



## Enhancing Ecotourism Through Inclusive Language: A Case Study of Lon Malang Beach, East Java

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### Abstract\*

*This research examines the strategic role of inclusive language in promoting Lon Malang Beach as an ecotourism destination in Sampang Regency, East Java. Despite its high ecotourism potential in terms of natural beauty and rich local culture, this one of northern beach in Madura island remains relatively unknown, among Generation Z in particular. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, this research combines field observations, in-depth interviews with stakeholders, and a survey of 150 university students to analyze the effectiveness of inclusive language in enhancing the destination's appeal and visibility. The findings reveal that 69.3% of respondents were unaware of Lon Malang Beach, primarily due to limited digital promotional strategies. Inclusive language—as defined in this study through the use of shared linguistic codes and accommodative communication strategies—has proven to play a significant role in reducing stereotypes against the Madurese community, reinforcing local cultural narratives, and encouraging tourist engagement across diverse backgrounds. Moreover, inclusive language supports equitable marketing practices by ensuring information accessibility for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities. This research underlines that inclusive communication approaches can build a positive and relational image of the destination through personalized and engaging language use. The findings highlight the urgency of inclusive language management within the framework of sustainable rural tourism development, addressing not only economic dimensions, but also social and cultural cohesion.*

### 1. Introduction

Tourism has evolved into a globally popular industry that plays a significant role in boosting economic growth in many countries (Azmi et al., 2023; Li, 2022 ; Agbola et al., 2020). Many countries are now focusing on leveraging their natural resources as tourist attractions to

drive regional and national development (Baggio & Caporarello, 2005; Kunjuraman & Aziz, 2019). This potential can be easily developed on Madura Island. Madura is an island located in East Java Province, Indonesia. Covering an area of approximately 5,379 km<sup>2</sup>, it is one of the largest islands in Indonesia. The island is divided into four regencies: Bangkalan, Sampang, Pamekasan, and Sumenep, each with its own unique characteristics, cultures, and social history. This diversity plays a significant role in enriching the culture and social life of Madura. Each element of this cultural heritage offers an appeal that motivates people to experience the island's natural beauty, local social wisdom, religious values, and adventure (Andlib & Salcedo-Castro, 2021). Interestingly, all these aspects can be found in various destinations across Madura, including unique traditions such as Kerapan Sapi or bull racing (Pramestika et al., 2023), ecotourism, religious tourism, adventure tourism (Yasir, 2023), and its distinctive culinary delights (Ekawati & Ayuningtiyas, 2024).

One of the great ecotourism potentials that could be well-developed is Lon Malang Beach in Sampang Regency, East Java (Suning et al., 2023; Setiyarini & Chrismardani, 2024). Located on Jalan Raya Batu Lenger, Batu Lenger Timur, Desa Bira Tengah, Kecamatan Sokobanah, Kabupaten Sampang, this beach offers stunning natural beauty that has the potential to attract both local and international tourists. However, it remains relatively unknown to the public. To raise its profile, a targeted promotional strategy is needed (Austin et al., 2021), and one effective approach could be the use of inclusive language to ensure the beach becomes more accessible and widely recognized (Fredriksson et al., 2006; Harzing & Pudelko, 2013; Lauring & Klitmøller, 2017). Inclusive language is a communication tool used by individuals in diverse environments (Lauring & Selmer, 2012). The purpose of using inclusive language is to accommodate the linguistic diversity within a multicultural community by employing a common language (Janssens & Steyaert, 2014). This approach enables everyone to actively engage in collaboration and interaction, avoiding the complications that arise from diverse language use (Lauring & Selmer, 2010).

In this study on Lon Malang beach ecotourism, the focus is on how the use of inclusive language can potentially enhance tourist frequency and their experiences (Verbytska et al., 2023). Managing inclusive language can serve as a foundation for inclusive social marketing. Inclusive marketing is an approach to promoting goods or services that emphasizes unity and integrity while respecting diverse identities and characteristics (Tobal & Menna, 2020; Petrescu & Krishen, 2021). It prioritizes customer satisfaction and recognizes the varied needs and abilities of customers (Cambier & Poncin, 2020; Cherniaieva et al., 2023). Inclusive marketing is based on acknowledging and embracing different cultural and social backgrounds, ensuring that everyone feels accommodated (Assenza et al., 2018).

Although there has been extensive research focusing on business development strategies, there is still room for the application of inclusive language management to enhance the frequency of tourists and accommodate their experiences. This focus is needed because previous studies primarily emphasized cultural awareness, Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Marketing (DIM), inclusive leadership, and spatial governance development (Paiuc, 2021; Kipnis et al., 2021). Another reason is the lack of research literature specifically addressing linguistics in relation to ecotourism development. Existing studies related to linguistics tend to focus only on outcomes of workgroup collaboration, interactions between branch offices and headquarters (Lauring & Selmer, 2012), and academic interactions. Therefore, there is still a need to study inclusive language management in developing ecotourism, especially at Lon Malang Beach in Sampang. The purpose is not only to promote Lon Malang ecotourism to boost local economic growth but also to enhance community welfare while preserving the environment and promoting inclusive

local culture (Feng, 2023). This work highlights the importance of protecting the local environment and culture as essential elements of tourism development (Cemara & Ismail, 2024; Baloch et al., 2023). By applying sustainable management, the tourism sector can provide long-term benefits for both the community and the environment, creating a balance between economic needs and the preservation of natural resources. On the other hand, the lack of inclusive promotion may negatively impact the sustainability of the environment, society, and culture, leading to the degradation of land and oceans (Andlib & Salcedo-Castro, 2021).

## 2. Research methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a method that focuses on analyzing and interpreting texts and data from observations and interviews, aiming to understand the meaning behind a phenomenon (Sugiyono, 2010). Observations were conducted to examine the phenomenon of information access at the Lon Malang ecotourism site. The researcher, a person with visual impairment, acted as the main observer to assess and interpret this phenomenon. Interviews were conducted with three tourism stakeholders, including the Sampang Regency tourism office, ecotourism managers, and tourists who had visited the site multiple times. Additional insights were gathered through a survey of 150 respondents to determine how well they knew about Lon Malang beach.

The criteria for respondents are students from Trunojoyo University, representing Generation Z, which is a social generation with significant potential to enjoy leisure time for travel (Haratikka & Purba, 2023), use social media to seek travel information (Damanik et al., 2023; Haddouche & Salomone, 2018; Werenowska & Rzepka, 2020), or engage in communication based on others' experiences (Robinson & Schänzel, 2019). This reliance stems from their daily lives being dependent on technology (Slivar et al., 2019). The survey results show that 138 respondents were from East Java, and 12 were from outside East Java. Of these, 104 respondents had no knowledge of Lon Malang ecotourism. Meanwhile, 46 respondents were aware of the site, with 16 never having visited, 16 having visited once, and 14 having visited more than once. Information about the site was obtained from official Lon Malang social media accounts by 6 respondents, while others learned about it through word of mouth from friends or relatives. The following diagram summarizes the survey results on young people's knowledge of the Lon Malang ecotourism site (see figure 1).

### SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY AWARENESS AND VISIT FREQUENCY

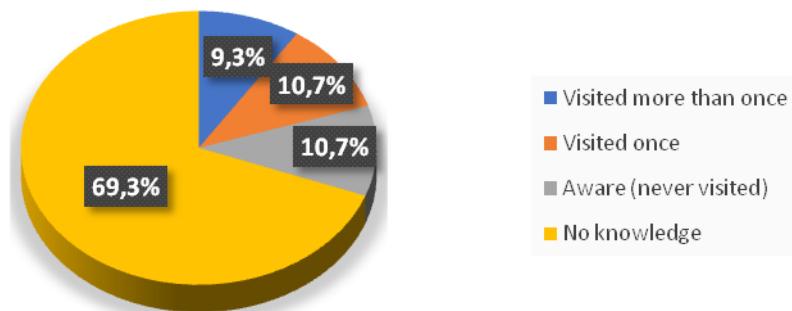


Figure 1. Lon Malang Ecotourism Survey Summary

The data were analyzed through an integration of in-depth interviews with two native Madurese youths and two non-native youths, combined with the researcher's survey and observational findings. All data underwent a comprehensive triangulation analysis, which included cross-referencing general information from various guidebooks. The findings from interviews, surveys, and observations were validated against existing research on inclusive language and ecotourism.

### 3. Discussion

A total of 69.3% of respondents were unaware of Lon Malang ecotourism, indicating that digital promotion efforts, particularly towards Gen Z, are still lacking despite their daily consumption of digital content. This is surprising given that the beauty of Lon Malang has already been recognized by several visitors. In fact, 65.2% of respondents expressed interest in visiting Lon Malang based on the experiences shared by friends or relatives who had been there. This aligns with the research by (Setiyarini & Chrismardani, 2024), which highlights that visitors consistently rate the beauty and comfort of Lon Malang highly.

The relationship between beauty, comfort, and tourist appeal should be naturally established. This notion aligns with social exchange theory, wherein the reciprocal interactions among various physical aspects of the Lon Malang ecotourism site are expected to contribute to the psychological and social dynamics among individuals (Blomgren & Ljungström, 2018). As a destination endowed with natural beauty, cultural attractions, and local wisdom, Lon Malang ecotourism inherently possesses unique appeal for visitors. However, a contradiction exists between these aesthetic assets and the low public awareness of the ecotourism site's existence. One of the issues stems from inadequate digital promotion. This concern is consistent with Zhang & Szabó (2024), who argue that the absence of digital-based information in the contemporary era can significantly hinder the growth of the ecotourism market. Furthermore, Kuzman et al. (2024) emphasize that insufficient information dissemination may impede the development of tourism destinations in emerging regions, ultimately restricting tourist access. In addressing this exchange dynamic, inclusive language serves as a vital communicative bridge (Kurniawan, 2024). Inclusive language holds considerable potential in enhancing access to information across diverse sociocultural contexts, particularly within the Madurese community. In general, the following three sociocultural phenomena observed in Lon Malang ecotourism could be effectively addressed through the implementation of inclusive language management.

#### 3.1 Reducing stereotypes

Inclusive language serves as a means of communication that emphasizes respect and appreciation. It has the potential to foster harmony and reduce bias and stereotypes in communication (Springer, 2023). Inclusive language can be a powerful tool to challenge stereotypes about the Madurese people, who are often perceived as rough, indifferent, reckless, and backward (Suryandari, 2017). Language acts as a form of linguistic control that can be directed toward exclusivity, discrimination, or inclusivity, promoting justice and equality (Taheri, 2020). Stereotypes held by people who have never been to Madura should be countered through the use of inclusive language that reflects the local wisdom, religious devotion, and care of the Madurese community, especially through social media and official government websites for each regency in Madura. This potential can enhance sympathy and encourage more people to visit Lon Malang beach.

*Table 1. Documented Cases of Violence on Madura Island*

Regencies	Cases	News Links
Bangkalan	2	<a href="#">Link 1</a> <a href="#">Link 2</a>
Sampang	2	<a href="#">Link 1</a> <a href="#">Link 2</a>
Pamekasan	2	<a href="#">Link 1</a> <a href="#">Link 2</a>
Sumenep	4	<a href="#">Link 1</a> <a href="#">Link 2</a> <a href="#">Link 3</a> <a href="#">Link 4</a>
Total	10 cases	

Table 1 above presents a summary of several instances of violence that have occurred on the island of Madura. Between 2021 and 2024, at least 10 murder cases were reported on Madura Island, based on a Google news search. These incidents were attributed to various motives, including romantic disputes, issues of pride, and personal conflicts. Such negative news about violence has the potential to influence tourists' perceptions of safety at destinations like Lon Malang ecotourism, ultimately affecting their decision to visit. This aligns with the findings of Besley et al. (2020), which demonstrate that violent events tend to trigger spikes in negative media coverage, leading to a significant decline in tourist activity and spending in affected areas. The surge in negative reporting not only heightens tourists' perceptions of risk but can also damage the long-term image of the destination. However, this impact can be mitigated through effective communication strategies, such as the use of inclusive language, which has the potential to rebuild tourists' trust in the destination. Inclusive language in media coverage can help balance negative narratives, shift focus to positive aspects, and ultimately enhance the overall image of the destination.

Based on interviews with two young men from Bangkalan, conflicts that can escalate into physical violence are often triggered by issues related to self-esteem. According to them, two primary factors that can damage a person's self-esteem are the loss of a partner and a job. This highlights the significant role these aspects play in shaping the identity and self-worth of the Madurese community. Interestingly, interviews with two other young men, who are not from the Madurese community, revealed their understanding of this issue. This suggests that relationship- and work-related violence occurring on Madura Island is widely recognized by the broader public. Most informants who were not from the Madurese community stated that they prefer to be friends with Madurese people, but maintain some distance. Their concern was that too much closeness could lead to conflicts. Therefore, issues of violence related to personal relationships and employment, as well as the dynamics of inter-group friendships, represent social problems that deserve greater attention in the context of the Madurese society.

Language, on one hand, can serve as a unifying tool that connects various groups within a society. However, on the other hand, it also has the potential to become a source of division if used in a non-inclusive manner. Indonesia, as a nation with diverse ethnicities, cultures, and characteristics, requires an inclusive language approach to foster social harmony. Inclusive language could play a significant role in introducing the unique traits of the Madurese community without reinforcing harmful biases or stereotypes. It can serve as a key tool in reducing conflict

potential and strengthening mutual understanding among individuals from different backgrounds. Furthermore, the use of inappropriate terminology can lead to labelling, stereotyping, and stigmatization (Fernandez-Sanchez et al., 2024). Any terminology that portrays negative characteristics of the Madurese community must be challenged with a commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity by promoting diverse and equitable language and references.

### 3.2 Promoting cultural heritage

A region rich in cultural heritage cannot fully benefit from its resources if the promotion of that heritage is not widely disseminated to the public. Traditions, arts, customs, and local wisdom, as integral components of cultural wealth, require sufficient exposure to ensure that people from various backgrounds, both nationally and internationally, can recognize, appreciate, and preserve them. Ineffective promotional efforts can lead to the neglect and eventual loss of cultural heritage, diminishing its potential to contribute to economic development, strengthen collective identity, and enhance regional cultural tourism. Therefore, policymakers and stakeholders must design systematic communication strategies and make optimal use of various publicity channels. In implementing these strategies, the use of inclusive language plays a crucial role. Inclusive language allows all members of society, regardless of social, cultural, or individual differences, to access, understand, and embrace information related to the promoted cultural heritage. This is in line with Eaton & Turin (2022) assertion that language serves as a tool to connect two realms of heritage: tangible heritage, such as cultural objects, and intangible heritage, such as practices and traditions. Moreover, Escudeiro et al. (2022) argue that language is not only a tool for integrating cultural heritage with assistive technology to promote inclusion, attract tourists with disabilities, and provide communication accommodations for all, but it can also leverage their experiences as a dissemination channel to expand the market for tourists with disability.

Based on interviews conducted with the Department of Tourism and the management of Lon Malang ecotourism, it was found that Lon Malang already maintains several social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. However, this finding stands in stark contrast to the results of a survey administered to 150 respondents: 104 respondents reported being unaware of the existence of Lon Malang ecotourism, while only 46 respondents indicated awareness. Of these 46, merely six respondents stated that they had learned about the ecotourism site through Lon Malang's official social media channels. This indicates that the social media outreach of Lon Malang has not yet been optimized. Furthermore, researcher observations revealed that the information disseminated through Lon Malang's social media platforms is not accessible to tourists with visual impairments. So far, the majority of respondents have largely relied on informal experiential narratives shared by previous visitors. According to Escudeiro et al. (2022), this reflects a form of social interaction within the community aimed at sharing experiences. Based on their research, another critical aspect that can be enhanced through inclusive language management is the integration of cultural heritage with assistive technologies to promote inclusion, attract tourists with disabilities, and provide accessible communication accommodations for all visitors.

Like other cultural communities, the Madurese people possess a rich and diverse cultural heritage that encompasses traditional arts, religious practices, and customary traditions. In addition to the expansive white sandy beaches of Lon Malang (Suning et al., 2023), notable elements of this heritage include the Madura Kris (Hani'ah et al., 2024), Madurese batik (Farida & Indrawati, 2023), *langghar* as a religious educational institution (Istikhari & Rahmah, 2020), traditional cuisine, and the nationally recognized cow races (Pramestika et al., 2023).

Stakeholders involved in the development of Lon Malang's ecotourism may utilize inclusive language as a communication strategy to promote both the cultural heritage and natural beauty of the area. This effort can be enhanced by integrating assistive technologies to improve information accessibility (Escudeiro et al., 2023). Consequently, Lon Malang ecotourism has the potential to reach a broader audience of tourists, including individuals with disabilities.

### 3.3 Fostering a sense of engagement

On the one hand, the deployment of web-based technologies plays a pivotal role in the promotion of ecotourism destinations. On the other hand, language serves an equally critical function in the marketing of tourist destinations. Language significantly influences the formation of tourists' preferences, guiding their decision-making process regarding the selection of particular sites to visit. This notion aligns with the findings of Zein & Afdal (2024), who assert that verbal techniques employed on websites and social media platforms have a profound impact on attracting tourists. One such technique that warrants attention is inclusive language management, which can be strategically utilized to enhance the emotional connection of potential tourists by fostering a sense of identification with the tourism site. The deployment of the second-person pronoun "you" serves to establish an interpersonal relationship between potential tourists and the tourism operators or local authorities. This linguistic choice facilitates an impression of personal engagement, thus promoting a sense of agreement, understanding, and empathy, ultimately encouraging tourists to visit the site.

Based on observational findings, the researcher has not identified any invitation for communication on the Lon Malang social media page. The platform solely features images of the attractions at Lon Malang. While previous studies indicate that 73% of attraction-related information significantly influences tourist attention (Maulana et al., 2021), the promotional content for Lon Malang ecotourism consists exclusively of images. Further development is required, incorporating opportunities for tourists to actively engage with these attractions. Best practices can be observed in countries such as Sri Lanka, Singapore, and Vietnam, which have successfully implemented inclusive language management. This management approach enhances content persuasiveness by fostering a sense of personal connection, encouraging tourists to envision themselves within the depicted scenarios. The following table presents examples of inclusive texts suitable for use on the Lon Malang ecotourism website and associated social media platforms. These examples are adapted from the framework analyzed by Zein & Afdal (2024) and have been refined to align with the specific context of the Lon Malang ecotourism site.

*Table 2. Adapted Examples of Inclusive texts for the Lon Malang Ecotourism Website and Social Media,*

*Based on Zein and Afdal (2024)*

Adapted from	Inclusive texts
India	Spend several days exploring the pristine white sand beaches, engaging in banana boat activities, and visiting attractions rich in local culture, and you will quickly develop an affinity for Sampang's dynamic and inexhaustible energy.
Sri Lanka	If you enjoy the outdoors, it's worth visiting here.
Taiwan	Just a 45-minute drive from Surabaya, you can enjoy the beauty of the white sands.
Thailand	If it's food you're after, you won't be disappointed – try

	the satay at Mak Ceneng, the legendary satay stall on Madura Island.
Vietnam	This is where you'll witness the most breath-taking sunrise in Indonesia.

As an illustrative example, the sentence "Spend several days exploring the pristine white sand beaches, engaging in banana boat activities, and visiting attractions rich in local culture, and you will quickly develop an affinity for Sampang's dynamic and inexhaustible energy" can be interpreted as a collective invitation to experience the beauty of the white sand beaches.

The use of the second-person pronoun *you* in this sentence directly engages prospective tourists, encouraging them to interact personally with the Lon Malang ecotourism destination. Tourists are prompted to envision themselves participating in banana boat activities and exploring attractions characterized by a rich local culture. The invitation to "spend several days exploring" Lon Malang ecotourism implies that visitors are encouraged to immerse themselves in the remarkable natural attractions and landscapes of the area. By spending several days at the destination, tourists are expected to develop a deeper recognition of the ecotourism site's character, ultimately leading them to form a strong emotional attachment to the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Madura.

Ecotourism represents a multicultural marketplace, a space where diverse cultural codes from both tourists and local communities intersect and engage in mutual interaction. Previous research has highlighted the significance of promotional strategies that employ the Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Marketing (DIEM) approach (Kipnis et al., 2021). The study asserts that barriers arise when the language used in marketing campaigns fails to reflect the diversity of the audience or, worse, overlooks minority identities. These barriers manifest in issues of meaning, representation, and communication, all of which are fundamentally rooted in language usage. In this study, inclusive language emerges as a vital medium for cross-cultural communication, addressing both linguistic commonalities and individual needs. Inclusive language thus serves as a pivotal social and cultural communication tool within the tourism sector, bridging both physical cultures—such as tourists, tourism managers, and tourism authorities—and non-physical cultures, including ethnicity, religion, race, disability, age, gender, and socioeconomic class.

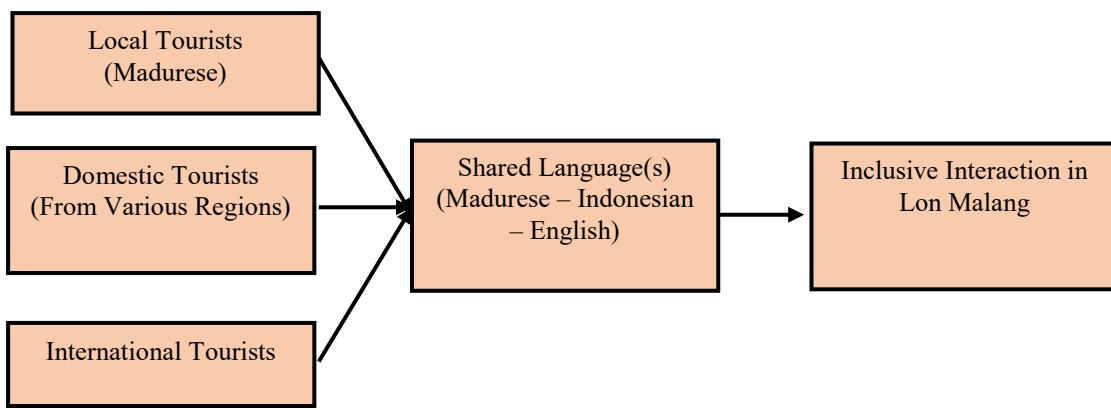


Figure 2. Shared Language as a Bridge of Linguistic Diversity

Kurniawan (2024) identifies two categories of inclusive language that play a critical role in challenging stereotypes associated with the Madurese community, promoting Madurese

cultural heritage and fostering the active engagement of all stakeholders in the Lon Malang ecotourism initiative. These categories are shared language and accommodative language. These categories serve as key instruments in creating a communicative environment that is both inclusive and culturally sensitive. The flowchart below provides a comprehensive summary of the role of inclusive language as categorized in (Kurniawan, 2024).

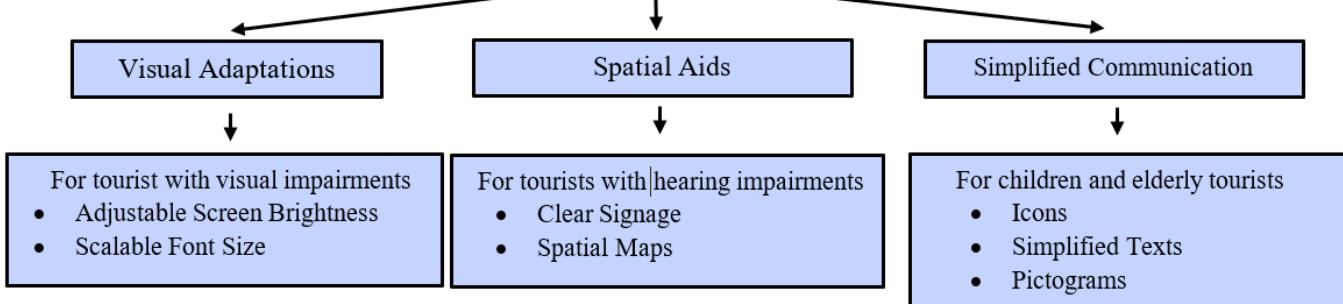


Figure 2. Accommodative Language as a Bridge of Linguistic Diversity

The shared language and accommodative language practices can function as vital communicative bridges for promoting the inclusive appeal of ecotourism in Lon Malang. The use of a shared language serves as a foundational pillar for reducing prevailing stereotypes about the Madurese community and for fostering greater social engagement. Conversely, accommodative language facilitates mutual understanding and collaboration among diverse stakeholders in the management and appreciation of Lon Malang's natural beauty. Through inclusive language management, the Sampang local government can strategically optimize regional economic growth anchored in ecological tourism. Furthermore, such management ensures the preservation of both the cultural heritage and the environmental sustainability of the Lon Malang region. An inclusive language management approach, therefore, enables a harmonious integration of economic development with the sociocultural and ecological preservation of Lon Malang ecotourism, in alignment with previous research (Azmi et al., 2023; Li, 2022; Andlib & Salcedo-Castro, 2021; and Feng, 2023).

#### 4. Novelties

The linguistic approach offers a powerful lens for understanding the complexity of human interaction with the environment in the context of ecotourism. By understanding how language works, we can build ecotourism that is more responsible, inclusive, and sustainable. It involves analyzing how language is used in ecotourism contexts, how it influences traveler perceptions, and how it can be used strategically to promote sustainable ecotourism practices. Furthermore, focusing on areas with particular stereotypes, this research emphasizes the importance of addressing community stereotyping issues through inclusive language practices. It has not been common to figure out research discussing inclusive language management to improve the socio-cultural image of the Madurese community for instance as a tourist destination promotion strategy.

#### 5. Conclusion

The relationship between the aesthetic appeal of Lon Malang ecotourism, its comfort, and visitor interest should establish itself naturally. However, empirical evidence reveals a troubling disconnect: 69.3% of digital communication users in East Java are unaware of the existence of this ecotourism destination. This significant lack of awareness underscores the urgent need for inclusive language management as a strategic communicative tool to enhance access to the cultural heritage and local wisdom of Madura Island, which remain largely underrepresented. By consciously employing the second-person pronoun *you*, this strategy invites prospective tourists to engage directly with the destination, fostering a more personal and participatory form of communication.

Moreover, inclusive language management holds the potential to counteract entrenched stereotypes about the Madurese community. Instead of perpetuating negative perceptions, this approach emphasizes the community's positive characteristics, particularly its religious devotion and strong work ethic, thereby constructing a more accurate and empowering social identity.

Although the findings are promising in attracting tourists to Lon Malang ecotourism, the scope of the present study remains limited. The primary focus of this study is on the technical application of inclusive language in promoting ecotourism and does not yet examine the varied capabilities and communicative needs of relevant stakeholders. Future research should therefore adopt a broader perspective by exploring digital inclusion in a more comprehensive manner, especially in relation to the capacities, preferences, and media habits of ecotourism managers, policymakers, and tourists. Given the diversity in social media platform usage, advancing our understanding of inclusive and adaptive digital communication strategies constitutes an essential academic and practical endeavour in the ongoing development of sustainable and inclusive ecotourism.

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