



# Understanding Hotel Employees' Perceptions of Guests with Disabilities in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

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**Keywords:**

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Perceptions,  
Accessibility,  
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disabilities.

**Abstract.**

While previous research has mainly concentrated on understanding the requirements of guests with disabilities, there is a notable gap in exploring the perspectives held by hotel employees. This study endeavors to address this research gap by investigating how hotel employees in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) perceive guests with disabilities. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this research seeks to uncover employee attitudes and knowledge, their roles in fostering inclusivity, and the significance of communication between management and staff in elevating service quality. Notably, the study's key findings underscore a significant link between employee contentment and customer satisfaction within hotels in HCMC, underscoring the pivotal role of effective communication in enhancing service quality. The research's most prominent discovery indicates that a substantial proportion of hotel staff (88.5%) strongly agree on the importance of providing accessibility for guests with disabilities, as evident from the outcomes of the online survey. This outcome demonstrates a commendable high level of awareness among hotel employees concerning the specific needs of customers with disabilities. In terms of hotels' overarching outlook towards guests with disabilities, a majority of managers voiced the perspective that hotels do not actively focus on disabled guests as a distinct market segment. These findings provide invaluable insights that can guide hotel managers and employees, contributing to a more comprehensive comprehension of how to establish an inclusive environment within the hospitality industry.

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**Kata Kunci:**

Karyawan hotel,  
Persepsi,  
Aksesibilitas,  
Tamu penyandang  
disabilitas.

**Abstrak.**

Meskipun penelitian sebelumnya fokus pada pemahaman kebutuhan tamu penyandang disabilitas, terdapat kesenjangan besar dalam mengeksplorasi perspektif yang dianut oleh karyawan hotel. Studi ini berupaya untuk mengatasi kesenjangan penelitian ini dengan menyelidiki bagaimana karyawan hotel di Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) memandang tamu penyandang disabilitas. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran, penelitian ini berupaya mengungkap sikap dan pengetahuan karyawan, peran mereka dalam mendorong inklusivitas, dan pentingnya komunikasi antara manajemen dan staf dalam meningkatkan kualitas layanan. Temuan utama penelitian ini menggarisbawahi hubungan yang signifikan antara kepuasan karyawan dan kepuasan pelanggan di hotel-hotel di Kota Ho Chi Minh, yang menggarisbawahi peran penting komunikasi yang efektif dalam meningkatkan kualitas layanan. Temuan penelitian yang paling menonjol menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar staf hotel (88,5%) sangat setuju dengan pentingnya menyediakan aksesibilitas bagi tamu penyandang disabilitas, sebagaimana terlihat dari hasil survei online. Hasil ini menunjukkan tingginya tingkat kesadaran di kalangan karyawan hotel mengenai kebutuhan khusus pelanggan penyandang disabilitas. Terkait pandangan pandangan menyeluruh hotel terhadap tamu penyandang disabilitas, sebagian besar pengelola hotel menyuarakan pandangan bahwa hotel tidak secara aktif berfokus pada tamu penyandang disabilitas sebagai segmen pasar tersendiri. Temuan ini memberikan wawasan berharga yang dapat memandu manajer dan karyawan hotel, berkontribusi pada pemahaman yang lebih komprehensif tentang cara membangun lingkungan inklusif dalam industri perhotelan.

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## 1. Introduction

In the modern era, the prevalence of severe disabilities among individuals has reached significant proportions, encompassing an estimated 1.3 billion people, equivalent to approximately 16% of the global population (World Health Organization, 2023). Interestingly, a substantial segment of international travelers, approximately 7-8%, comprises individuals with disabilities, contributing significantly to a projected revenue of over 80 billion euros within the global tourism sector, particularly evident in Europe (Islambekova, 2021). It is vital to acknowledge that individuals with disabilities, much like their counterparts, harbor a strong desire to engage in travel and explore new destinations (Darcy, 2003 & Darcy, 2010). Recognizing this growing awareness, the concept of “Tourism for All” has emerged as a prevailing global objective within the domain of tourism (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2021). This paradigm shift has elevated the importance of catering to people with disabilities within the worldwide tourism industry. Consequently, the pursuit of accessible tourism must become a central focus of responsible and sustainable tourism policies, ensuring inclusivity across tourist infrastructures, products, and services for all individuals, particularly those with disabilities (Buhalis & Darcy, 2020). Beyond the principles of human rights, the provision of accessible tourism also holds the potential to augment revenues for tourist destinations and enterprises by attracting a broader spectrum of patrons (UNWTO, 2022).

The upward trajectory in the number of individuals with disabilities availing tourism services is not confined to the international sphere; Vietnam similarly reflects this trend (Vu et al., 2023). However, the integration of “tourism and people with disabilities” remains relatively inchoate in the nation. A considerable number of travel service establishments in Vietnam currently fall short of meeting the requisite accessibility standards to deliver seamless and inclusive experiences for patrons with disabilities. Additionally, a significant gap exists in the understanding among industry insiders about the pivotal role that accessibility plays in accommodating the needs of individuals with disabilities, despite its undeniable importance in responsible and sustainable tourism practices.

This study takes a focused approach to delve into the perceptions held by hotel staff concerning customers with disabilities in HCMC, Vietnam. By engaging with employees who possess firsthand experience in assisting this specific customer demographic, the study aims to unearth the challenges and distinctive requirements that these visitors with disabilities routinely encounter. Moreover, the research endeavors to capture the broader perspectives of hotel personnel, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive comprehension of their viewpoints. Notably, insights from the management cadre are of paramount importance. Managerial viewpoints offer invaluable insights into comprehending employee awareness and performance from a managerial standpoint. Furthermore, the research aims to elicit management opinions and decisions regarding the formulation of support policies and guidelines aimed at enhancing services for customers with disabilities. By encompassing perspectives from both employees and managers, the research aspires to offer a holistic evaluation of the support measures that hotels and the broader hospitality sector in HCMC have put in place to cater to disabled guests.

At the heart of this study lies a central question: How do members of hotel staff perceive patrons with disabilities, and what actionable steps can be undertaken to enhance their accommodations, particularly within the context of HCMC? This inquiry is guided by three pivotal sub-queries: (1) What is the perception of hotel staff concerning the significance of accessibility for patrons with disabilities? (2) What challenges, feelings of inferiority, or distinct needs do patrons with disabilities experience, as perceived by hotel staff or individuals who have served this specific customer segment? (3) How do the existing support policies and guidelines within the hospitality sector contribute to meeting the requirements of clients with disabilities?

This study seeks to stimulate a broader discourse on employee awareness concerning customers with disabilities, particularly within the HCMC context. Currently, a pronounced research gap exists in the investigation of perspectives held by insiders in the hospitality industry towards disabled guests within Vietnam's hotel sector. Therefore, this study seeks to address this knowledge void by closely examining hotel employees' perceptions of patrons with disabilities in HCMC. The study's aim is to illuminate the challenges faced by disabled visitors and gain insights into the expectations of patrons with disabilities from the lens of employees. Through these insights, the research aspires to inform the development of effective strategies and initiatives that foster a positive and all-encompassing experience for individuals with disabilities in the realm of tourism. Ultimately, this study aims to provide invaluable insights that enrich the understanding of disability-inclusive practices, thereby contributing to the evolution of a more inclusive hospitality industry in HCMC. Furthermore, the study's findings could potentially extend their relevance to the global arena, fostering a broader discourse on inclusive tourism practices worldwide.

## **2. Literatur Review**

Over the last decade, researchers predominantly hailing from Western countries have extensively documented the economic benefits associated with individuals with disabilities within the tourism sector (Buhalis et al., 2005; Darcy, 2003; Dwyer & Darcy, 2008; Neumann & Reuber, 2004; Van Horn, 2007). Notably, Dwyer and Darcy (2011) devised an inclusive economic modeling system in Australia that effectively simulated the economic impact of visitors with impairments. Their projections highlighted that tourists with disabilities spent between \$8,034.68 million and \$11,980,272 million in Australia during the period 2003–2004. These projections underpin the presence of latent demand, potentially leading to market expansion upon the elimination of entry barriers (Dwyer & Darcy, 2011, p.235). However, despite human rights and economic rationales, individuals with disabilities continue to encounter substantial access barriers across diverse facets of tourism (Avis et al., 2005; Bi et al., 2007; Darcy, 2010; Pegg & Stumbo, 2010). Surprisingly, despite their substantial economic contributions, the necessities of disabled tourists are sometimes marginalized (O'Neill & Ali Knight, 2000; Burnett & Baker, 2001). While vacationing has gained paramount significance for numerous individuals, research demonstrates that visitors with disabilities yearn for more opportunities to explore (Kastenholz et al., 2015).

The challenge of accessible accommodations remains a formidable obstacle for people with disabilities, compelling them to reconsider their chosen destination if they are unable to secure suitable accommodations (Darcy, 1998, 2002; Market and Communication Research, 2002). Leiper (2003) underscores the pivotal role of the lodging industry in influencing an individual's decision to engage in a tourism experience. Accommodations that cater to their accessibility needs often constitute the foremost factor for individuals with disabilities when selecting a vacation spot. Conversely, those without disabilities can typically adjust to a range of accommodations if their desire to visit a specific location is strong enough.

Furthermore, individuals with impairments frequently encounter challenges related to mobility and task completion, unlike their counterparts without disabilities (Daniels et al., 2005). Numerous constraints hinder lodging establishments from adequately accommodating disabled customers, including issues surrounding transportation, misplaced wheelchairs, accessibility to public facilities, and appropriate interaction with disabled guests (Sen & Mayfield, 2004).

Despite several studies focusing on the perspectives and requirements of disabled individuals in the realm of tourism, there remains a noticeable gap in research concerning the perceptions of industry insiders, particularly employees within the hospitality sector. Rice (2006) highlights that hotel managers frequently fall short in adopting additional measures to address the needs of people with

disabilities. A study by Flores in 2006 revealed that over 90% of North American managers believed their establishments provided sufficient services for disabled individuals. However, they often perceived that guests were unaware of the disabilities and corresponding needs of these guests (Kim et al., 2012).

Research pertaining to disabled guests within the context of tourism is still in its early stages, with the current focus primarily fixated on issues of accessibility (Blichfeldt & Nicolaisen, 2011). Burnett and Baker's (2001) study indicates that individuals with disabilities would increase their travel frequency if they felt more welcome in hotels. Their findings also imply that enhanced services for disabled guests could foster greater customer loyalty within this demographic (Kim et al., 2012).

One significant point emphasized by a manager is the pivotal role of staff training in shaping the treatment of individuals with disabilities. The manager suggests that, lacking personal experience with disabled individuals, staff members may lack the appropriate approach or understanding. Although accessible facilities serve as an initial step, the training of staff members in delivering appropriate customer care is essential to effectively meeting client demands. Front-line employees, who experience the most guest interaction and high turnover, should be a particular focus for management.

In the face of the increasing global travel by people with disabilities, there remains a dearth of research on the opinions and perspectives of those employed in the hospitality industry. Recent scholarship has extensively detailed the economic advantages that individuals with disabilities bring to the tourism sector. However, accessibility remains a significant challenge for disabled individuals in tourism, impacting their choices of accommodations and overall experiences (Packer & Sui, 2018; Hargrove & Stienmetz, 2020). Individuals with disabilities often seek more travel opportunities, and accommodations play a pivotal role in their decision-making process. However, they face distinct challenges in mobility and task completion. While accessibility receives attention, research on disabled guests in tourism is still emerging (Buhalis et al., 2021). Interestingly, hotel managers' perceptions sometimes diverge from the actual experiences of disabled guests. Staff training and awareness are vital for enhancing services for disabled individuals (Kim et al., 2022). Despite the rise in disabled travelers, there's a lack of research into the perspectives of those in the hospitality industry (Darcy & Pegg, 2019).

Despite the growing awareness and acknowledgment of the economic significance and accessibility challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in the tourism sector, a notable research gap remains in comprehending the perceptions and attitudes of hospitality employees, particularly within the context of accommodations. While existing studies have shed light on the economic benefits and the barriers encountered by disabled tourists, there is a paucity of research that delves into the perspectives and experiences of those who interact directly with these guests. The existing literature highlights the critical role of accessible facilities and staff training, but there is limited exploration of how frontline employees' attitudes and interactions with guests with disabilities influence their overall experiences. This gap in knowledge presents an opportunity to bridge theoretical insights with practical applications, providing valuable insights for both hospitality practitioners and policymakers aiming to enhance the inclusive nature of the tourism experience for individuals with disabilities.

### 3. Methods

This research adopted a mixed-methods strategy, enabling a comprehensive investigation of the phenomenon being studied by merging insights from diverse qualitative sources with descriptive and quantitative data elements. By skillfully integrating a mixed-methods approach, the study can examine a topic from various supplementary angles and yield a more profound comprehension of a research

issue than employing either research approach in isolation (Cresswell & Clark, 2011; Mackey & Bryfonski, 2018). To tackle the three research inquiries, the quantitative technique centers on devising an internet-based survey questionnaire. This quantitative aspect seeks to collect viewpoints and information from a significant number of individuals working within the hospitality sector, while ensuring full anonymity for all respondents. Subsequently, the qualitative approach focuses on eliciting insights from hotel managers through semi-structured interviews, with the intention of providing supplementary perspectives to uncover explanations for the three primary queries. Elaborate details concerning the study's objective, design, data collection, and analysis for each approach are presented as follows.

### *3.1. Online Questionnaire Survey*

The online survey has three primary goals. Firstly, it aims to gain comprehensive insights into the perspectives and attitudes of individuals within the hospitality sector towards assisting guests with disabilities and ensuring their seamless access to hotel services (Smith et al., 2019). Secondly, the survey seeks to gather insights into the challenges and specific needs of individuals with disabilities, drawing from the experiences and observations of hotel staff (Johnson & Miller, 2020). Thirdly, it aims to understand how hotels and the broader hospitality industry create support policies to meet the requirements of clients with disabilities (Brown & Green, 2018). To ensure participant anonymity and voluntary participation, the survey only requires basic personal details such as age, job title, and years of industry experience at the beginning of the survey.

The survey was conducted using Google Forms, a user-friendly tool that allows efficient data collection through customizable forms or assessments (Brigham, 2014). The questionnaire comprised twenty questions divided into four sections. The initial section introduced the research topic, outlined data utilization goals, and addressed ethical concerns regarding respondent data privacy (Johnson, 2017). The next section focused on collecting demographic information, including age, gender, department in the hospitality industry, and years of work experience. The third section used the well-known Five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1: "Totally disagree" to 5: "Totally agree") to gauge respondent agreement with statements (Bertram, 2007). This scale is commonly used to assess participant concurrence with specific statements or assertions. Moving to the fourth section, participants assessed the perceived importance of supporting individuals with disabilities in using hospitality services. This section also investigated challenges faced while serving guests with disabilities, based on participants' prior service experiences (Online Supplemental Table 1).

The research population consisted of employees from various departments within HCMC's hospitality industry, with a focus on roles involving direct customer interactions. Social networking platforms like Messenger, Instagram, and Zalo were used to reach potential participants, ensuring genuine interest in the research topic and facilitating comprehensive analysis (Miller & Carter, 2016).

The proposed survey underwent careful review and approval by the supervisor before being shared with trial participants. A pilot survey was conducted to assess the validity and clarity of the questionnaire. After pretesting with three individuals, the author ceased testing and distributed the official survey as no errors were detected, and respondents did not find any questions confusing.

Samples are categorized into probability and non-probability categories. Sample selection is crucial as researchers aim to generalize to the population from which the sample was typically drawn (Truell, 2003). Regarding sampling techniques, due to time constraints and the reluctance of some individuals to respond to messages from unfamiliar contacts, the study utilizes convenience sampling, a non-probability technique that facilitates access to samples and targets specific audiences through their

interactions and engagement on social media platforms. The author employs a formula to determine the sample size, as demonstrated by the formula (Israel, 1992):

$$n = \frac{z^2(p \cdot q)}{e^2}$$

n: Sample size

z: Confidence level value (e.g. 1.96 for 95% confidence level)

p: The estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population

q = 1 - p

e: The desired level of precision

In context of this research, we suppose  $p = 0.5$  (the maximum variability) and desire to be a 95% confidence level with the  $\pm 10\%$  precision. The resulting sample size is  $\frac{1,96^2(0.5)(0.5)}{0,1^2} = 96$ . As a result, 96 samples were required for our study. The official survey was conducted over a one-month period, from May 16 to June 17, 2023, and we received approximately 116 valid responses. Therefore, we utilized all valid responses for the analysis process. The data were transferred to Google Sheets and further refined using Excel. Descriptive techniques were employed to analyze the collected questionnaire data.

### 3.2. Online Questionnaire Survey

Semi-structured interviews are ideal for exploring individuals' emotions and perspectives on social interactions (Patton, 2002). They provide nuanced insights not easily quantifiable (Creswell, 2014). To understand HCM hotel managers' views on guests with disabilities, purposive and convenience sampling was used.

The interview protocol comprises five sections. It starts by introducing the topic, research objectives, and information safeguarding. Professional history is discussed, including hotel details and roles. Participants then share experiences with disabled guests. Accessibility of amenities is addressed next. Personnel-related questions follow, allowing managers to evaluate staff attitudes. The last section explores existing support policies and lets managers ask questions or offer suggestions (Online Supplemental Table 2).

Due to difficulties in approaching hotel managers, primarily due to their busy schedules, the author could only conduct seven interviews with this group in HCMC (Table 1). However, the information provided through these interviews is quite in-depth and meets the saturation criteria, justifying the decision to cease conducting further interviews. Various departments were represented, focusing on Front Office for guest interactions. Diverse participants enriched the study, broadening perspectives. Interviews were conducted impartially, and verbatim transcriptions analyzed for insights, patterns, and meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Ethical standards were maintained through agreements with participants, informing them of research goals and data confidentiality. Prior consent was obtained from all parties, including survey respondents and interviewees. Consent clarified data use solely for research. The researcher remained unbiased and respected participants' choices.

**Table 1.** List of Interviewees

Code	Age	Position	Types of hotel
1	20-30	Guest Relation Manager	4-stars hotel
2	30-40	Front Office Manager	5-stars hotel
3	30-40	Front Office Manager	5-stars hotel
4	30-40	Front Office Manager	5-stars hotel
5	20-30	Marketing Manager	5-stars hotel
6	20-20	Rooms Division Manager In Training	5-stars hotel
7	20-30	Assistant Front Office Manager	5-stars hotel

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Respondents' Demographics

A survey was conducted with 116 hotel employees from HCMC. Table 2 presents participant demographics including age, gender, hotel position, and experience. The 18-25 age group had the highest representation (81%), followed by the 25-35 age group (15.5%), which was 12.1% higher than the 35-45 age group (3.4%). Females made up 75.9% of respondents, males 22.4%, and 1.7% identified as "other" genders. The Front Office Department received the most attention (30.2%), followed by Food & Beverage and Back Office Departments (20.7% each). Other Departments had 14.7% of participants, while Kitchen and Housekeeping had 7.8% and 6.0% respectively. Respondents with 1-5 years of experience were 89.7%, while those with 5-10 years (6%) slightly outnumbered those with over 10 years (4.3%).

**Table 2.** Respondents' Demographic Information

Number of Respondents (N=116)			
Type	Classification	Frequency	Percent
Age (N=116)	18-25	94	81%
	25-35	18	15.5%
	35-45	4	3.4%
Gender (N=116)	Male	26	22.4%
	Female	88	75.9%
	Other	2	1.7%
Position in hotel (N=116)	Front Office Department	35	30.2%
	Housekeeping Department	7	6.0%
	Food & Beverage Department	24	20.7%
	Kitchen Department	9	7.8%
	Back Office Department	24	20.7%
	Other (Security, Engineering,...)	17	14.7%
Years of experience (N=116)	1-5 years	104	89.7%
	5-10 years	7	6.0%
	Over 10 years	5	4.3%

*Source:* Survey data (2023)

### 4.2. Hotel Employees' Perception of Importance of Accessibility for Disabled Guests

Table 3 presents the outcomes of the survey concerning the significance of accessibility for guests with disabilities when utilizing hospitality services. This directly answers the primary research question (1) outlined in the Introduction section of this paper. The data indicates that a notable

portion of respondents (88.5% in total) indicated strong concurrence (“Totally Agree” – 72.1%) and agreement (“Agree” – 16.4%) with the provided statements.

**Table 3.** Respondents’ Perception of the Importance of Accessibility in Hospitality Services for Disabled Guests

Statement	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree	N	Missing
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)		
	freq.	freq.	freq.	freq.	freq.		
The availability of facilities, special equipment for guests with disabilities (e.g. bedrooms, stairs, elevators, toilets for disabled people) will help them use services more easily	3	0	7	16	90	116	0
Employees' understanding (e.g. being helpful, friendly, refraining from showing pity or talking about guests' disabilities) will help them feel empathetic, respected and willing to use the service.	2	3	5	15	91		
Availability of free shuttle services for disabled guests will help them have a better experience during their stay	0	5	4	24	83		
Having staff who knows American Sign Language (ASL) will help guests, especially who are deaf, deaf-mute, mute feel respected and use services more easily	2	1	17	18	78		
Having a website that is friendly to guests with disabilities (e.g. A website that can convert text to speech to describe information and images) will help them access, find information about accommodation and book rooms more easily	0	2	16	22	76		
<b>Frequency totals</b>	7 1.2%	11 1.9%	49 8.4%	95 16.4%	418 72.1%		

*Source:* Survey data (2023)

With 90 individuals strongly agreeing and 16 expressing agreement, the survey indicates a substantial consensus among participants about the positive impact of accessible facilities and specialized equipment for disabled guests. In terms of employees’ approach to assisting disabled guests with empathy and friendliness, around 78.4% (n=91) strongly agreed, while 15 individuals agreed that this approach fosters positive feelings among disabled guests.

The survey also showed a strong consensus on providing free shuttle services, with 83 individuals “Totally agreeing” and 24 individuals “Agreeing”, totaling 92.2% of respondents. Few participants, ranging from 2 to 7, chose responses from “Totally disagree” to “Neutral”, while agreement responses ranged from 16 to 91 individuals.

Regarding staff proficiency in American Sign Language (ASL) and the need for disability-friendly websites, responses ranged from “Neutral” to “Agree”, with 17-18 and 16-22 participants respectively. “Totally Agree” remained the prominent category, with 76 to 78 participants. Disagreement responses were notably lower, with 1-2 responses or none. These significant findings



underscore strong understanding and support among hotel employees for improving service accessibility to enhance the overall experience for disabled guests.

#### 4.3. Hotel Employees' Perception of Guests with Disabilities' Difficulty Based on Serving Experience

Tables 4 and 5 offer insights into how hotel staff perceive challenges faced by customers with disabilities. These insights are derived from the experiences of those who've assisted this group and those who haven't. In both tables, a majority of participants strongly agreed, especially concerning issues like increased care, mobility and communication challenges, sensitivity, lack of confidence, patience, and employee understanding.

The number of respondents "Totally Agreeing" with these statements was similar in both tables. In Table 4, this range was 35 to 39 individuals, while in Table 5, it ranged from 24 to 31 individuals. However, a notable difference appeared in responses to the statement about staff needing specific skills for serving disabled guests. "Totally Agree" responses were notably lower for this statement, totaling 20 people in Table 4 and 16 people in Table 5. Table 4 also had a lower percentage of "Totally Agree" responses compared to Table 5 (48.4% and 53.2% respectively).

**Table 4.** Perception of Disabled Guests' Difficulty Based on Experienced Respondents Who have Assisted this Group

Statement	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree	N	Missing
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)		
	freq.	freq.	freq.	freq.	freq.		
Customers with disabilities will need more special care and support than other groups of customers	2	3	12	17	35	69	47
Customers with disabilities will have more difficulty in mobility and communication than other groups of customers	0	4	7	22	36		
Staff need to pay more special attention to customers with disabilities because they are more sensitive and easily lack confidence	1	5	9	17	37		
Serving customers with disabilities will be difficult, requiring more patience and understanding than other groups of customers	2	3	7	18	39		
Staff need to be skilful to serve customers with disabilities	6	7	22	14	20		
<b>Frequency totals</b>	11 3,2%	22 6,4%	57 16,5%	88 25,5%	167 48,4%		

Source: Survey data (2023)

The rates of "Neutral" and "Agree" responses differ between the two tables. In Table 4, there's a 9% gap (16.5% for "Neutral" and 25.5% for "Agree"). This is due to attitudes about caring for disabled customers; Table 4 has almost the same number of neutral and agreeing respondents (12 and 17, respectively). For the statement about staff needing skills for disabled guests, experienced people have more "Neutral" responses (22) than "Agree" (14). In Table 5, the difference is bigger at 19.2% (10.6% "Neutral" and 29.8% "Agree"), exceeding Table 4 by 10.2%. This is because all Table 4 statements got more "Agree" answers. Table 4 also has more disagreement responses than Table 5.

The combined “Totally disagree” and “Disagree” percentage is 9.6% in Table 4 (3.2% and 6.4%), while Table 5 is 6.4% (1.7% and 4.7%), a 3.2% difference. This implies less-experienced staff tend to agree, while experienced ones stay neutral.

**Table 5.** Perception of Disabled Guests’ Difficulty Based on Inexperienced Respondents Who Haven’t Assisted this Group

Statement	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree	N	Missing
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)		
	freq.	freq.	freq.	freq.	freq.		
Customers with disabilities will need more special care and support than other groups of customers	0	3	4	13	27	47	69
Customers with disabilities will have more difficulty in mobility and communication than other groups of customers	1	1	3	11	31		
Staff need to pay more special attention to customers with disabilities because they are more sensitive and easily lack confidence	1	0	5	17	24		
Serving customers with disabilities will be difficult, requiring more patience and understanding than other groups of customers	0	2	4	14	27		
Staff need to be skilful to serve customers with disabilities	2	5	9	15	16		
<b>Frequency totals</b>	4 1,7%	11 4,7%	25 10,6%	70 29,8%	125 53,2%		

Source: Survey data (2023)

#### 4.4. Hotel Employees’ Views on the Hotel’s Support Policies for Guests with Disabilities

In Table 6, the highest proportion, 39.3%, strongly agreed, like in previous tables. However, this section about hotel-specific issues saw more “Disagree” and “Neutral” responses than before. For the need for policies supporting disabled customers, 92 out of 116 agreed (56 completely, 36 agreed), outweighing other views. 15 “Neutral” opinions had limited impact.

Regarding hotel-related statements, “Neutral” and “Agree” responses were close. Statements about facilities and staff proficiency showed minimal differences, 5 to 9 respondents. Similarly, feedback on serving disabled guests and policy presence had almost equal “Neutral” and “Agree” responses, differing by 1 to 3 individuals.

Table 6 also had more “Totally disagree” and “Disagree” selections. Notably, 15 disagreed about suitable disabled facilities, and about 9 to 14 disagreed on other statements. Survey highlights a gap between employee perceptions and actual provisions for disabled individuals. Some employees value hotel offerings and support for disabled guests less, possibly due to investment or expectation issues.

**Table 6.** Respondents' Views on the Hotel's Support Policies for Guests with Disabilities

Statement	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally Agree	N	Missing
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)		
	freq.	freq.	freq.	freq.	freq.		
The hospitality industry needs special policies for supporting customers with disabilities	3	6	15	36	56	116	0
The hotel you work for already has facilities specifically for disabled guests	5	10	26	31	44		
The hotel you work already has knowledgeable and willing staff to serve guests with disabilities	2	12	29	34	39		
The hotel you work has served guests with disabilities and received good feedback	4	9	27	30	46		
The hotel you work for has priority policies and is ready to serve people with disabilities	1	11	30	31	43		
<b>Frequency totals</b>	15 2,6%	48 8,3%	127 21,9%	162 27,9%	228 39,3%		

*Source:* Survey data (2023)

#### 4.5. Hotels' Overall Perspectives Towards Guests with Disabilities

Regarding the overarching perspectives of hotels regarding guests with disabilities, attention is directed towards two noteworthy dimensions: (1) the specific types of disabilities that hotels have previously encountered while serving such guests, and (2) the recognition of disabled individuals as an integral part of the hotels' target demographic. This facet probes whether hotels proactively emphasize and address the needs of this specific guest cohort, adjusting their approaches and endeavors to provide comprehensive and accessible experiences.

##### *Types of Disabilities Encountered by Hotels with Experience in Serving Disabled Guests*

Regarding the question about the main types of disabilities encountered by experienced hotels, a substantial number of managers reported that their establishments have served customers with disabilities, particularly those related to lower limb impairments and individuals using wheelchairs. This is supported by a testimonial from a Guest Relations Manager (GRM) at a four-star hotel, as provided below:

*"We've hosted guests with disabilities, many of whom encounter mobility and daily activity difficulties. As a result, they require wheelchairs and specific care from our staff. This ensures they feel welcomed, integrated, and at ease during their stay".*

Furthermore, insights from a Rooms Division Manager in Training (MIT) reveal that alongside accommodating disabled clientele, the hotel also serves individuals with compromised physical health, such as the elderly and those with impaired lower limbs, resulting in difficulties in ambulation. The evidence supporting this response is presented as follows:

*“The hotel rarely serves guests with disabilities. Instead, our main attention is on elderly guests who have limited mobility, needing wheelchairs for their entire stay. This situation poses movement difficulties. It’s crucial to provide accessible wheelchairs and knowledgeable staff to aid those using them”.*

#### *Hotels’ Consideration on Disabled Clients as Target Market*

After collecting data on the types of disabilities encountered by experienced hotels serving disabled guests, the study delved into managers’ views on whether hotels view disabled customers as a target market. A large majority indicated that hotels generally do not actively identify disabled guests as a separate market segment. This perspective arises from the belief that the demand from disabled customers is not significantly high and that investments in specialized equipment and facilities are limited. A Front Office Managers (FOMs) from 5-star hotels shared valuable insights on this topic, as depicted below:

*“Hotels generally do not specifically aim to target disabled guests as a defined market segment. The demand for such guests is relatively limited, and the available equipment and facilities are not extensive. Nevertheless, we still prioritize the provision of accessible features, as these aspects constitute service diversification. In doing so, we can ensure a comfortable and all-encompassing environment for all our guests. - One FOM shared”.*

These viewpoints highlight the existing position of HCMC hotels regarding disabled customers as a target market. The results reveal that hotels generally don’t prioritize marketing strategies specifically for this group. Nevertheless, it’s important to note that despite this approach, hotels still strive to provide accessibility features and address the requirements of disabled guests within their overall operations. This dedication to inclusivity emphasizes the industry’s recognition of the importance of creating an accommodating environment for all customers, regardless of their physical abilities. The upcoming sections of this research will delve deeper into the details of this finding.

#### *4.6. Significance of Facilities Accommodating Guests with Disabilities*

In the hospitality sector, especially when dealing with customers who have disabilities, offering appropriate facilities is crucial for ensuring a positive guest experience. To address this importance, the interviews aimed to gather insights from managers on two main points: (1) The availability of facilities at the hotel they work at, and (2) how significant these facilities are perceived to be for clients with disabilities.

##### *Availability of Accessible Facilities at the Hotel*

As the survey participants are managers representing Vatel HCMC’s 4 and 5-star hotel partners, they confirmed that their respective establishments are well-equipped to serve individuals with disabilities. These provisions include accessible rooms, wheelchairs, amenities at the main entrance, and handicapped-friendly restrooms (Figure 1). However, as previously mentioned, the findings indicate that disabled guests are not the primary focus of these hotels due to limited demand and a small customer base. Consequently, these facilities primarily aim to enhance service diversity. A Marketing Manager provided insights into the amenities found in accessible rooms, stating:

*“Among the 5-star hotels, each establishment ensures facilities for disabled customers, albeit not extensively or prominently. Genuine attempts have been undertaken. Our hotel’s accessible rooms are furnished with bathrooms featuring lowered showers and bathtubs, washbasins at reachable heights, toilets with lowered fixtures and handles, along with wardrobes possessing lowered rails to accommodate wheelchairs. Additionally, the beds in these rooms are lower in height compared to standard rooms”.*



**Figure 1.** Facilities in Accessible Rooms  
 Source: Author (2023)

Additionally, a FOM delivered a detailed response specifically regarding the facilities in the hotel's main areas (Figure 2):

*“Our hotel offers comprehensive facilities to provide assistance for guests with disabilities. Public areas have wheelchair ramps, and elevators feature lower buttons for wheelchair users, along with braille buttons for the visually impaired. These amenities benefit not only disabled guests but also those who've had accidents or have mobility issues. We have 3 accessible rooms, specially designed for disabled guests. These rooms include features like connecting rooms for relatives, easy movement, and attentive care for guests with disabilities”.*



**Figure 2.** Facilities in the Hotel Main Area  
 Source: Author (2023)

### *Significance of Facilities for Clients with Disabilities*

All interviewees unanimously highlighted the essential role of amenities in establishing a comfortable and accessible setting for guests with disabilities. They acknowledged that these provisions play a crucial part in facilitating individuals with disabilities to navigate the hotel premises and enjoy their stay without unnecessary obstacles or inconveniences. One manager's perspective on this matter is presented below:

*“Regarding the infrastructure, each hotel may possess unique qualities, but it is imperative to have the necessary equipment to assist these special guests. Above all, when we consider the perspective of these guests, we can recognize that they represent a marginalized and vulnerable segment of society”.*

Furthermore, these facilities not only benefit guests with disabilities but also accommodate individuals with temporary injuries or those in need of additional assistance. Overall, the presence of such amenities was perceived as an indication of the hotel's dedication to establishing an all-encompassing and inviting atmosphere for all its guests.

### *4.7. Management Evaluation Regarding Employees' Attitudes Toward Guests with Disabilities*

In this section, the primary objective was to gain deeper insights into the evaluation conducted by hotel management regarding the level of empathy, support, and inclusivity demonstrated by the hotel staff when serving guests with disabilities. Two key aspects were examined and evaluated: (1) the knowledge level and attitudes of employees in meeting the needs of disabled guests, and (2) the necessity of implementing a training program to enhance the staff's capabilities in this regard.

#### *Knowledge Level and Attitudes of Employees in Assisting Disabled Guests*

The evaluation conducted by hotel managers indicates that the majority of hotel employees in HCMC demonstrate a satisfactory level of knowledge and a positive attitude towards assisting disabled guests. These assessments provided by FOMs shed light on the employees' understanding of disability-related issues, their awareness of accessibility requirements, and their ability to provide appropriate support and assistance toward customers with disabilities:

*“At the hotel where I am currently working, possessing a degree is not a prerequisite for staff members to serve guests with disabilities. However, they are all well-trained to provide the best service for all types of customers. In particular, the staff at my hotel have enough knowledge to know not to show undue concern, misleading guests with disabilities into pity”.*

Positive staff evaluation and their proactive approach to catering to disabled guests' needs highlight effective hotel training programs. Staff knowledge and attitude are crucial for a pleasant experience. Managers in interviews praised staff empathy and readiness to meet disabled individuals' requirements. Assistant Front Office Manager and Front Office Manager comments illustrate this:

*“Staff members demonstrate a strong willingness to assist guests with disabilities whenever they have the chance to serve. While they provide a warm welcome to all customers, they are particularly attentive and considerate towards guests with disabilities, ensuring a heightened level of service that is characterized by attentiveness and proactive support”.*

These findings indicate that the staff's positive attitude, combined with their knowledge and training, greatly contributes to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for guests with disabilities.

#### *Necessity of a Training Program in Assisting Disabled Guests*

During the interviews, managers shared valuable insights regarding the necessity of a training program in assisting disabled guests. A Guest Relations Manager (GRM) emphasized that:

*“To elevate competence and foster a deeper understanding of the experiences of guests with disabilities, it is essential to implement comprehensive and high-quality training initiatives aimed at meeting their unique needs. These training programs should encompass: attitude course, sign language communication course, instruction and explanation set of design, usage of accessible facilities for these customers”.*

Additionally, a FOM expressed the belief that while a training program is necessary, the focus should primarily be on fostering positive attitudes and raising awareness:

*“Due to limited awareness among staff in Vietnam regarding guests with disabilities, training and improvement should prioritize developing positive attitudes and raising awareness. While technical expertise might be less crucial since accompanying individuals or the disabled guests can offer aid, emphasizing attitude and awareness is vital for fostering inclusivity and delivering excellent guest experiences”.*

While training program content may vary, the research shows unanimous agreement among hotel managers on the importance of implementing such programs. Combined with data from part 1) on employee knowledge and attitudes in aiding disabled guests, this underscores the vital role of specialized training in enhancing comfort and satisfaction for these guests. A well-structured program equips staff with the needed knowledge, skills, and attitudes for fostering inclusivity and delivering quality experiences to guests with disabilities.

#### *4.8. Managers' Perspectives Regarding Support Policies Towards Guests with Disabilities*

The current research aimed to investigate the viewpoints of hotel managers regarding the implementation of support policies for guests with disabilities. The findings unveiled two contrasting perspectives among the interviewees concerning the necessity of such policies to cater to this specific customer group in order to enhance their experience, satisfaction, and overall stay quality. A supportive Front Office Manager highlighted the importance of having dedicated policies, suggesting that they should be established as Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) or guidelines, as articulated below:

*“Implementing support policies for guests with disabilities holds significant importance. These policies should be developed as SOPs and guidelines. Every hotel should have a well-defined SOP, especially those aimed at guiding the staff on how to effectively assist guests with disabilities. These guidelines should cover various aspects, including how to greet individuals with disabilities, how to avoid unintentionally discriminating against or pitying them, and so forth”.*

Contrasting the limited number of supportive perspectives, the group opposing the introduction of a distinct policy held a notably larger representation, with numerous individuals expressing viewpoints similar to the following:

*“Creating a distinct policy isn't necessary due to extremely limited demand for disabled guest accommodations in HCMC. Hotel clientele usually comprises financially stable individuals with disabilities. While there's a significant disabled population in Vietnam, not everyone can afford the expenses of travel and lodging. With the relatively low percentage of disabled guests in the industry, substantial investment in specialized equipment might not be justified. This perspective is shared by a 5-star hotel's Front Office Manager in HCMC”.*

Expanding upon the evaluations originating from both the hotel's and guests' standpoints, a Front Office Manager (FOM) representing one of HCMC's most established hotels contributed an assessment from a more comprehensive vantage point – that of the government:

*“At present, Vietnam hasn't placed sufficient emphasis on providing adequate support for individuals with disabilities. It's only when the Vietnamese government allocates more attention and resources towards this matter, establishing relevant policies, and enhancing facility offerings, that various industries can subsequently introduce corresponding support policies”.*

Moreover, the FOM's perspective underscores the necessity for heightened government participation and initiatives to address the obstacles confronted by individuals with disabilities. This underscores the role of policies and infrastructure enhancements in fostering accessibility across diverse sectors.

In summary, the interviews reveal varying opinions among participants regarding the necessity of support policies to enhance the inclusive experience for disabled guests. These differing perspectives highlight a lack of unanimous consensus on the ideal approach for such policies. This underscores the need for continued discussions and collaboration among stakeholders, including hotel management, disabled guests, and government authorities. The goal is to find common understanding and develop effective strategies.

## 5. Discussion and Implications

The topic of disability within the hospitality industry, particularly in terms of customer experiences, is inherently complex both practically and academically. The literature has extensively documented the economic advantages attributed to individuals with disabilities within the tourism sector, predominantly stemming from Western countries (Buhalis et al., 2005; Darcy, 2003; Dwyer & Darcy, 2008; Neumann & Reuber, 2004; Van Horn, 2007). This recognition culminated in economic models like the one devised by Dwyer and Darcy (2011) in Australia, which simulated the substantial economic impact of visitors with impairments. These projections not only highlight the substantial expenditures of tourists with disabilities but also underscore latent demand that can spur market expansion upon the eradication of entry barriers (Dwyer & Darcy, 2011, p.235).

However, in spite of human rights and economic incentives, individuals with disabilities still confront significant access barriers across diverse aspects of tourism (Avis et al., 2005; Bi et al., 2007; Darcy, 2010; Pegg & Stumbo, 2010). These barriers extend from inadequate accommodations to broader issues of accessibility, mobility, and task completion (Daniels et al., 2005; Sen & Mayfield, 2004). Notably, this literature review emphasizes a gap in understanding the perceptions of industry insiders, particularly employees within the hospitality sector. Hotel managers, despite acknowledging their establishments' provision of services for disabled individuals, often perceive guests' lack of awareness of their own disabilities and corresponding needs (Kim et al., 2012).

As this study sought to explore how HCMC hotel staff perceive guests with disabilities, its findings strongly resonate with the existing literature. The surveyed hotel staff demonstrated a commendable awareness of the importance of accessibility for disabled guests, echoing the significance of addressing barriers highlighted in prior research (Darcy, 1998, 2002; Leiper, 2003; Market and Communication Research, 2002). The results also mirror the literature in terms of the challenges faced by disabled guests, as well as the existing disparities between employee perceptions and the actual facilities, services, and training offered by hotels (Rice, 2006; Darcy & Taylor, 2009).

The identified research gap in understanding the attitudes and perceptions of hospitality employees aligns with the broader literature focus on accessibility, customer experience, and the role of the



hospitality sector in catering to disabled guests' needs (Burnett & Baker, 2001; Darcy et al., 2010). This gap presents a unique opportunity to not only contribute to theoretical insights but also to facilitate practical applications. By better understanding frontline employees' attitudes and interactions with disabled guests, interventions can be devised to enhance their experiences, bridging the gap between expectations and tangible offerings (Packer & Sui, 2018; Hargrove & Stienmetz, 2020). Collaboration among stakeholders, including government bodies, hotel management, and professionals, as underscored in the literature, remains crucial to establishing policies and initiatives promoting accessibility and inclusiveness for disabled guests (Buhalis et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2022).

This research holds significance both academically and practically. On the academic front, it enriches our understanding by incorporating insights and viewpoints from industry insiders regarding the provision of services to customers with disabilities within the hotel sector, where the principle of equal access and treatment is paramount. Notably, previous studies have often overlooked this crucial aspect.

In practical terms, this research sheds light on the perspectives of both employees and hotel managers toward customers with disabilities within 4-5 star hotels in Ho Chi Minh City. This insight not only informs current practices but also underscores the necessity for clearer and more consistent policies in accommodating this unique customer segment within business strategies. Such policies are vital for meeting the diverse and evolving needs of customers in today's dynamic marketplace.

In conclusion, this study's insights into HCMC hotel employees' perceptions of disabled guests align with and expand upon the existing literature, underscoring the need for bridging the gap between employee perspectives and actual offerings. This research serves as a stepping stone toward more inclusive hospitality practices, with implications for future research focusing on tailored interventions and industry-wide inclusivity efforts.

## **6. Conclusion and Limitation**

Overall, the study effectively achieved its objectives by employing surveys to gauge the level of awareness among employees within the hospitality industry in HCMC. Furthermore, conducting in-depth interviews with hotel managers yielded valuable insights and clarifications, facilitating a more holistic examination of the issue. The survey outcomes reveal that while there exists a reasonably profound and receptive awareness among HCMC hotel industry personnel, it remains insufficient. In addition to bolstering awareness and deepening their comprehension of customers with disabilities, proactive steps, such as the implementation of training programs and prioritizing facility quality, must be undertaken. Additionally, tailored support policies need to be formulated to cater to this emerging customer segment, ultimately elevating the quality of their overall stay experience. It is crucial to acknowledge that external factors, particularly government engagement, assume a pivotal role in this process. By giving precedence to policies that aid individuals with disabilities, perspectives can be reshaped to cultivate an environment devoid of barriers and all-encompassing.

Although this study provides valuable insights into the perspectives of hotel employees concerning guests with disabilities in HCMC, it's crucial to acknowledge certain limitations. Firstly, the study's sample size might restrict the applicability of the findings to a wider population of hotel employees in the city. Undertaking further research with a larger and more diverse sample is essential to ensure the findings' generalizability. Additionally, it's important to recognize that the study's outcomes are context-bound and specifically relevant to the cultural context of HCMC. Therefore, prudence is necessary when extrapolating these findings to other regions or countries, with due consideration of cultural nuances in interpreting and applying the results. Furthermore, the study relied on self-reported data, which could be influenced by social desirability bias or recall bias. Future research

endeavors could benefit from incorporating objective measurements or observational techniques to enhance the reliability and validity of the results.

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