

# Impact of Inclusive Tourism on the Economy and Society

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## Abstract

Inclusive tourism is a concept that promotes social justice and equality, creating opportunities for everyone, including people with physical and mental disabilities, to participate in and benefit from tourism activities. This form of tourism covers not only people with physical disabilities, but also all groups with differences such as age, gender, ethnicity, and social status. Inclusive tourism encompasses economic growth by serving a wider range of tourists, taking into account the needs of different parts of society. In terms of economic impacts, the inclusive tourism sector stimulates the development of infrastructure projects related to the creation of new jobs and the reconstruction or adaptation of tourism facilities. By creating favorable conditions, services that make it possible for people with disabilities to travel, in particular, increase the participation of this group in tourism activities. This leads to an increase in tourism spending and more economic activity in the relevant areas. The impact of inclusive tourism extends beyond economic benefits and contributes significantly to social development. Inclusive tourism enhances the development of Social Inclusion. It also allows for greater equal opportunity for all groups in public life and allows for greater equal opportunity for citizens to travel and experience different cultures, educate themselves, and form social bonds. Ultimately, an increase in travel opportunities creates greater understanding and empathy between different cultures and provides the ability for individuals to take a giant leap toward social equality and peace. Additionally, the promotion of inclusive tourism requires that the public and private sectors work together, utilize new technologies, and gain support from the local community. By providing this framework, provides a foundation for developing a sustainable, equitable tourism industry that is economically and socially viable.

**Keywords:** Inclusive tourism, Sustainable tourism, Social inclusion, SDGs, People with disabilities, Economic development, Tourism accessibility

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## 1. Introduction

Inclusive tourism has become an increasingly significant research area within tourism studies. As an area of study, inclusive tourism includes concepts such as equity, social justice, and ensuring that every person can participate in tourism regardless of any barriers. In addition to supporting the development of accessible environments for those with physical, sensory, cognitive, and/or psychological disabilities, inclusive tourism also represents broader socially equitable and inclusive practices to address the needs of individuals regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, economic status, and numerous other personal characteristics. Essentially, inclusive tourism is aimed at ensuring equitable access to opportunities for all while enhancing all members of the community's quality of life.

Inclusive tourism has garnered strong international interest as it can contribute to both the economic development of local economies and improve individuals' quality of life. In general, inclusive tourism can assist with the expansion of the economy by increasing and diversifying the number of visitors that a destination can accommodate services to, thereby increasing both the demand for and revenue generated by tourism in general. In addition to the economic development benefit, increasing numbers of visitors to destinations who use accessible tourism products and services provide opportunities for increased job creation,

increased investments in local infrastructure, and increased diversification of the type of tourism services provided in various communities.

Furthermore, through increasing cultural exchange and increasing opportunities for social interaction between groups of different social and economic backgrounds, inclusive tourism helps to develop stronger social cohesion and greater community development among people from diverse social backgrounds.

Governments, tourism-related organizations, and private commercial entities across the globe have increasingly recognized the importance of developing inclusive tourism systems. Many governments, private tourism enterprises, and tourism-related organizations have focused on enhancing accessibility standards and updating their tourism infrastructure, and implementing new technologies that help to achieve the above-mentioned goals. Developing inclusive tourism systems requires more than just removing physical barriers and improving access to tourism services regardless of cultural or social background. As a result, inclusive tourism has become an integral aspect of sustainable tourism development by creating greater economic growth and increasing social inclusion. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the effects of inclusive tourism on the economy and society and its role in promoting sustainable economic development, increasing social equality, and improving participation by more people in tourism activities.

## 2. Economic and Social Impacts of Inclusive Tourism

Inclusive tourism is a way of providing opportunities for everybody, including people with disabilities, to participate in society. Inclusive tourism contributes to the development of the tourism sector and also supports social justice and equal opportunities for participation. Research shows that inclusive tourism has the potential to produce a wide range of benefits to individuals and society and to be an important component of the sustainable development of tourism (Bhatt, 2024).

From an economic perspective, inclusive tourism expands the potential customer base (beyond just those who have a disability) and creates new markets for tourism destinations and services (Korbiel et al., 2025). The provision of accessible and adaptable tourism products and services creates job opportunities, stimulates investment in tourism infrastructure, and supports regional economic development. The increased accessibility of destinations creates opportunities for the growth of a more diverse visitor base, a higher level of tourism spending, and increased revenues for tourism businesses. For people with disabilities, the ability to use tourism products and services and participate in tourism activities promotes independence and social participation. The increasing demand for accessible services will result in more innovation and diversification of the tourism industry, resulting in the development of specialized products and services to meet the diverse needs of visitors (Ghotbi & Dyliaeva, 2025).

From a social perspective, inclusive tourism ensures that all people have an equal opportunity to participate in tourism activities, which promotes social equality. By providing access to tourism experiences, people with disabilities will be able to engage more fully in the social life of their communities and participate more in community interactions. In addition, inclusive tourism promotes mutual understanding, empathy, and respect between different social groups. Developing inclusive tourism will foster intercultural exchange and increase social interaction while contributing to the development of an equitable and inclusive society (Hamarnah et al., 2024).

Moreover, inclusive tourism will reduce barriers to different social groups while improving the quality of life of society as a whole. By fostering greater participation, accessibility, and opportunity for all social groups, inclusive tourism strengthens social cohesion and supports communities that are diverse in nature. The benefits of implementing inclusive tourism practices extend not only to travellers as individuals but to all members of society through increased social integration and improved collective well-being (Mubaiwa, 2022).

Inclusive tourism also has the potential for significant economic and social impact. The development of inclusive tourism will create a more inclusive, accessible, and socially responsible tourism industry. An increase in the level of inclusive tourism will positively impact the welfare of society as it relates to both social inclusion and economic development (Acheampong et al., 2025). A critical factor in maximizing the long-term benefits of inclusive tourism is effective cooperation and collaboration among all stakeholders (public and private); continuing improvement of tourism infrastructure; and the increased availability of accessible and affordable services.

A further factor contributing to the competitiveness of tourism destinations in the modern economy and for future development is the contribution to sustainable development made by inclusive tourism. Tourism policy increasingly emphasizes the need to develop an environment that is accessible and welcoming for all people, regardless of their level of physical ability, age, or social status. Inclusive tourism, by allowing for the shared benefits of tourism activity to be spread throughout the broader community, contributes to sustainable development. Inclusiveness encourages social cohesion, provides opportunities for all individuals, and supports the long-term viability of tourist locations.

One important component of successful inclusive tourism is having adequate accessible tourism supporting infrastructure in place. Accessibility does not just refer to physically modifying hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions to accommodate those with disabilities; it also includes transportation systems, information services, communication technologies, and publicly accessible facilities. Destinations that have made these types of accessibility improvements are now able to offer their products and services to a much broader audience, including individuals with disabilities, seniors, and families with small children. Therefore, investing in accessibility enhancements not only provides visitors with improved experiences but also creates increased demand for tourism and increased economic activity.

Technological innovations are playing an increasingly important role in promoting inclusive tourism. Digital solutions, online booking systems, and assistive technologies remove barriers that have historically prevented individuals from participating in tourism, enabling guests to plan and fully experience their journeys independently and confidently, thereby enhancing visitor experience and quality of services while promoting increased levels of social inclusion throughout the tourism community.

Also, benefits equal to increased employment opportunities and economic sustainability are provided to local communities due to increased successful adoption of inclusiveness amongst businesses and institutions. Increasing interaction between people from various sociocultural backgrounds promotes respect for one another, encourages communication, and understanding of the cultures of others. Therefore, inclusive tourism should be treated as not only an economic activity but an important means of achieving community development, civic engagement, and sustainable growth.

Inclusive tourism, while contributing to the economy and social development, each of the inclusive tourism activities, also plays an important role in promoting sustainable development goals at both a global level and a national level.

Examining the significance of inclusive tourism can be framed within an international framework using the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Governments and the United Nations are placing greater priority on sustainability. Inclusive tourism can be viewed as an effective instrument to achieve several of the global objectives identified by the UN.

Primarily, inclusive tourism supports the achievement of SDG8. Through the development of inclusive tourism destinations, inclusive tourism creates employment opportunities by stimulating entrepreneurship and promoting sustainable economic activity in the tourism sector. Increasing the accessibility of tourism services will ultimately create growth opportunities for the tourism industry while increasing participation in the labour force.

Additionally, inclusive tourism is closely linked with SDG10. By reducing the barriers that may prevent an individual from accessing tourism opportunities, a destination creates equal opportunities for everyone, including people with disabilities, older persons, women, low-income individuals, and persons from varied socio-economic backgrounds. Creating equal access to tourism opportunities removes the stigma associated with social isolation and provides individuals the opportunity to participate fully in economic and social activities. Therefore, tourism becomes an avenue through which equitable and engaging communities can be created.

In addition, inclusive tourism supports the achievement of SDG11. Sustainable cities and communities through the development of accessible infrastructure, public spaces that are inclusive to all, and through community involvement. By providing barrier-free transportation systems, affordable accommodation, and public amenities that are easy to use and enjoyable, we provide a better quality of life for both tourists and local residents. In addition to improving the quality of life for thousands of people who visit the destination,

these improvements will increase urban sustainability, create environments that are inviting to all citizens, and ultimately strengthen our communities (Mubaiwa, 2022).

The growing integration of the principles of inclusive tourism into sustainable development strategies reflects a view that tourism cannot be assessed solely by the economic contribution(s) generated by tourism. Inclusive tourism is also an important contributor to community engagement, social inclusion, and the promotion of access to tourism for all individuals, regardless of their socio-economic or geographical status. Therefore, an effective approach to achieving economic growth, social equity, and the objectives of sustainable development is through inclusive tourism.

**Table 1.** The impact of inclusive tourism on the economy and society.

| Area                         | Impacts                                                                                                                                        | Outcomes                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Economic Impacts             | 1. Creation of a new customer base<br>2. Expansion of accommodation and tourism services.<br>Creation of new employment opportunities          | 1. Increased tourism revenues<br>2. Development of local economies<br>3. Emergence of new services and innovations   |
| Infrastructure Development   | 1. Adaptation of tourism infrastructure to accessibility requirements<br>2. Development of specialized services for people with disabilities   | 1. Improved accessibility of the physical environment<br>2. Expansion of services for individuals with special needs |
| Social Impacts               | 1. Promotion of social inclusion<br>2. Increased empathy and understanding among different social groups. Strengthening of social interactions | 1. Greater social equality and harmony. Equal participation opportunities for all members of society                 |
| Cultural Impacts             | 1. Growth of cultural exchange<br>2. Enhanced mutual understanding among different cultures and ethnic groups                                  | 1. Greater openness toward cultural diversity. More effective intercultural dialogue                                 |
| Social and Economic Benefits | 1. Promotion of social equality and justice. Increased participation of different social groups in economic activities                         | 1. Strengthened social inclusion. Improved social welfare and community development                                  |

**Source:** Compiled by the author based on Gorbatova (2024).

Table 1 summarizes the major economic and social impacts of inclusive tourism identified in previous studies (UNWTO, 2021).

In Economic Impact, rather than simply generating tourism revenue, inclusive tourism enables the expansion of the tourism market through developing new clients, creating new service providers, and increasing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities and other underrepresented groups. As a result, by enhancing the accessibility of destinations and promoting the participation of all visitors regardless of their disability status or other characteristics, inclusive tourism will create increased demand for travel and tourism, thereby generating increased revenue for both businesses and government (Darcy & Buhalis, 2010). Additionally, inclusive tourism promotes additional economic activity for the region by creating additional jobs and increasing the capacity of local economies, contributing to long-term sustainable development of local economies (Table 1).

In terms of infrastructure development, inclusive tourism supports the development of the built environment, including creating and adapting built environments, such as tourism facilities, transportation systems, accommodation facilities, public spaces, and accessibility to those facilities. These improvements promote greater usability of the built and natural environment, encouraging equal participation by all visitors in tourism, while improving the physical accessibility of tourist destinations (Tilovmurodov, 2024). Specifically, by providing additional services for individuals with disabilities, these facilities enhance the number of accessible facilities at the tourism destination level and enhance the overall accessibility of the destination by aligning with the principles of universal design in the tourism development and service delivery process (Table 1).

In terms of Social Impact, inclusive tourism supports the development of equitable social systems and increased social cohesion. By providing opportunities for individuals to participate in tourism regardless of their disability status or other characteristics, inclusive tourism facilitates the interaction of diverse groups and promotes the understanding and acceptance of others. As a result, inclusive tourism promotes healthy social relationships and reduces discrimination against individuals who are underrepresented in tourism.

Cultural impact highlights the importance of greater cultural awareness and understanding. Interaction between persons from diverse cultural, ethnic, and social backgrounds contributes to greater understanding and promotes the use of constructive dialogue in building intercultural relationships. Additionally, the increased interaction and exposure between diverse cultural groups will enhance the quality of social experiences and ultimately foster greater tolerance and openness in our societies.

Lastly, in summation, the benefits of inclusive tourism have both social and economic implications. Providing a broad range of tourism services and increasing the participation of the different social groups in the tourism economy reinforces social justice while creating additional economic opportunities for those groups. Thus, inclusive tourism contributes to the well-being of the community, quality of life, and an equitable model for the future of tourism development. The contributions of inclusive tourism are multidimensional and will create long-term economic, social, and cultural benefits for all participants (Maxmudova et al., 2025).

### **3. Conclusion**

Inclusive tourism will assist in providing social equity and economic growth. By developing and advancing tourism opportunities for people with disabilities, as well as the diverse social groups within our society, the tourism industry will promote interaction among individuals from different parts of the world, thereby providing for a more cohesive society and a better understanding of one another through the appreciation of the cultures of others.

Additionally, inclusive tourism contributes to economic growth in the form of new job creation for individuals who may not have had access to tourism prior to the introduction of inclusive tourism. It also provides a means to promote sustainable tourism through the expansion of accessible tourism facilities and services in these areas. Furthermore, inclusive tourism will further increase the competitive advantage of tourist destinations because of these improvements to sustainability.

The benefits of inclusive tourism also extend to the cultural domain, as it enhances intercultural communication and cooperation between individuals from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, and by doing so, fosters a greater level of understanding and mutual respect; therefore, helping to create a greater sense of community and a greater sense of tolerance and an open attitude towards others.

Thus, inclusive tourism is not only a viable strategy for the growth of tourism, but it can be a significant contributor to the enhancement of social equity and social justice; and so, it should be pursued in a manner that creates the greatest incentive to produce a more equitable society through sustainable development. To accomplish this, there must be a partnership between the private and public sectors, and continual improvement of tourism infrastructure and access to tourism services for all individuals, especially those living with disabilities.

### **Author Contributions**

The author approved the final manuscript.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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