limitations travel around 60% less than non-disabled travelers (Popiel, 2016). Accessible tourism products are often more expensive and less available, especially in developing countries. Some destinations do not provide basic accessibility, such as special lanes, information aids, or accessible transport (Elfrida & Noviyanti, 2019).

Bunaken National Park, located in North Sulawesi Province, is one of Indonesia’s flagship marine tourism destinations. Bunaken Island serves as the main entry point and hub for diving tourism. By 2019, 25 inns and 34 homestays were operating, with more planned by the local government (Traveling, 2024). Despite its international reputation, no facilities for tourists with disabilities have been developed, and no concrete plans exist in the destination’s development policies. This situation illustrates a lack of inclusive planning, especially when compared to models in other countries or even some domestic examples (Arawindha & Fitrianita, 2018; Nur, 2018).

Therefore, this study aims to examine stakeholders’ perceptions, including government officers, tourism operators, and the local community, regarding the availability and urgency of providing tourism facilities for people with disabilities on Bunaken Island

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques (Creswell, 2014). The research was conducted on Bunaken Island, North Sulawesi Province, purposively selected due to its prominence as a marine tourism destination and its role in local government tourism planning. Quantitative data were collected through a structured survey administered to 321 respondents, including government employees, private sector workers, business owners, students, laborers, and housewives from the Manado area. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which allowed for the inclusion of respondents with relevant knowledge of the research subject (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). To enrich the survey results, qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews with

key stakeholders such as local tourism business owners, village leaders, and officials from the Manado City Tourism Office. These interviews aimed to gain deeper insights into their perspectives on the availability and planning of tourism facilities for people with disabilities on Bunaken Island. In addition, non-participant field observations were conducted to examine the actual physical accessibility of tourism infrastructure on the island (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013). The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and categories relevant to the research objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The integration of qualitative and quantitative data ensured a more comprehensive understanding of stakeholder perceptions and the challenges of implementing inclusive tourism infrastructure in Bunaken.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Bunaken National Park is a marine park area in the province of North Sulawesi, covering an area of 89,065 ha which includes four administrative areas, namely Minahasa Induk Regency, South Minahasa, Manado City and North Minahasa. But so far, the spotlight for the tourism utilization zone is Bunaken Island and its surroundings, because around the area it has beautiful coral reefs where thousands of fish species gather, making it a diving spot for diving enthusiasts. Bunaken and the surrounding islands have been known as a tourist attraction since 1978 where in that year there were several activities carried out around the Bunaken island group. Practically since 1978 to 2021, it has been 43 years since Bunaken has developed as a tourist attraction, so it's no wonder this marine park is so well known in the world, especially for divers.

Visitors or tourists who come to Bunaken island must go through the city of Manado as the provincial capital, as well as the closest point to get to Bunaken. In addition, part of the National Park area is included in the administrative area of the Manado city government, such as Bunaken Island, Siladen and Manado Tua. The impact on Bunaken island tourism can be seen in the profile of tourists going to Manado or Bunaken. Almost 100% of tourists to Manado must go to Bunaken Island, this is related to how access to Bunaken from Manado City by using a boat at a certain point such as from Tongkaina Village can be reached in just 15 minutes, then 30 to 45 minutes from the Marina Plasa area or from Kali Jengky which is a traditional market in Manado City. The data specifically on the number of tourists/visitors to Bunaken Island is not perfectly recorded because of the open access to the National Park Area or to Bunaken Island. The following is data on tourists to Manado, taken from the Manado City Tourism Office, in the last 10 years.

In the table, it can be seen that in 2015 to 2019 there was a significant increase in the growth rate of tourists to the city of Manado, which increased by more than 1 million visitors to Manado. This also affects Bunaken Island. Because it is certain that the lodging industry in Manado City will sell Bunaken as a must-visit destination. This significant increase was due to the opening of flight routes from Manado to 5 cities in the Republic of China, (Shenzen, Chongqing, Wuhan, Shanghai, and Changsa). However, in 2020 the number of tourists coming to Manado-Bunaken decreased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the closure of all domestic and international flight routes and even all tourist locations.

Table 1 Tourist Visits in Manado City

Years	Tourist		Total
	International	Domestics	
2010	30.996	355.583	386.579
2011	41.904	510.493	552.397
2012	50.008	521.247	571.255
2013	50.197	682.231	732.428
2014	34.443	832.015	866.458
2015	38.400	1.070.681	1.109.081
2016	50.653	1.484.402	1.535.055
2017	92.729	1.647.000	1.739.729
2018	124.830	1.271.289	1.396.119
2019	143.730	975.060	1.118.790
2020	24.021	447.119	471.140
2021	16.718	442.587	459.305

Source: Manado City Tourism Office

Following are the results of a survey of stakeholders to see how they perceive facilities for people with disabilities. Table 2 summarizes the demographic profile of respondents who are eligible. Where in the table there are 321 respondents with a gender distribution, gender distribution is 53.9 percent male and 46.1 percent female. Most of the respondents were in the age group of 31 to 40 was 46.1 percent; ages 20 to 30 was 25.2 percent; age 41 to 50 is 16.8 percent and the last age over 51 years is 11.8 percent. then specifically the level of education is dominated by respondents with a high school education level of 67.6 percent. For jobs that stand out, respondents who have jobs as private industry are 34.0 percent, other types of work tend to be evenly distributed. With the characteristics of the respondents, it can be concluded that the respondents are fairly evenly distributed.

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Respondent	Variable (n= 321)	Number	Per cent
Gender	Male	173	53,9
	Female	148	46,1
Age	20-30	81	25,2
	31-40	148	46,1
	41-50	54	16,8
	> 51	38	11,8
Education	Middle School	4	1,2
	High School	221	67,6
	Bachelor	100	31,2
Occupation	Government Employee	71	22,1
	Private Employee	113	34,0
	Employees of State-Owned Enterprises	20	6,2
	Entrepreneur/Trader	37	11,5
	Professional Worker	13	4,0
	Student	51	15,9
	Handyman	3	0,9

Respondent	Variable (n= 321)	Number	Per cent
	Loborer	4	1,2
	Housewife	13	4,0

Source: researcher processed data, 2025.

In Table 3, it is shown how the respondents responded to the twelve sub-indicators, which are divided into two main indicators, namely (1) the availability of access for people with disabilities and (2) the availability of disabled facilities at tourist attractions.

Table 3, Survey Result

No	Access and Facilities Needs	Percentage
	Availability of access for the disabled	
1	Special lanes (parking lots, flat roads, wide traversed wheels, there are guide boards)	4.6199%
2	Modified Boat Parking with special doors for the disabled	4.2617%
3	A modified Boat with a special door for the disabled	4.1059%
4	Special ticket booth with adequate barrier for wheelchair access	3.7819%
5	Special communication information facilities (officers who can speak sign language, information media with braille/sculpted reliefs/touchable embossed images)	4.5919%
6	Special officers accompanying disabled tourists	3.5171%
Availability of facilities at tourist attractions (disabled)		
1	Toilets that are easily accessible and suit the needs of people with disabilities	3.4268%
2	Accessible beds for people with disabilities	4.3551%
3	Canteen / Cafeteria / Outlet with ramp / good facilities	4.3925%
4	Emergency evacuation facilities in the form of audio and visual and there are evacuation points	3.6168%
5	Wheelchairs for the disabled	3.5171%
6	Providing books, brochures specifically for disability	3.4268%

Source: data resource, 2025.

The first indicator, namely the availability of access for people with disabilities, consists of 6 statement sub-indicators, which discuss the availability of access for tourists with disabilities to visit the Bunaken National Park area; in this case Bunaken Island as a center for the development of the tourism industry. Indeed, this area consists of 5 islands, but Bunaken is the entrance for tourists to carry out various tourist activities, due to the distribution of spots for diving tourism activities (diving) the most and spread on Bunaken island, so the most operators and lodging businesses are on the island. . The following is a description of the answers from the respondents:

In the first statement, namely the need for a special lane (parking lot, flat road, wide for wheels, there is a guide board). Respondents answered the statement "agree on average 4.6 percent, almost close to strongly agree. Understanding the condition of Bunaken which has a small road is very necessary access well-organized for tourists with special needs to enter the area. Then in the second statement, namely the special boat parking for disabled carriers, the average respondent answered agreeing 4.2 percent, still above 4 agree statements. The current condition on Bunaken Island, where all tourists visit through the same pier, is not feasible when

there are tourists with special needs coming to the location, where access is available the same as for tourists in general. So, separate access is needed in the form of boat parking that makes them safe, to go down and enter the tourist area.

Furthermore, in the statement Boat, which was modified with a special door for people with disabilities, the average respondent answered in agreement to 4.1 percent. It must be admitted that the boat that operates to bring tourists to Bunaken does not yet have a special door for tourists with special needs to get on or off the boat. And this is very dangerous for the tourists, besides that, with a specially modified door, it will make it easier for introductions who bring tourists or officers who work on boats or at the pier to supervise tourists' access to the area.

In the statement of the need for special ticket booths with adequate barriers so that they can be accessed by wheelchairs, the respondents' answers somewhat agree with an average of 3.7. percent. It is recognized that the majority of tourist activities to Bunaken are for diving and snorkeling lovers, Bunaken has not been explored with mainland tourist attractions, and even if there are additional tourist attractions other than diving, it is certain that they are still activities related to attractions in the water, so the prediction of tourists with needs especially at this time it is still very small to visit the area. However, it is estimated that with the arrangement and development of an ecotourism village on Bunaken Island, it is estimated that Bunaken will become crowded so that there will certainly be opportunities to be visited by tourists with special needs. Bunaken tourism managers must think about this access.

Then on the statement of the need for special communication information facilities (officers who can sign language, information media with braille/relief (sculptures/embossed images) that can be touched, the average respondent answers 4.5 percent agree. Indeed, for tourists who speak or see special information is needed making it easier for them to have activities at tourist sites and not making it difficult for tourism managers.

In the last statement specifically for the indicator of access availability with a sub-indicator of the need for special officers to accompany tourists with disabilities, it can be seen that the respondents' answers somewhat agree with an average of 3.5 percent. From these answers, it can be seen that there are special doubts related to the availability of officers, who will accompany them, then these officers must have special skills because they handle tourists who have special needs. This is what causes respondents to doubt the statement.

Of the six sub-indicators, in total positive respondents agree with the need for special access on Bunaken Island, for tourists with special needs, especially at this time Bunaken is still in the process of structuring the dock and developing an ecotourism campus. Become an opportunity that attracts tourists with special needs.

Then on the indicator of Availability of facilities at tourist attractions for people with disabilities, this indicator consists of six sub-indicators that are asked to respondents. The following is the answer for each sub-indicator:

On the statement of the need for toilets that are easily accessible and in accordance with the needs of people with disabilities. From these statements, the average respondent answered somewhat agree (undecided) 3.4 percent. Respondents understand the current condition of lodging in Bunaken, which on average requires special renovations for tourists with disabilities.

With the condition of lodging in Bunaken, serious attention is needed from the management in managing public toilets.

Furthermore, in the statement of the need for a bed that is easily accessible according to the needs of the disabled, the average respondent answered agreeing to 4.3 percent. With current technological developments, it is very easy for tour managers to provide beds that are easy to arrange, according to the needs of tourists compared to the provision of special toilets, which require separate renovations, with the accommodation conditions that have been built at this time in Bunaken.

Then in the statement of the need for a canteen/cafeteria/outlet with ramps/facilities that make it easier for people with disabilities, it can be seen that the average respondent answered agreeing to 4.3 percent. Respondents see the need for special outlets for tourists with disabilities, this is possible for tourists who will not stay overnight, who only come to tourist sites and return home, do not stay overnight. The current arrangement of Bunaken needs to think about at least there are special signs at outlets / restaurants that are specifically for disabled tourists.

In the statement of the need for emergency evacuation facilities in the form of audio and visual and there is an evacuation point. On average, respondents answered somewhat agree (undecided) 3.6 percent. Respondents compared the current conditions in Bunaken where under normal conditions there are no special signs for evacuation routes on Bunaken Island, so there are doubts for tourists with special needs to Bunaken.

Furthermore, on the statement of the need for wheelchairs for people with disabilities, the average respondent's answer is somewhat agree (undecided) 3.5 percent. Respondents saw that the average tour manager had not provided these facilities because it was related to access to tourist sites with friendly roads, so this condition caused doubts about the need for wheelchair facilities for tourists with special needs.

In the last statement, namely the need to provide books, special brochures for disability, respondents' answers somewhat agree (undecided) 3.4 percent. This condition is related to sources of information in the form of books/magazines or brochures, which contain specific information such as this is not easy to obtain, there must be someone who provides and distributes it to tourism managers in Bunaken. Of the six sub-indicators related to the need for facilities for tourists with disabilities at tourist sites, the average respondent agrees, although not as significant as the availability of access for tourists with disabilities.

It must be admitted that almost several decades before, people with disabilities were marginalized from normal society, even though they had the same rights in accessing all facilities for the public interest. In developed countries such as in Europe, America and Australia, these people get high attention from the government and even the community, given the opportunity to enjoy all the facilities provided for the community in general. All public facilities can be enjoyed by the community without distinguishing one from another. For example, for educational facilities, not only for normal citizens, but schools must also provide facilities for people with disabilities.

The availability of facilities for people with disabilities is no longer an issue, because it is certain that they are available on campuses in developed countries. The setting that is debated is whether they are comfortable with the learning process provided and are there any

obstacles to learning achievement, as well as how their learning experience is during their education on campus (Fuller*, M., Healey, et.al, 2004 & Fuller*, M, Bradley, A, 2004; Healey, M, et al, 2006).

Especially for the tourism industry, the availability of access and facilities is also needed by people with disabilities, considering that tourists with disabilities tend to be loyal, spend more, and enjoy a longer stay at their destination, but it all depends on local policies (Domínguez Vila, et.al, 2019). However, the availability of access and facilities is still minimal in several destinations in Indonesia, although there are some tourist destinations that are well known, but their availability is difficult to find. Tourism in Batu Malang is famous for Jatim Park1, 2 and 3, but access and facilities can be found at these tourist sites, even though the availability of space for the development of these facilities is still possible to provide places for people with disabilities, (Arawindha, & Fitrianita, 2018)

However, there is also a tourism development plan that has given serious attention to people with disabilities, especially in Indonesia, as seen in the arrangement of the Sekumpul Religious Tourism Area Corridor, Martapura using the Livable Street approach. Where the elements of road safety and comfort as well as to accommodate the capacity of the Guru Sekumpul haul congregations are equipped with corridor facilities such as the availability of safe and comfortable pedestrian paths, bicycle lanes and public transportation and improving the quality of places of worship such as outdoor spatial planning, the addition of supporting facilities for religious activities. noticed. In addition to the design elements, the corridor is equipped with a special identity to mark it as a religious tourism area. (Nur, 2018).

The results show that the existing planning and development planning on Bunaken Island has not fully described the availability of facilities for people with disabilities from several studies related to the government's responsiveness to people with disabilities, as seen from the feasibility of housing for the city of Manado, which is low. (Darise, 2015). There is also no alignment of planners on the availability of people with disabilities to discuss the availability of facilities for people on Bunaken Island (Agusbushro, et al, 2015).

Looking at the market for people with disabilities, it is time for the government and tourism managers to see that this segment is small but has added value for its high occupancy rate and high consumption rate, they are considered a group with a fairly large income level (Domínguez Vila, et.al, 2019; O'Neill, & Knight, 2000). Strong stakeholder support for the availability of access and facilities for people with disabilities on Bunaken Island should be considered for structuring and developing tourist destinations.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research objectives and findings, it can be concluded that stakeholders—comprising government officials, business actors, and community members—generally agree (> 4.1) that it is necessary to improve access for tourists with disabilities visiting Bunaken Island. Regarding the availability of supporting facilities, the average agreement score was above 3.7, though some stakeholders expressed uncertainty due to concerns over renovation costs and the readiness of existing infrastructure.

To move toward a more inclusive tourism model, several specific recommendations can be proposed. First, it is essential to prioritize the development of basic accessibility

infrastructure, such as accessible toilets, special lanes and ramps, wheelchair-friendly boat access, and clear visual-auditory emergency signage. Second, local governments should initiate a stakeholder engagement strategy that involves disabled persons organizations (DPOs), tourism operators, and local communities in the planning and monitoring of inclusive facilities. Third, funding models may include public-private partnerships (PPPs), grants from international development agencies, and the reallocation of local tourism levies to support inclusive infrastructure. This study contributes to the growing discourse on inclusive tourism development by providing empirical evidence on stakeholder awareness and attitudes in a globally recognized marine destination. It underscores the urgency of integrating accessibility into tourism planning not only as a legal and ethical obligation but also as an economic opportunity, given the growing demand from the disability travel market. Establishing Bunaken as a disability-friendly destination could serve as a model for other marine and island-based tourist areas in Indonesia and beyond.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors are very grateful to the UK Skills for Prosperity (UKS4P) Program, who has funded this research through the collaboration between the International Labour Organisation and Manado State Polytechnic.

REFERENCES

- Agusbushro, R., Makarau, V. H., & Sembel, A. (2015). Analisis kebutuhan prasarana dan sarana pariwisata di kawasan Taman Nasional Bunaken Kecamatan Bunaken Kepulauan Kota Manado. *SPASIAL*, 2(2), 122–131.
- Arawindha, U., & Fitrianita, T. (2018). The accessibility of people with disabilities to the tourism activities in Batu City. *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, 6(1), 47.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Darise, D. I. (2015). Kajian Kota Manado sebagai kota layak huni berdasarkan kriteria (IAP) Ikatan Ahli Perencanaan. *SPASIAL*, 1(1), 131–140.
- Daruwalla, P., & Darcy, S. (2005). Personal and societal attitudes to disability. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32(3), 549–570.
- Domínguez Vila, T., Alén González, E., & Darcy, S. (2019). Accessible tourism online resources: A Northern European perspective. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 19(2), 140–156.
- Elfrida, T., & Noviyanti, U. D. E. (2019). Difa City Tour dan pemenuhan kebutuhan wisata difabel. *INKLUSI: Journal of Disability Studies*, 6(1), 25–46.
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1–4.
- Fuller, M., Bradley, A., & Healey, M. (2004). Incorporating disabled students within an inclusive higher education environment. *Disability & Society*, 19(5), 455–468.
- Guest, G., Namey, E., & Mitchell, M. (2013). *Collecting qualitative data: A field manual for applied research*. Sage Publications.
- Hano, K. (2011). *Accessible tourism: Concepts and issues*.
- Healey, M., Bradley, A., Fuller, M., & Hall, T. (2006). Listening to students: The experiences of disabled students of learning at university. In *Towards inclusive learning in higher*

- education: Developing curricula for disabled students* (pp. 32–43).
- McIntosh, R. W., & Goeldner, C. R. (1980). *Tourism: Principles, practices, philosophies*. Grid Publishing Inc.
- Nur, L. (2018). *Penataan koridor kawasan wisata religi dengan pendekatan Livable Street* (Doctoral dissertation, Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember).
- O'Neill, M., & Knight, J. (2000). Disability tourism dollars in Western Australia hotels. *Hospitality Review*, 18(2), 7.
- Pendit, N. S. (2002). *Ilmu pariwisata: Sebuah pengantar perdana*. PT Pradnya Paramita.
- Pitana, I. G., & Gayatri, P. G. (2005). *Sosiologi pariwisata*. PT the Network.
- Popiel, M. (2016). Tourism market, disability and inequality: Problems and solutions. *Acta Academica Karviniensia*, 16, 25–36.
- Traveling. (2024). Pemerintah bangun 300 homestay di Bunaken. Retrieved from <https://traveling.bisnis.com>