



Prospects for disability storytelling tourism in community-based tourism villages

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ABSTRACT

Community-based tourism has emerged as an alternative model that promotes inclusivity and sustainability. One innovative yet underexplored approach is *Disability Storytelling Tourism*, in which persons with disabilities serve as narrators of the tourism experience. In this concept, visitors are not only exposed to natural landscapes or cultural performances but are also invited to listen to life stories, local histories, and village legends as told by disabled narrators. This model positions tourism as a space for reflection, education, and social empowerment. This article discusses the prospects of implementing *Disability Storytelling Tourism* in Indonesian village tourism, highlighting three key dimensions: empowerment of persons with disabilities, strengthening of local identity, and the enhancement of experience-based tourism value. Through an inclusive approach, tourism can serve not only as an economic driver but also as a medium for reducing stigma and fostering recognition of societal diversity.

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Introduction

Inclusive tourism is gaining global attention as part of sustainable development that emphasizes equitable access for all segments of society, including persons with disabilities. Until now, disability issues in the tourism sector have often been viewed only from the perspective of physical facilities such as wheelchair ramps, transportation accessibility, or special services. However, persons with disabilities have great potential as key actors in tourism, especially through the sharing of their narratives and life experiences. One form of innovation that has emerged is *Disability Storytelling Tourism*, in which persons with disabilities become narrators of travel stories and present tales of struggle, village history, and local legends. This type of tourism not only provides entertainment but also becomes a space for reflection and social learning.

The urgency of developing this tourism model can be viewed from two aspects. First, the aspect of social and economic empowerment. People with disabilities still face stigma and limited access to employment in various sectors (Kurniawati, 2021). Through *storytelling tourism*, they

can become tour guides, narrators, and tourism content creators, thereby gaining recognition and new sources of income. Second, the aspect of tourism innovation. Global tourism trends show a shift from *mass tourism* to *experience-based tourism*, where tourists seek authentic, personal, and meaningful experiences (Richards, 2018). By presenting the personal narratives of persons with disabilities, tourism villages and local destinations can strengthen their appeal and reflective value for visitors.

Furthermore, this approach is also in line with the principles of *inclusive tourism* initiated by the UNWTO, which is to ensure that every individual has the same opportunity to participate in tourism, both as tourists and tourism practitioners (UNWTO, 2019). Thus, *Disability Story Tourism* has the potential to be an innovative strategy in addressing issues of equality, social justice, and sustainability.

This article is compiled as a literature study with the aim of describing the prospects for developing *Disability Story Tourism*. A review was conducted on research and practices in inclusive tourism, community narratives, and global trends in *storytelling tourism*. With this approach, this paper is expected to provide a conceptual contribution in formulating strategies for developing inclusive tourism in Indonesia and in the global context.

Method

This article uses a *literature review* approach to analyze the prospects of *Disability Storytelling Tourism*. The literature search was conducted through online databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, ResearchGate, and official reports from international institutions (e.g., UNWTO) using the keywords "*inclusive tourism*," "*disability tourism*," "*storytelling tourism*," and "*community-based tourism*." The literature selected was published in the last 5 years (2020-2025), although several classic sources were still used to strengthen the theoretical framework. The analysis was conducted using a descriptive-critical approach, namely examining findings related to disability inclusion, *storytelling tourism* practices, and experience-based tourism trends. The results of the analysis were then synthesized to formulate conceptual ideas about *Disability Story Tourism* as a model of social and cultural innovation in tourism.

Results and Discussion

The results of the literature review show that *Disability Story Tourism* has great prospects as an inclusive tourism model that combines social, cultural, and economic aspects. This idea not only addresses the need for accessibility but also presents people with disabilities as the main subjects who narrate their life experiences. This indicates an important paradigm shift from the old model, which tended to view disability in a charitable framework (*charity-based model*), to an *empowerment* paradigm. By becoming tourism narrators, persons with disabilities gain social recognition and a new bargaining position in society.

From a social perspective, the role of persons with disabilities as guides and narrators reinforces the principle of *empowerment tourism*. This type of tourism provides opportunities for groups that are often marginalized to showcase their unique potential, skills, and perspectives. Their active participation not only boosts their confidence and independence, but also builds empathy among tourists towards issues of diversity and inclusion. In this context, tourism becomes a space for interaction that brings two worlds closer together: the general public, who are often oblivious to disability issues, and people with disabilities, who struggle to be recognized as an integral part of the community.

The cultural aspect is also prominent in *Disability Story Tourism*. The narratives presented are not limited to personal experiences, but can be expanded to include the history of the village, local traditions, or legends that have been passed down from generation to generation. The involvement of persons with disabilities as guardians of the narrative makes local culture more alive and relevant, as it is conveyed from a rarely heard perspective. This adds to the richness of cultural interpretation and strengthens the collective identity of the tourism village. Thus, disability-based *storytelling tourism* serves a dual purpose: preserving cultural heritage and creating new meaning within the framework of inclusion.

From an economic perspective, narrative-based tourism offers advantages that are difficult for mass tourism to match. Today's tourists are increasingly seeking personal and reflective experiences, not just entertainment. The stories told by people with disabilities have an authentic appeal that can foster emotional engagement among tourists. This is what makes *Disability Story Tourism* in line with the trend of *experience-based tourism* (Richards, 2018). This added value opens up monetization opportunities not only through direct tour packages but also through derivative products such as *podcasts*, short films, books, or virtual tours. With relatively small capital in the form of communication training, content development, and digital promotion, tourist villages can obtain a sustainable source of income.

Table 1. Simple Business Model Estimate

No	Tour Package Components	Estimated Cost per Tourist	Potential Revenue per 20 Tourists	Description
1	Entrance ticket & guided tour (3 hours)	Rp100,000	IDR 2,000,000	A narrator with a disability shares stories of struggle, village history, or legends
2	Local souvenirs (crafts/creative products)	Rp50,000	Rp1,000,000	Products made by the community, including groups of people with disabilities
3	Documentation & digital content (optional)	Rp25,000	Rp500,000	Photos/videos shared with tourists
4	Consumption (snacks & local beverages)	Rp25,000	Rp500,000	Provided by village MSMEs
	Total Revenue	Rp200,000	Rp4,000,000	Package for 20 tourists per session

Table 1 shows that one tour session (approximately 3 hours) for 20 people can generate around IDR 4,000,000. If 8 sessions are conducted per month, the potential monthly revenue reaches IDR 32,000,000. This value can be increased through virtual tours, collaboration with digital platforms, or derivative products such as books or *podcasts*.

Table 2. SWOT Analysis of Disability Story Tourism

No	Aspect	Description
1	Strengths	- Provides an authentic and reflective travel experience - Empowers people with disabilities as key actors - Relatively low initial costs, with a greater focus on training and storytelling - Supports the destination's positive image as an inclusive travel destination
2	Weaknesses	- Limited communication capacity and narrative skills among some people with disabilities - Accessibility infrastructure (wheelchair paths, special

		toilets) is still minimal in many tourist villages - Potential stigma from some communities or tourists
3	Opportunities	- Global trend toward <i>sustainable and responsible</i> tourism - Regulatory and policy support for inclusion from the government and UNWTO - Market of young tourists seeking authentic and meaningful experiences - Potential for development in digital media and virtual tours
4	Threats	- Dependence on external support (government/NGOs) if there is no economic independence - Risk of excessive commercialization, resulting in a loss of social meaning - Competition with other forms of story-based tourism (heritage, culture)

Table 2 shows that the main strength of *Disability Story Tourism* lies in the uniqueness of the experience and the empowerment of vulnerable groups. The main weakness is the limited human resources and accessibility infrastructure. The opportunities available are vast, especially with the growing trend of sustainable tourism and policy support for inclusion. However, the threats that need to be anticipated are the risks of excessive commercialization and competition with other narrative-based tourism products. With the right management strategy, the social and economic potential of this tourism model can be optimized while maintaining the reflective and inclusive values that are its main identity.

International examples show that inclusive models like this can be implemented and successful. In Japan, the *Barrier-Free Tourism* program in Okinawa Prefecture not only provides physical accessibility but also involves people with disabilities as local cultural guides (Takeuchi, 2019). They share their life experiences while introducing local traditions, giving tourists the added value of empathy. In Europe, particularly in Spain, the *Accessible Madrid* initiative has developed city tours guided by narrators with disabilities, where tourists are invited to understand the city's history through the perspective of people with physical limitations. Meanwhile, in Australia, *Vision Australia* launched an *audio-guided storytelling* program in museums and tourist destinations, where blind narrators present unique interpretations that differ from conventional guides (Daruwalla & Darcy, 2005).

These international practices show that involving people with disabilities as tour narrators is not just an idealistic discourse, but a strategy that has been proven to improve the quality of the tourist experience, strengthen sustainability values, and create a real economic impact for the community. Therefore, the development of *Disability Story Tourism* in Indonesia has great potential to be adopted by adapting to the local context, in terms of culture, infrastructure, and the potential of the domestic and international tourist market.

However, the development of *Disability Story Tourism* faces a number of challenges. First, the limited awareness of the community and tourism stakeholders regarding the importance of inclusive tourism often hinders the provision of equal space for persons with disabilities. Second, the limited physical accessibility of many tourist destinations makes the implementation of this model difficult. Third, the narrative abilities of persons with disabilities require support in the form of communication training, foreign language proficiency, and the use of digital technology in order to meet tourist expectations. In addition, the challenges of financing and program sustainability also need to be considered, given that the initial investment—although relatively small—still requires cross-sector support.

The policy implications of these findings are the need for more stringent and inclusive regulations in the tourism sector. Central and local governments can integrate *Disability Story Tourism* into tourism village programs, especially those managed based on *community-based tourism* principles. Support in the form of fiscal incentives, training funding, and special

promotions for inclusive tourist destinations can accelerate the adoption of this model. Additionally, tourism policies should encourage collaboration with disability organizations, the private sector, and educational institutions to ensure sustainability.

Conclusion

This literature review concludes that *Disability Story Tourism* has significant prospects as an inclusive tourism innovation that not only places persons with disabilities as beneficiaries but also as the main narrators. This model reinforces the concept of *empowerment tourism* through the active participation of persons with disabilities, presents cultural added value through authentic local narratives, and opens up new economic opportunities through story-based tourism experiences. The novelty of this idea lies in the integration of social, cultural, and economic dimensions within the framework of inclusive tourism that is oriented towards sustainability.

To optimize development, strategic support is needed in the form of communication training for narrators with disabilities, the development of competitive tour packages, and the use of digital technology for promotion and documentation. Local governments, tourist villages, and the private sector are advised to establish partnerships so that this model does not stop at the conceptual level but develops into a sustainable practice.

As a follow-up step, empirical research needs to be conducted to assess tourist market response, calculate more accurate economic impacts, and identify supporting infrastructure needs. Thus, *Disability Story Tourism* has the potential to become a pioneer of reflective and inclusive tourism in Indonesia, as well as an international reference in the development of diversity-based tourism models.

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