



Escape2

Implementing Accessibility and Inclusiveness

Focus on Rural Tourism SMEs

www.escape2project.org

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Accessibility and Inclusiveness in Tourism

In the tourism market there are non-negligible niches linked to potential customers with special needs: people with motor disabilities (even temporary), with cognitive disabilities, blind or visually impaired people, deaf people, people with special dietary needs (due to allergies, religions, philosophies of life), single parent families or with small children, LGBTQI+ people.

Each of these niches has specific needs and expresses clear demands to which the market does not always provide an adequate offer.

- 01 **Defining** Accessibility and Inclusiveness in Tourism
- 02 The **Main Goals** of Inclusive Tourism
- 03 **Reasons** why Accessibility and Inclusiveness in Tourism are **Important**
The targets
- 04 **Implementation:** How to Prioritise and Implement Accessibility and Inclusiveness into a Tourism Business

What You Will Learn

- Find out more about the **special needs** in tourism
- Discover the **potential** of inclusive and accessible tourism
- Understand the **opportunities** and increase your knowledge by learning from best practices
- Identify the **targets** of interest and the key points to make your proposals inclusive
- Learn how to characterize your business in order to make it effectively **accessible and inclusive**



Image source: www.saravitali.com

01

Defining Accessibility and Inclusiveness in Tourism



Defining Accessibility and Inclusiveness in Tourism

Let's go through some definitions related to accessible and inclusive tourism to ensure we have a clear understanding of the interpretation of the concepts.

Accessible tourism

It is an approach that can be applied to every type of tourism and to every operator to create a proposal that can be experienced by everyone, even by people with special needs (people with motor disabilities (even temporary), with cognitive disabilities, blind or visually impaired *people, deaf people*).

Inclusive tourism

It is the approach to each type and tourist product that takes into account not only accessibility, but also the needs of particular groups of people, such as:

seniors, people with special dietary needs - due to allergies, religions, philosophies of life, single parent families or with small children, LGBTQI+ people, people belonging to ethnic or religious minorities (just to indicate some categories).

Defining Accessibility and Inclusiveness in Tourism

The concept of tourist accessibility is therefore only a small part of the much more extensive and ambitious concept of tourist inclusion.

Inclusive tourism means making spaces, communities, territories, hospitality, services, catering, experiences, routes and mobility accessible and usable for all.

The future of the tourism industry is the **removal of barriers** to allow anyone to explore the world in total freedom. In this perspective, the principle that every tour operator, as well as every citizen, should follow is that of inclusion.

Inclusive tourism, therefore, means welcoming any traveler and making him feel at ease, regardless of his personal background.

Defining Accessibility and Inclusiveness in Tourism

Tourism for All

In 1999 the World Tourism Organization adopted the World Code of Ethics for Tourism, which aims to promote responsible, sustainable and accessible tourism to all; it proposes the improvement and development of the sector taking into account the impact on the environment and people.

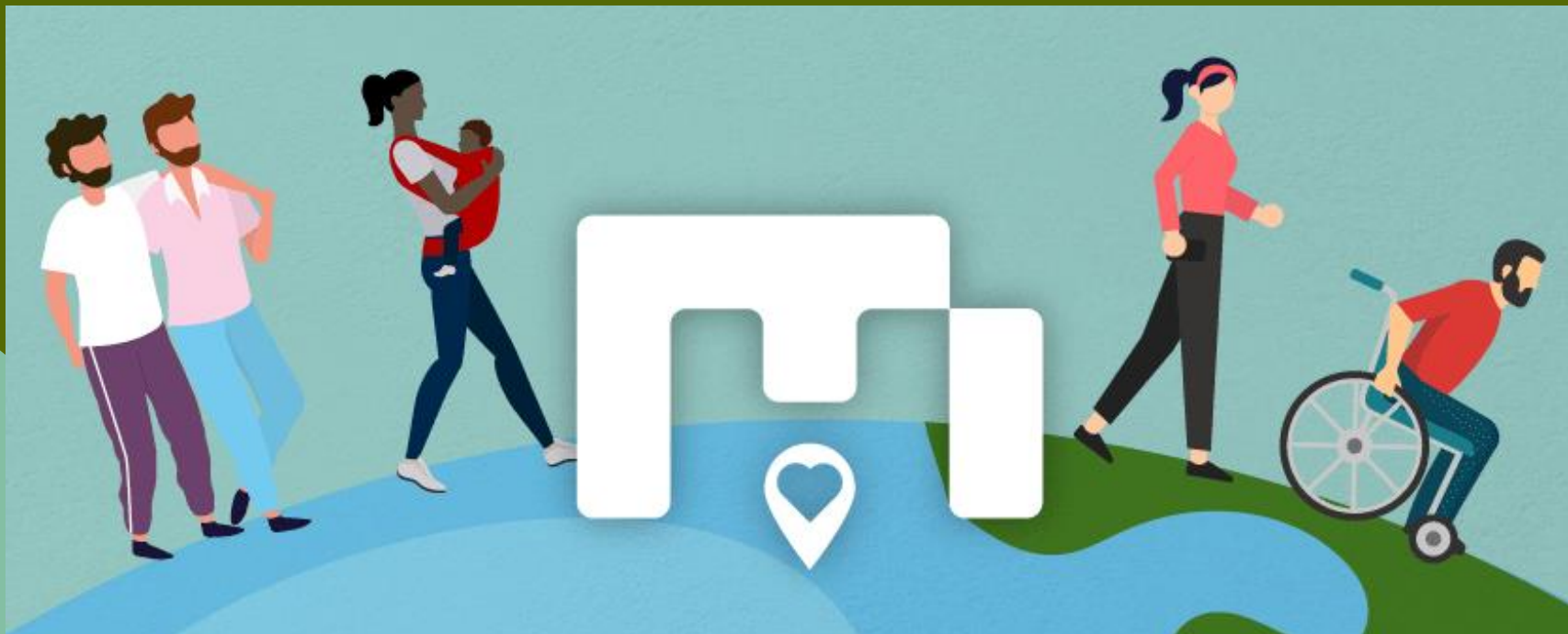
In 2013 the World Tourism Organization issued the "Recommendations for accessible tourism" which contain all aspects related to the tourist experience (travel, accommodation, experiences, etc.), integrated with the main concepts of the UN convention on people's rights with disabilities and Universal Design.



1. **World Code of Ethics for Tourism**
<http://www.ontit.it/opencms/opencms/ont/it/documenti/02289>
2. **Reccomendations for accessible Tourism**
<https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284417896>

02

The Main Goals of Inclusive Tourism





If the principles of **accessible tourism** have long been established, those of **inclusive tourism** are still, for many, out of focus; let's be clear.

1. **Accessibility:** ensuring accessibility to the tourist destination, its attractions, experiences and services for all; the necessary infrastructure also improves the quality of life of the resident populations.
1. **Usability:** making cultural and naturalistic attractions accessible to all, as well as practicable experiences; also in this case the impact in terms of improving the quality of life of the residents is evident
1. **Hospitality society:** educating active citizens, local operators and political decision-makers in the principles of hospitality for all, without discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, disability or other.



4. Local involvement: empowering and making local communities active in planning and decision-making processes on the management and future development of inclusive tourism

4. Community welfare: to implement the quality of life in local communities, starting with access to resources and services

6. Quality of the destination: improving fundamental elements such as mobility, accessibility and usability of places (an element that also benefits the resident population)

6. Economic value: broaden the target of possible customers to implement the profitability and competitiveness of tourist destinations and businesses



8. Local prosperity: implementing the contribution of tourism to the economic prosperity of the host destination (expansion of niche targets)

8. Tourist Satisfaction: providing a safe, satisfying and rewarding experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination based on gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, disability or otherwise.

To these are added the objectives of sustainability:

- **Cultural landscape:** respect and enhance the historical heritage, the authentic culture, the traditions and the particularity of the host communities
- **Environmental value:** minimize air, water and soil pollution and waste generation by tourism businesses and visitors
- **Physical integrity:** maintaining and improving the quality of landscapes, both urban and rural, and avoiding physical and visual degradation of the environment
- **Resource efficiency:** minimize the use of scarce and non-renewable resources in the development and operation of tourist facilities and services

Some Quick Examples of Inclusive Tourism Approaches

Image source: www.revistacocemfe.es



- ❖ Facilitate **better access** through sustainable and suitable for all modes of transport
- ❖ **Remove** the existing **physical impediments** that prevent or limit the use of places
- ❖ Application of the principles of **Universal Design** in the planning of new spaces and in the redefinition of places
- ❖ Educating communities and tourism operators in the principles of **hospitality for all**
- ❖ Provide **adequate tools and knowledge** to tourism operators (hospitality, services, reception, guides, managers of monuments, museums, parks and attractions) on the topics of inclusiveness
- ❖ Create specific services for the targets of **special needs** (disabled, blind, deaf, etc ...)
- ❖ Create **new tourism products** for specific categories (single-parent families, elderly people, families with small children, LGBTQI + community, etc ...)

03

Reasons why Accessibility and Inclusiveness in Tourism are Important The targets

*'Life is a Journey,
not a Destination'*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

European tourism needs to be accessible and inclusive

The world of tourism is characterized by **strong competitiveness** and **continuous changes**.

The recent epidemiological crisis has put the spotlight on rural locations, considered safer in the era of covid. This situation has allowed an unprecedented public to discover the advantages of destinations characterized by large spaces, enormous natural and cultural heritage, interesting food and wine traditions.

Although these destinations loom gaps relating to ease of access and adequacy of services, the new public has been able to ascertain the **authenticity of the destinations** and the competitiveness of the offer (quality / cost ratio). Even today, with the health situation now under control, the flow of visitors to rural areas is growing steadily: a sign that the public has now partly become **aware of the opportunities** offered.

For **rural destinations**, the only conceivable type of tourism is **sustainable tourism**, consisting of limited numbers. The importance of **building loyalty in niche and specific markets** is evident.

European tourism needs to be accessible and inclusive

In this perspective, the expansion of the catchment area of European rural areas to target tourists with **specific needs** seems strategic.

By establishing themselves as tourist **destinations accessible to all**, thanks to the creation of itineraries and services dedicated to people with special needs (people with motor disabilities and in wheelchairs, the elderly, blind people, deaf people) and special categories, rural areas could be **distinctly placed in the market** .

It would **not be merely an ethical operation**, if we take into account that, for example, in Europe there are about 50 million people with physical disabilities, blind people about 30 and the elderly population continues to grow as a percentage of other demographic groups. According to the World Health Organization, **one billion of the world's population currently has disabilities**.

European tourism needs to be accessible and inclusive

We are therefore talking about a target with **enormous economic potential**.

If we look at the categories of tourists with specific needs, we realize that the interest in inclusiveness is no less: just think of the growing number of single-parent families in the Western world, or the spending power of LGBTQI + tourists.

According to data from the latest UNWTO research, by 2030 there will be over **180 million LGBTQ + tourists**, while the tourism expenditure of those residing in the European Community (UK included in the data) is already about 50 billion a year.



TARGETS

People with physical disabilities



People with reduced mobility and in wheelchairs (even temporarily) experience the limits of their freedom every day: architectural barriers are everywhere. In the field of tourism, the response to their particular needs is not only connected to the possibility of finding suitable accommodation facilities or being able to access monuments and museums, but above all to be able to live experiences suited to their needs. All in the guarantee of safety.

It is therefore a question of planning and proposing suitable activities (cultural guided tours, naturalistic excursions, workshops, sports activities in the countryside, tastings, etc ...) that use instruments and equipment specifically designed for their particular needs.

Tourism for disabled people is becoming increasingly relevant and today the need to allow everyone access and usability of goods and services is urgent.



TARGETS

People blind and visually impaired



The journey has always been given a completely "visual" connotation - seeing new places, seeing monuments / museums, photographing, filming - as if all the other "senses" did not have their own weight in the tourist experience!

What happens when you are blind or have impaired vision? Until recently it was practically impossible to travel safely and derive satisfaction from the travel experience for this category of people.

The attention to the needs of the blind has grown, with results above all for cultural tourism: more and more monuments and museums are equipped with Braille panels or models for tactile exploration. 3D printing allows the scale reproduction of monuments and allows you to "transform" the paintings into bas-reliefs.

The ability of private operators to adequately accommodate the blind, especially if unaccompanied, remains problematic: there are very few accommodation facilities and restaurants equipped with devices for blind guests, who often have difficulty even getting their guide dogs to be welcomed. Furthermore, there are still few outdoor activities and experiences designed specifically for this target.



TARGETS

Deaf people

Image source: www.museum.com



Even in the case of deaf people, the first point to be addressed in planning a trip is related to safety: mobility infrastructures are not always equipped with adequate devices. The target, in fact, needs elements of visual communication that replace the sound one (in railway stations, airports, subways, roads, hotels...) Likewise, reception areas should be equipped with luminous devices for communication especially in the event of an emergency.

Another fundamental element concerns communication.

There are very few tourism operators who speak sign language; to this we must add that there is no universal sign language, but that changes in every country (32 sign languages in Europe alone...).

Communication technologies (video) could partially overcome the obstacle.

In any case, services and experiences designed for the deaf in tourism are still few and often linked to excellence in the cultural field (important museums for example).



TARGETS

People with special dietary needs



One of the most relevant aspects of a trip is the discovery of the local gastronomy. However, people do not approach food in a standard way due to various reasons that influence its possibilities and choices.

An inclusive destination should allow everyone to meet their special food needs.

But what are these special needs? and by what are they determined?

Special dietary needs are determined by: intolerances and allergies; religious beliefs; ethical beliefs.

Food allergies and intolerances are reactions that develop in some individuals after consuming a certain food and represent an increasingly widespread problem in the population.

Allergies are reactions of the immune system and as such can be severe (anaphylactic shock); intolerances cause less dangerous symptoms (skin rash, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, etc ...).

The most common allergens are milk (and derivatives), gluten, eggs, shellfish, peanuts, tree nuts.

Restaurants should be able to offer alternatives to any intolerant or allergic guest.



TARGETS

People with special dietary needs

Some religions contain precepts regarding nutrition, prescriptive rules relating to the production of raw materials, their processing and the preparation of dishes.
They also ban some foods.



Kosher ("in accordance with the law, permitted") is the set of religious rules that regulate the diet of observant **Jews** and which derive from the Bible and the Torah. This discipline indicates which meats can be consumed (how to slaughter them), which ones are prohibited (rabbit, pork, horse for example); prohibits the consumption of crustaceans (only fish with fins and scales are allowed), does not allow the consumption of dairy products and meat in the same lunch, etc ... There is a Kosher certification of the food, as well as adequate slaughter.
Some restaurants are kosher certified.

Another religion that has precepts on food, rules relating to the production of raw materials, their processing and the preparation of dishes is **Islam**. The term **halāl** (Arabic: حلال 'lawful') indicates what is allowed in matters of behavior, language, dress and nutrition. The discipline of halal food is based on a verse of Sura 16 of the Koran and in this case indicates allowed (halal) and forbidden (haram: pork, frogs, meat not slaughtered properly, alcohol, etc ...), correct methods of slaughter, etc ... There is a halal certification of food.



TARGETS

People with special dietary needs



Image source: www.oliocarli.it

Another notable component of the special needs in terms of nutrition is deriving from **philosophical beliefs** and **ethical convictions**.

In fact, the practices of vegetarianism, veganism, fruitfulness, raw food, etc ... are increasingly widespread.

Vegetarians exclude meat and fish from their diet.

Vegans, on the other hand, are vegetarians who completely abstain from all foods of animal origin, so they don't even eat eggs, milk and its derivatives and honey.

Fruitarianism eat only fruit.

Raw foodists refuse any physical, chemical or other treatment on foods that alters their natural or original nutritional properties. At the base of raw food there are reasons linked to nutritionism, healthism and the mysticism of nature.



TARGETS

Families with children



One of the most interesting targets with regard to special needs is made up of families with children. This is a classic target on which the fortune of the classic sea product for example has been built, but which, due to the decline in births in Western countries in recent decades, has become a niche. There are three elements to combine: the needs of the family, those of the children and those of the parents.

The tourism product is focused on **the needs of children** and is therefore aimed at offers that include attractions, recreational activities, games, sports courses, workshops... Often the operators offering this type of product are resorts or tourist villages, where every moment of the day is organized for children. In fact, the construction of a vacation that contains all these elements by families is complicated and expensive if it does not involve a single service provider. However, there are also destinations that have built the product thanks to various thematic attractors managed by different operators that characterize the local offer.



TARGETS

Single parent families

Image source: www.elpais.com



The social composition is changing, especially in Western countries. Single parent families are increasingly common. These are families made up of a single adult (single father / mother) and children. This type of family has the typical needs of any family unit with young children (fun, play, free time, discovery, sharing, relaxation, etc.) to which the specific needs of the single parent are associated (time for themselves, opportunities for socialization, entertainment, culture).

It is necessary to consider the situation of a single parent as a highly demanding condition and which therefore takes away space from other areas of relational life.

The time of the holiday therefore becomes the space in which to recover time for one's own care by the parent.

Tourist products for this type of target must therefore be able to create diversified moments and spaces for the different members of the family (parent, children), in addition to those designed for sharing.

A fundamental element will therefore be the presence of services dedicated to children (playful activities, workshops, courses, games, etc ...), with assistance such as entertainment and babysitting that allow the parent to have time for himself.



TARGETS

Seniors

Image source: www.assistedvillas.com



Very interesting target is that of the elderly. First of all for numerical data and future prospects: more than 20% of the European population is over 65 and forecasts say that this percentage will increase steadily. It is an interesting target also from an economic point of view: mostly retired belonging to the boom generation and who have mainly benefited from the economic privileges of those who started working in the 60/70s (income, position, savings, ...).

The needs of this target with a high average spending potential are very peculiar: beautiful destinations, interest in art and culture, food and wine, slow rhythms, authentic contact with local culture, soft physical activities.

To this we must associate the need to organize travel in all its aspects, especially for travel abroad (this is a generation with little familiarity with travel outside their country of birth / residence and who does not speak second languages) .

It is clear that we are faced with a target that allows the construction of complex and articulated proposals consisting of a great variety of possible services (accommodation, restaurants, guided tours, accompaniment, excursions, insurance, etc ..), resulting in a wide range of services. possibility of action for operators.



TARGETS

LGBTQIA+ community



Image source: www.nomadicboys.com

The needs of this target are connected to a few and essential factors: the perception of safety and being able to openly live one's sexuality, the attractiveness of the destination (beauty, culture, entertainment, lifestyle ...) If we look at the leading LGBTQI + destinations in the world (San Francisco, New York, Tel Aviv, Madrid, Berlin, Mikonos, etc ...), we realize that these are mainly destinations in countries with laws attentive to LGBTQI + rights and therefore considered "welcoming".

Lgbtqia+ destinations have been able to build products adhering to the needs of the target which is among those who spend the most on holidays.

People with a medium-high purchasing power who have different priorities on average from the rest of the population and who invest more in culture, leisure, entertainment, food and wine, etc ...

Another characteristic connoting the target is the propensity to choose destinations strongly characterized from an aesthetic point of view (whether it is nature, landscape or architecture).



04

Implementation: How to Prioritise and Implement Accessibility and Inclusiveness into a Tourism Business

How can my SME be inclusive?

—**“Tourism for all”** is a concept that caters to a growing segment of travelers with a diverse range of needs and requirements.

An **inclusive tourism business** or destination works to deliver positive travel experiences to people with different needs, addressing them from various perspectives and providing design solutions and services that aim to cover as many different groups as possible.

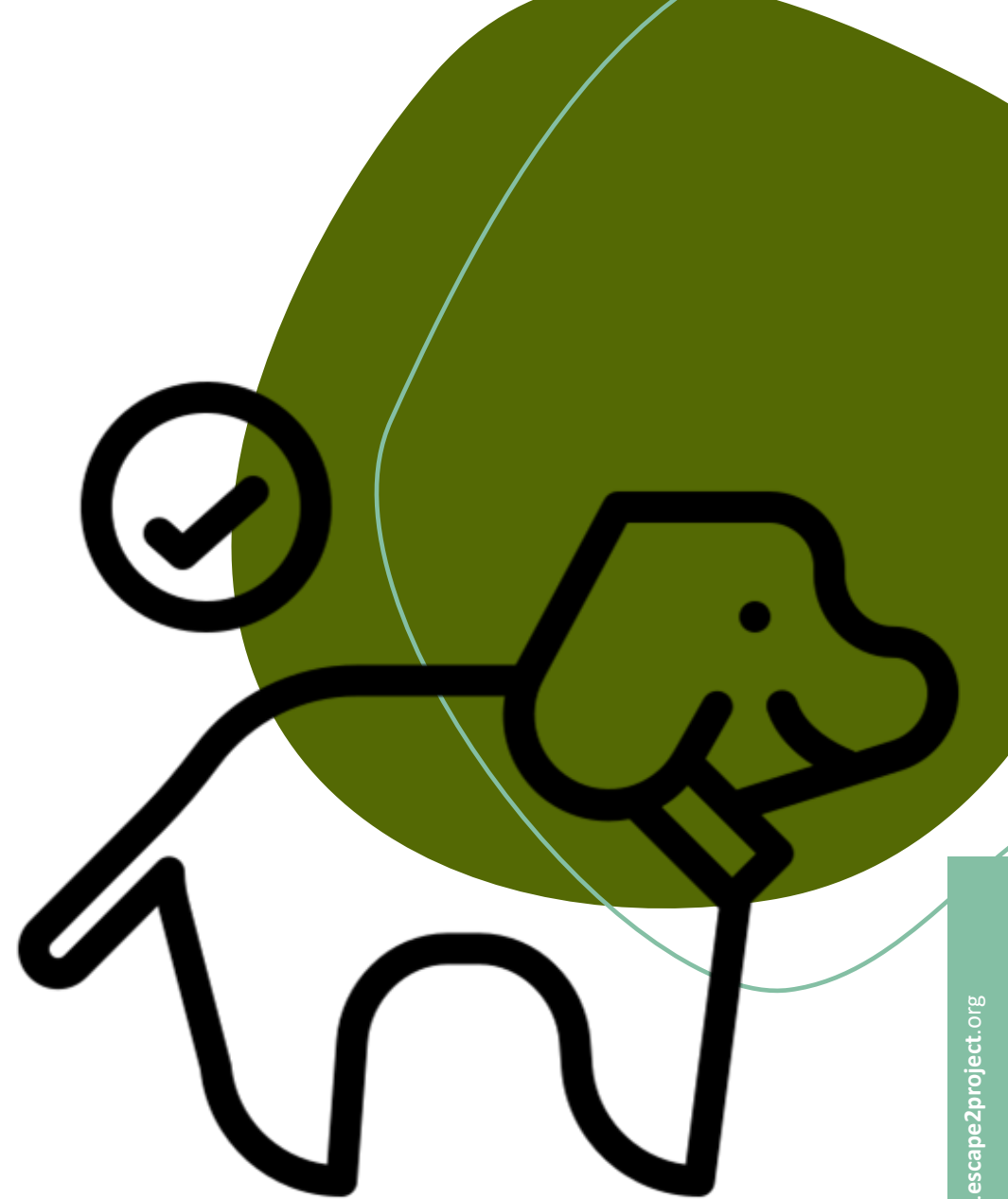
As already seen, the concept of inclusiveness is broader than that of accessibility and contains it. This section intends to clarify the elements that a tourism company must necessarily contemplate in order to be defined as inclusive, avoiding errors or superficiality that could affect the result of the actions.

The starting point to be an inclusive tourism business is to change your mentality and put yourself in the shoes of the potential customer as much as possible.

Implement an Inclusive Management Approach

The **travel experience** begins with its planning: an inclusive activity must make everything that precedes the journey easy, clear and welcoming, from searching for information to booking services. A website of any tourism company should clearly indicate the accessibility of places, if they exist and which services are dedicated to the various target groups with special needs.

Sometimes just a few icons are enough: the silhouette of a dog will make travelers with pets understand that they are welcome.



Implement an Inclusive Management Approach

If your customers have **special needs**, don't underestimate them: communicate with them and try to understand as much as possible.

The issue of **accessibility** is more commonly considered only for physical disabilities (people in wheelchairs or with limited movement); moreover, it is only partially guaranteed in places of public interest and in accommodation facilities / restaurants.

In most cases, wheelchair users are granted access only to certain areas of the attractions, with limited use of the services.

A **competitive advantage** of a tourism company can be constituted by making all areas of a structure or an attraction accessible and all services usable.

Image source: www.abilities.ca



Implement an Inclusive Management Approach

In order to be defined as "**accessible**" an **accommodation facility** must therefore allow disabled access to common areas, be equipped with rooms and bathrooms with adequate standards (remember: bathrooms for the disabled can be beautiful!), and must finally guarantee the usability of the services to all guests, regardless of their physical condition.

If a hotel has, for example, a swimming pool or a spa, these must allow their use to the disabled people. Often the accommodation facilities and restaurants are equipped with measures aimed only at welcoming people in wheelchairs, completely neglecting the needs of blind and deaf people.

Image source: www.tsnn.com



Implement an Inclusive Management Approach

Inclusive restaurants, in addition to guaranteeing accessibility, must be able to offer alternatives to any intolerant, allergic or **special dietary needs** guests (leaving out the complex kosher or halal certifications, it will be necessary to be able to offer vegetarian and vegan options).

The menus must contain an indication of any allergens in the dishes proposed and the customers must be able to request a preparation that excludes from a dish those ingredients to which they are possibly allergic or intolerant.

The dining room staff must be informed in detail on the subject of allergens, so that they can answer customers questions correctly. The kitchen staff, on the other hand, must perfectly know the procedures to follow for the preparation of a dish ordered by an allergic person, and avoid the risk of food contamination.

The entire kitchen must be organized in such a way as to know perfectly the composition of the ingredients used.

Image source: play.google.com



Implement an Inclusive Management Approach

Given the **complexity of inclusiveness**, small and medium-sized tourism businesses should concentrate and develop reception policies for the most appropriate target for their business.

If your goal is to attract families with small children, it will be advisable to have specific services for children (games area, workshops, areas for recreational sports activities, instructors, babysitters, etc ...).

If, on the other hand, you decide to propose yourself to the lgbtqi + target, you must be sure that all the staff of your company are well disposed towards potential customers and that they know how to approach them (be welcoming and never intrusive).

Then eventually you can also build targeted services, such as stays for singles with socialization activities, excursion,

Image source: www.acon.org.au





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Thank You!

Any questions?



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