

Abstract

This thesis presents a study that examines the accessibility of Norwegian Destination Management Organisation websites, the user testing experiences of people with disabilities, and the challenges faced by Destination Management Organisation leaders regarding website accessibility and inclusive digital communication.

Using a mixed-methods approach grounded in critical realism, the study combines 80 automated web accessibility audits, user testing with 42 Brazilian participants with motor disabilities and visual impairments, and semi-structured interviews with 18 Norwegian Destination Management Organisation leaders.

These three empirical stages collectively help explore how technical design, user experience, and institutional practice interact to shape inclusion within digital tourism communication. The analysis employs the social model of disability, critical disability studies, and Bourdieu's field theory to conceptualise digital accessibility as both a technical practice and a socially embedded phenomenon.

Automated testing (Chapter 4) identified systemic accessibility gaps, particularly in non-text alternatives, structural markup, link purpose, and labelling. User testing (Chapter 5) demonstrated that technical compliance alone does not ensure usable or welcoming experiences, often producing emotional fatigue and a sense of symbolic exclusion. Semi-structured interviews (Chapter 6) revealed that accessibility remains peripheral to institutional priorities and is frequently subordinated to aesthetic or branding considerations.

By connecting these structural, experiential, and institutional perspectives, the study develops a multilayered understanding of website accessibility, proposes a practical Digital Accessibility Guide for Destination Management Organisation leaders, and reframes inclusion as a rights-based form of communicative competence.

The study concludes that digital accessibility must evolve from minimal technical compliance towards an approach grounded in encompassing justice, participation, and

belonging—recognising people with disabilities as legitimate travellers, co-creators, and full participants in Norwegian tourism.

Keywords:

digital accessibility, Destination Management Organisations, inclusive marketing communications, accessible tourism, digital co-creation, disability studies, people with disabilities