NETMANAGEMENT®

Whitepaper

Accessibility in Retail and at the Point of Sale (POS) – Requirements, Realities, and Perspectives

Executive Summary

This whitepaper examines the requirements, opportunities, and challenges of accessibility in retail, with a particular focus on payment processes at the Point of Sale (POS). It outlines how legal frameworks, technological developments, and societal expectations interact, and identifies the measures merchants should take now to remain compliant, customer-oriented, and future-ready.

The core conclusion: accessibility is not a cost burden but a strategic advantage. It broadens the customer base, streamlines operations, and reduces legal risks. Successful implementation, however, requires both technical and organisational adjustments – and, above all, deliberate action.

Introduction

Over recent years, accessibility has moved from a niche concern to a central element of modern retail strategies. With the **European Accessibility Act (EAA)**, which becomes mandatory from June 2025, and its implementation in Germany via the **Barrierefreiheitsstärkungsgesetz (BFSG)**, retailers face concrete obligations. Comparable frameworks exist internationally:

➢ **United States:** Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

➢ **Canada:** Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

➢ **United Kingdom:** Equality Act 2010

➢ **Australia:** Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)

➢ **New Zealand:** Human Rights Act

All these laws share a common principle: both physical and digital interfaces must be accessible. For retail, this means that store access and POS interactions – whether physical or digital – must be usable by everyone.

Inclusion as a Success Factor

Inclusion is far more than compliance. It is an active process aimed at ensuring equal participation of all individuals in economic and social life. Retailers who genuinely embrace accessibility not only earn the trust and loyalty of a wider customer base but also position themselves as forward-thinking and socially responsible market players.

With an ageing population, the proportion of people with mobility, vision, hearing, or cognitive impairments is steadily rising. Accessible solutions are therefore not only a matter of social equity but also an investment in competitiveness.

Accessibility as a Driver of Efficiency and Quality

Systems designed to be operable "with eyes closed" minimise errors, speed up processes, and enhance customer satisfaction. Features such as high-contrast displays, clear iconography, audio prompts, and haptic feedback assist not only individuals with impairments but also anyone acting under stress, in poor lighting, or with hands full.

Accessibility therefore drives workflow optimisation and can even help reduce operational costs.

Technical Challenges and Practical Usability

SoftPOS and SmartPOS solutions based on smartphones or tablets introduce new accessibility challenges:

➢ Lack of tactile orientation without physical keys

➢ Small display sizes with limited readability

➢ Inconsistent designs without standardisation

➢ Delayed activation of assistive technologies such as screen readers

These issues make it clear: accessibility must be embedded in product development from the outset. Retrofitting often proves costly and incomplete.

It is equally important to note that technical design decisions affect not only people with disabilities – older customers or those with temporary impairments equally benefit from clearly structured, intuitive processes.

Self-Determination and Independence

Accessibility safeguards the right to act independently – even in sensitive scenarios such as PIN entry. People with disabilities should not have to rely on companions or carers to complete a purchase. This requires POS systems that are fully autonomous to operate, and a physical and organisational environment that facilitates independent use.

The Role of Staff Training

Technical measures reach their full potential only when staff are trained appropriately. Effective training should cover:

➢ Awareness of different types of disabilities

➢ Privacy-compliant assistance

➢ Knowledge of assistive technologies

➢ Skills to deliver improvised, customer-focused solutions

It is advisable for at least one trained person to be present on each shift.

Industry-Specific Requirements

Grocery & Supermarkets

➢ Wide, barrier-free aisles

➢ Adjustable or dual-height checkout terminals

➢ Audio price output

➢ Shopping carts with walking-aid holders

Fashion & Boutiques

- ➢ Spacious fitting room access
- ➢ Mirrors at varied heights
- ➢ Digital catalogues with screen reader compatibility

Hair & Beauty Services

- ➢ Accessible wash stations
- ➢ Reduced ambient noise
- ➢ Mobile payment options at the seat

Hospitality & Hotels

- ➢ Menus in large print, Braille, or audio formats
- ➢ Mobile, voice-assisted payment solutions
- ➢ Wheelchair-accessible table heights

Bars & Cafés

- ➢ High-contrast lighting
- ➢ Lowered counter sections
- ➢ Audible order notifications

Pharmacies & Healthcare

- ➢ Accessible consultation counters
- ➢ Clear customer call signals
- ➢ Separate payment points for sensitive transactions

Petrol Stations & Roadside Services

- ➢ Fuel pumps operable from a wheelchair
- ➢ Tactile POS devices
- ➢ Clearly marked navigation routes

Public Transport & Ticketing

➢ Voice-assisted ticket machines

➢ Tactile control panels

➢ Contactless ticket purchases without visual checks

Other Sectors

➢ **Museums & Cultural Venues:** Audio guides, tactile guidance systems

➢ **Sports Venues:** Accessible seating areas, barrier-free payment points

➢ **Banks:** ATMs with voice guidance and tactile markings

Advantages and Disadvantages

For Retailers

✓ Broader customer reach

✓ Increased customer satisfaction

✓ Reduced legal and reputational risks

✖ Investment in adjustments

✖ Staff training requirements

For Customers

✓ Equal access

✓ Independent, dignified usage

✖ Inconsistent implementation across providers

10-Point Action Plan

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1. Review applicable legal requirements (EAA, BFSG, ADA, etc.)

2. Conduct a comprehensive accessibility audit

3. Select POS systems that meet accessibility standards

4. Integrate audio, contrast, and haptic features

5. Implement regular staff training

6. Ensure accessible customer communications

7. Tailor solutions to industry-specific needs

8. Engage with disability advocacy groups

9. Set up a continuous feedback mechanism

10. Publicly communicate your inclusion strategy

Future Perspective

In the coming years, accessibility will become a baseline expectation that goes beyond legal compliance. Retailers who act early will secure competitive advantages, reduce risk, and enhance their brand image.

POS systems will increasingly offer modular, customisable features to accommodate diverse needs, blending accessibility with efficiency and customer experience.