



Entrepreneurship of People with Disabilities and Accessible Tourism in the Non-hotel Accommodation Sector in Italy*

Loredana Picciotto¹ 
Immacolata Ummarino²

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Abstract: *The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities establishes two fundamental rights: the right to work and the right to enjoy a tourist experience. Work employment is considered by the European Commission the fundamental way to social inclusion. Nevertheless, several studies highlight the difficulties of entering the labor market. The UNWTO (2020) has pointed out the priority role of accessibility in the tourist sector and the importance of providing accessible tourist services to all potential travelers is widely underlined in literature. This chapter analyses a form of entrepreneurship of people with disabilities, recently established in Italy, that favors their employment in the non-hotel accommodation sector and jointly promotes accessible tourism. By using a representative case study, the research identifies the distinctive features of this initiative; in addition to its aptitude to promote social inclusion, it highlights the intrinsic accessibility of the tourist offer, the strengths of the business model and the critical issues to manage for its possible diffusion in other territorial contexts.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Disability is a reality for many people and has been identified by the World Health Organization to be a challenge faced by all countries. It has been estimated that more than one billion people in the world live with some form of disability (physical, mental, or sensory), or about 15% of the total population (World Health Organization, 2011). The figure is growing in consideration of both the increased average age and the worsening of some chronic health conditions. In Italy, in 2019, people with disabilities are 3 million and 150 thousand (5.2% of the population) (Istat, 2021).

The increase of people with disabilities poses relevant ethical, social and economic issues, especially in times of crisis in which public services often suffer a lack of resources (Migliaccio, 2019). People with disabilities must have the same citizenship rights and the same quality of life as non-disabled people (United Nations, 1993), representing exclusion from full participation as social inequality. The importance of an inclusive society and a greater involvement of people with disabilities in the economy is the subject of growing attention and reflection (Levitas, 2005; Migliaccio, 2016; Moreno de la Santa, 2020).

The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (United Nations, 2006) has identified the rights of people with disabilities, providing signatory countries with indications for policies and interventions aimed at perfecting these rights. This study specifically addresses two fundamental rights enshrined in the Convention: the right to work (art. 27) and the right to enjoy a tourist experience (art. 30).

¹ Department of Economics, Business and Statistics, University of Palermo, Viale delle Scienze, Building 13, 90128, Palermo, Italy

² Independent consultant in the tourism sector.

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Work employment is considered by the European Commission the fundamental way (the “key route”) for the integration and social inclusion of people with disabilities; while other factors are naturally relevant (education, training, access to public and private services, etc.), unemployment is considered the main factor of social exclusion (Grammenos, 2003). Indeed, work for these people represents not only an instrument of economic support but a fundamental way to satisfy the needs of personal fulfillment and socialization. In literature, various studies have highlighted the difficulties of entering the labor market of people with disabilities and their lower levels of education and employment (Alonso, 2014; Cooney, 2008; Corradini & Martinez, 2021; Martínez-León et al., 2019).

Some scholars have focused on the employment inclusion of people with disabilities in various companies and organizations, and consequently, on appropriate human resource management policies (among others: Martins et al., 2012; Pérez-Conesa et al., 2020; Simonelli & Camarotto, 2008; Toldra & Santos, 2013). Other scholars have explored the theme of entrepreneurship of people with disabilities (Cooney, 2008; De Klerk, 2008; Maritz & Laferriere, 2016; Martínez-León et al., 2019; Migliaccio & Ummarino, 2022; Migliaccio, 2009; Olmedo-Cifuentes & Martínez-León, 2019; Renko et al., 2016; Rozali et al., 2017), based on the assumption that personal difficulties are not incompatible with taking on entrepreneurial roles (apart from particularly serious situations). Some scholars claim that entrepreneurship is the main way for this group of people to achieve equality and social justice (Cooney, 2008; Martínez-León et al., 2019). Self-employment provides an opportunity to achieve both employment and personal goals, thanks to its greater flexibility in choosing, for example, working conditions or environment (Doyle, 2002; Hagner & Davies, 2002; Pagan, 2009). Art. 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities explicitly promotes self-employment opportunities and entrepreneurship, as a further way to affirm the right to work. However, people with disabilities interested in entrepreneurship face significant barriers to starting a business, including access to start-up capital, the lack of relevant knowledge and skills, the lack of confidence and the absence of appropriate business support, as highlighted by Kitching (2014), Bakara et al. (2016) and Maritz and Laferriere (2016). The latter recommends further research about the types of business that disabled entrepreneurs have engaged in, the factors motivating self-employment, as well as how entrepreneurs have managed to deal with barriers and limitations to achieve success.

The growing interest in the literature on the entrepreneurship of people with disabilities and the existence of specific barriers to self-employment underlies this study. In particular, this paper aims to examine a nascent form of entrepreneurship of people with disabilities in Italy in the tourism sector aimed at promoting their work placement and social inclusion as well as accessible tourism. By adopting the methodology of the representative case study, we intend to analyze an entrepreneurial project that has originated the “*Like your Home*” network, a set of B & Bs and apartments managed by people with disabilities or special needs together with their families. It is a complex project that originates from the needs of people with disabilities and their difficulties in the labor market, and which jointly contemplates the right to enjoy a tourist experience aiming to increase the offer of accessible tourism services. Accessibility has a priority role in the tourism sector (UNWTO, 2013, 2020) since travelling is everyone’s right. Compared to a traditional research perspective in the area of tourism and disability focusing on travelers with disabilities (Lehto et al., 2018), in this study people with disabilities are not the users but the providers of tourist services.

The initiative has received numerous awards for its social, human and tourist value, as well as for the innovativeness of its entrepreneurial formula. Consequently, this business case has

recently been the subject of scientific analysis (Migliaccio & Ummarino, 2022), presenting the origins of the project and its innovative elements. Our study aims to highlight the facilitating mechanisms of the process of self-employment and social inclusion of people with disabilities and to analyze the distinctive characteristics of their tourist offer. Therefore, the following research questions are discussed: What are the factors that facilitate business start-ups and support the entrepreneurship of people with disabilities? What are the qualifying profiles of this form of hospitality from an accessible tourism perspective?

The field of entrepreneurship certainly deserves development and further scientific analysis (Maritz & Laferriere, 2016; Migliaccio & Ummarino, 2022), in addition to studies on the employment of people with disabilities in companies in the tourism sector (Kalargyrou et al., 2020). Our paper can shed light on the distinctive elements of a business model that facilitates the work placement of people with disabilities, considering the barriers and criticalities highlighted in the literature.

Furthermore, the paper can offer a useful contribution to the field of «accessible tourism» (Buhalis & Darcy, 2011; Buhalis et al., 2012), highlighting the specific characteristics of the tourist services offered (also, but not only) to people with the same needs and access requirements as B&Bs managers with the case study. As claimed by various scholars, the tourism industry needs to design and deliver products and services suitable to all potential users and remove any barriers that can prevent visitation to the places (Eichhorn & Buhalis, 2011; Michopoulou et al., 2015; Rucci & Porto, 2022).

To this end, the chapter first provides a theoretical background by examining the issues of disability, citizenship rights and social inclusion with specific reference to the sphere of work and travel. Secondly, it reviews the limits and difficulties of access for people with disabilities both in the field of entrepreneurship and in the enjoyment of a tourist experience. Thirdly, it presents the case of the “*Like your Home*” network. Fourthly, it highlights the qualifying features of this entrepreneurial initiative and discusses the main empirical evidence. Lastly, the study concludes with some implications and final remarks.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Disability, Human Rights and Social Inclusion

Disability is a part of the diversity of human communities and it can occur at any stage of life, whether it is in a temporary or permanent capacity (Darcy & Dickson, 2009; Small & Darcy, 2010). Over the last twenty years, the international debate has led to a profound renewal of the theoretical paradigm of disability. The traditional medical approach has been originally focused on the individual and the impairments (physical or psychological) that preclude full participation in social life (Oliver, 1996). Over time, it has been understood that the elements of fragility that can limit the development and social progress of individuals are manifold and depend to a large extent on society and the context. As a result, a second social approach invests in the relationship between the person and the environment. In this model, disability is the product of a disabling social environment and hostile social attitudes (Barnes, 1996; Darcy, 2002). It is the latter, together with personal factors, that cause disability and influence the full participation of disadvantaged people (UPAIS, 1975).

The new theoretical paradigm has been formalized by the scientific community in the *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (ICF) approved by the World Health

Organization (2001). Subsequently, the UN *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, also ratified by Italy, incorporated its principles and identified the rights of people with disabilities, providing the 265 signatory countries with indications for policies and interventions aimed at perfecting these rights. The Convention states that people with disabilities “all those who have lasting physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments that in interaction with barriers of different nature can hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (art. 1). Activity and participation thus become two important components of a person’s physical, mental and social wellbeing.

However, despite the enunciation of fundamental principles and the commitment of States to translate them into policies and programs, it often happens that people with disabilities encounter obstacles in their daily life, and they do not have access to the physical, economic, social and cultural structures of the community (or is limited), or still, suffer multiple forms of discrimination. Specifically, the barriers that preclude the full and serene participation of people with disabilities in the life of society are the following (**World Health Organization, 2011**):

- *Inadequate policies and standards*. The needs of people with disabilities are not always adequately addressed at the political level, or existing standards are not sufficiently strengthened.
- *Negative attitudes*. In society, there are often “mental” barriers (**Grammenos, 2003**), prejudices towards people with disabilities, erroneous beliefs, misconceptions about their lower productivity, and ignorance of possible adjustments in labor bargaining.
- *Lack of service provision*. Persons with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to deficiencies in certain services (e.g. health care, rehabilitation).
- *Problems in providing services*. Inadequate coordination and sometimes not very competent staff significantly affect the quality, accessibility and adequacy of the offered services. Among these, we also mention the tourist services (**Darcy, 2010; Eichhorn et al., 2008**).
- *Inadequacy of financial resources*. The resources for the implementation of policies and action programs are very often insufficient and inadequate to the needs.
- *Lack of accessibility*. Many buildings (including public buildings), infrastructure, transport systems and sometimes information are not fully accessible.

Disabling barriers give rise to disadvantages experienced by people with disabilities, including a lower level of education, less participation in economic activity, worse health conditions and higher poverty rates. Indeed, very often the families of people with disabilities have a lower level of economic well-being. In Italy, their average annual income (including transfers from the State) is 7.8% lower than the national one (**Istat, 2021**). Welfare and the system of social transfers are not sufficient to guarantee these families living conditions similar to the rest of the population, due to the additional medical and health costs caused by disability.

Inadequate institutional solutions and a lack of community life often lead to situations of isolation and dependence on others, filled by family members and, more recently, by social networks. Their relational network tends to be more circumscribed, determining or aggravating situations of economic difficulty and social exclusion. Therefore, the family plays a crucial role in treating and combating social exclusion, but the factors indicated above make the balance fragile and can also have negative consequences for those who provide care (stress, loss of socio-economic opportunities, etc.).

2.2. Disability, Right to Work and Entrepreneurship

Article 27 of the UN Convention recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others. Self-employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, the organization of cooperatives and the start-up of self-employed businesses are also explicitly promoted.

Independence and autonomy are of particular importance for people with disabilities, contributing to effective participation and inclusion in society. As pointed out by [Martínez-León et al. \(2019\)](#), having a job promotes the integral development of people with disabilities, making them feel more socially useful, and have higher self-esteem, social recognition, and economic independence. Indeed, work for these people represents not only an instrument of economic support but, above all, the fundamental way of expressing one's being and enhancing one's characteristics and abilities.

The *World Report on Disability* ([World Health Organization, 2011](#)) specifies that people with disabilities are the least likely to be employed (especially in the case of cognitive disabilities) and that, even when employed, they generally earn less. In the 27 countries considered, the employment rate of disabled people is on average 44% (for non-disabled people it is 75%); the inactivity rate is about two and a half times higher among people with disabilities (49% and 20% respectively). In Italy, the percentage of disabled people who are employed is decidedly lower in the various age groups. In particular, in the 15-44 age group 24.8% of men with disabilities are employed (against 62.7% of the others) and 20.4% of women (against 46.3% of the others) ([Osservatorio Nazionale sulla Salute nelle Regioni Italiane, 2017](#)). Based on a more recent analysis of the National Institute of Statistics ([Istat, 2021](#)), in 2019, considering the population between 15 and 64 years old, in Italy only 32.2% of those suffering from severe limitations are employed compared to 59.8% of people without limitations.

Some studies on people with disabilities have shown that their work experience and training are lower due, in part, to unequal access to education ([Dakung et al., 2017](#); [Park & Bouck, 2018](#)). In Italy, although social inclusion policies have favored a progressive increase in school participation in recent years, there are several critical issues concerning specific training for pupils with disabilities, the number of communication assistants in the South of the country, the lack of technological tools and the widespread presence of architectural barriers in the schools ([Istat, 2021](#)). The Covid-19 pandemic has aggravated the situation by limiting the opportunities for school participation.

In Italy, labor legislation is quite advanced and in line with the international framework, having ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006 ([United Nations, 2006](#)). There are various regulations aimed at encouraging the work placement of people with disabilities. The main one is Law n. 68 of 1999, which laid the foundations for a profound cultural change in the employment of people with disabilities. In particular, from the obligation for employers to hire a certain number of disabled people, a logic of reconciliation of different needs has been affirmed by promoting a job placement through support services and «targeted placement» (art. 1). There is also the possibility of inserting the most severely disabled in type B social cooperatives under Law 381/91 (art. 12). The subsequent Legislative Decree 276/03 (art. 14) has provided for a system of agreements at regional, local and company level in order to enhance social and territorial coordination.

Despite this legislation, the disadvantage of people with disabilities in the labor market remains significant. A recent study ([Osservatorio Nazionale sulla Salute nelle Regioni Italiane, 2017](#)) underlines that the rights enshrined in the UN Convention, including the right to work and

accessibility, are not yet perfected, as evidenced by the lowest levels of education and many people employed not yet in line with the rest of the country. In particular, alongside successful work integration experiences (Migliaccio, 2009), there are also “shadows” in this system. First of all, the number of places available under Law 68/99 is lower than the potential job offers; moreover, despite the intention to create a “targeted placement”, available places and business needs do not sometimes answer personal skills/abilities. Solutions are often criticized for their ineffectiveness in achieving effective integration into the work environment (Borgonovi, 2009). Furthermore, budgetary constraints and tensions on public finance, as well as administrative complexities, do not always allow for a full and effective application of the legislation.

For these reasons, it seems appropriate to devote our attention to the entrepreneurial experiences of people with disabilities, analyzing an interesting initiative in the non-hotel accommodation sector. Entrepreneurship represents a further way to affirm the right to work and achieve the objectives of social inclusion and personal fulfillment. Despite personal difficulties, the skills and attitudes of an entrepreneur (such as decision-making ability, enthusiasm, and initiative) are not incompatible with the fact of being disabled and the specificities of the situation experienced. In literature, it is argued that entrepreneurship may lead to breaking down barriers faced by people with disabilities and provide them with opportunities traditionally viewed as not possible or unattainable (Maritz & Laferriere, 2016). Some scholars claim that entrepreneurship is the main way for this group of people to achieve equality and social justice (Cooney, 2008; Martínez-León et al., 2019). Martin and Honig (2020) have developed a holistic model that demonstrates how persons with disabilities might attain meaningful work and improved self-image via self-employment, thus achieving economic and social benefits often closed to them due to organizational-employment barriers. Pagan (2009) demonstrates that self-employed disabled workers report higher (or at least equal) levels of job satisfaction as compared with their employee counterparts in many European countries.

Nevertheless, some studies have highlighted some difficulties that people with disabilities face when approaching entrepreneurship. Maritz and Laferriere (2016) distinguish barriers for people with disabilities into three main categories: financial, social and personal. Financial barriers include the difficulty of accessing capital and the fear of losing a regular benefit income (so-called “benefits trap”). Social barriers refer to societal and consumer discrimination and the inadequacy of business support services (such as training). Personal barriers relate to lack of self-confidence, and lack of business knowledge, experience, and skills. These barriers are similarly highlighted in the studies of Kitching (2014) and Bakara et al. (2016). People with disabilities tend to be unemployed or underemployed and they do not have enough personal savings (Maritz & Laferriere, 2016). Also, Martínez-León et al. (2019) point out that the lower economic level of disabled people (and their families) makes it more difficult for them to access credit and obtain financing to start a possible business project. Renko et al. (2016) highlight that the lower levels of training and work experience represent a disadvantage in a possible path of entrepreneurship. Furthermore, people with disabilities, typically having a smaller network of social relationships (Lippold & Burns, 2009), are limited in terms of professional opportunities and support in the entrepreneurial process.

2.3. Disability and Accessibility in the Tourism Sector

Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities establishes the right of access to all areas of cultural life and leisure activities, including tourism.

Naturally, it is implicit that the level of individual support for a person with a disability directly determines their social participation (Small & Darcy, 2011) and, therefore, also the possibility of traveling. Nevertheless, many people are excluded from participating, or from participating fully in tourism because of a series of obstacles or difficulties that arise during a holiday or when planning it. Indeed, the majority of people with disabilities do not consider their impairment as the reason for non-travel but cite other constraints and barriers that they encounter (Darcy, 2003). Tourism represents an extraordinary experience for travelers (Lehto et al., 2018) but travelling can be a challenge, as finding the information on accessible services and booking a room to fulfil access needs often prove to be difficult, costly and time-consuming. Travelling can also be a highly anxious experience, especially for tourists with mobility impairments (Darcy, 2002). The importance of guaranteeing an adequate supply of services has also been underlined in consideration of growing market demand (Agovino et al., 2017).

Accessible tourism is the set of services, structures and infrastructures that allow people with specific needs to enjoy tourism experiences without obstacles or difficulties. As defined by Buhalis and Darcy (2011: pp. 10-11), “accessible tourism is a form of tourism [...] that enables people with access requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments”.

In literature, several studies have highlighted the barriers that hinder or prevent the full accessibility of facilities, services or, more generally, of a tourist destination (Buhalis & Darcy, 2011; Buhalis et al., 2012; Darcy, 2010; Eichhorn et al., 2008; Israeli, 2002; Michopoulou & Buhalis, 2013; Richards et al., 2011). They can be grouped into a few major categories, as follows:

- physical barriers and lack of accessible infrastructure (physical accessibility);
- inadequate information provision (accessibility of information);
- inadequate offer of facilities and services (economic accessibility);
- inadequate competence and aptitude of staff in customer service (psycho-social accessibility).

Physical barriers both in the building and in the external environment make a specific physical space difficult to access for people with disabilities (Michopoulou & Buhalis, 2013). For example, steps, stairs, and heavy doors can be remembered for people with mobility impairment; inadequate lighting or lack of tactile guide for visually impaired people; a lack of alternative fire alarm signals for people with hearing impairments (Michopoulou & Buhalis, 2013). Some countries have introduced legislation that makes physical accessibility mandatory for tourism businesses, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and Italy. In the latter, the legislation is not homogeneous since some non-hotel accommodation facilities (such as Bed & Breakfasts) are not yet subject to legal obligations. Accessibility to transport services, accommodation, restaurants and tourist attractions are essential for tourists to reach their destination and fully participate in the tourist experience (Small & Darcy, 2010).

Information regarding the accessibility of tourism facilities, services and tourist attractions is a critical requirement for participation in tourism and destination selection. Even if the facilities and environment are accessible, the availability, accuracy and reliability of access information are essential for people with disabilities to make appropriate decisions and plan their trips. The provision of information is particularly important in the pre-travel phase. However, for people with disabilities, is important not only for the availability of information but also for its reliability (Cavinato & Cuckovich, 1992). The lack of reliable and accurate information is the main reason why people

with disabilities choose not to travel or that causes severe inconveniences and difficulties (Eichhorn et al., 2008; Michopoulou & Buhalis, 2013). People with disabilities often need to use multiple information sources because the quality of information from a single source is usually insufficient in terms of detail and accuracy. The Internet is one of the most frequently used information sources (Michopoulou & Buhalis, 2013). In terms of content, Cloquet et al. (2018) state that all dimensions of access needs should be addressed, and information should include experiences offered to people with disabilities, access to services, and available assistance during the visit. Therefore, information should entail all accessible components, be readily available, detailed according to the different degrees of disability, be verified, and meet customer needs. The growing development of digital technologies undoubtedly favors people with disabilities, favoring the acquisition of information and the description of tourist facilities and attractions (Migliaccio, 2021).

An inadequate supply of facilities and services represents another barrier that can preclude the accessibility of a destination. Indeed, we refer to economic accessibility that permits one to enjoy a holiday by choosing between various types of prices (Morelli et al., 2003). It often happens that only 4 or 5-star hotels are accessible, with higher prices than other accommodation facilities; consequently, this entails a higher expense for disabled travelers, also considering that they usually travel with other people who accompany and assist them. This aspect has its relevance considering that people with disabilities (and their families) have a lower level of income. An Istat survey (2021) shows that 67% of Italian families in which at least one person with disabilities lives cannot afford a week's vacation a year.

Finally, another barrier is represented by inadequate staff training and poor customer service attitude. Untrained professional staff capable of informing and advising about accessibility issues is one of the main challenges for people with disabilities highlighted by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (n.d.). A facility or service is accessible when the staff is competent and inclined to understand the specific needs of tourists regardless of their conditions. Customer service issues have been highlighted in many complaint cases reviewed by Small and Darcy (2010) in their study. Scholars argue that in some instances the discrimination toward people with disabilities is direct and conscionable. In other cases, it involves less favorable treatment suffered by a person with a disability who is not treated in the same manner as a non-disabled. Discrimination against people with disabilities sometimes depends on prejudices, or sometimes it is because for a long time, these people have been ignored or their needs neglected, favoring the emergence of certain non-inclusive social and cultural attitudes. Therefore, discrimination can also occur unconsciously and have its roots in the cultural context.

Rucci and Porto (2022) point out that the different barriers faced by people with disabilities are disruptive and generate a break in the chain of accessible travel. Only by removing all barriers of various kinds, these people can be guaranteed to have the right to travel, the autonomy of access and enjoyment without unpleasant feelings and social exclusion.

3. ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE TOURISM SECTOR: THE CASE OF THE "LIKE YOUR HOME" NETWORK

In this section of the chapter, we present the case of the "Like your Home" network⁴, an entrepreneurial project undertaken in Italy in 2014 which promotes the employment of people with disabilities or special needs in the non-hotel accommodation sector.

⁴ *Like your Home*, a model of "inclusive and social entrepreneurship" (conceived by Immacolata Ummarino

3.1. Research Methodology

This form of entrepreneurship in a specific territorial context is examined with a qualitative approach by adopting the representative single-case method (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2009).

Advantages of qualitative research include the ability to learn directly from the research subject, and the use of inductive and non-quantitative approaches is a useful strategy applicable to research in small business and entrepreneurship as well (Dana & Dana, 2005). The case study method is useful when it is appropriate to analyze in depth a contemporary phenomenon in the real context in which it occurs. Other studies have adopted this methodology to contextualize the exploration of entrepreneurship of people with disabilities (Balcazar et al., 2014; Maritz & Laferriere, 2016). Naturally, this shouldn't lead to a generalization but it does provide examples of how these entrepreneurs have overcome obstacles in starting a business.

The entrepreneurial project, financed by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, has given rise to some Bed & Breakfasts managed by people with disabilities in the south of Italy (in particular, in the Campania region). The case is considered representative since it is a pilot project, the first of its kind in the country, likely to be implemented in other regions and abroad. Our analysis focuses on the first Bed and Breakfasts of the network, managed by people with disabilities, already operational and present in the major tourist portals. In addition to the object of analysis, the choice of this case has been also motivated by the possibility of directly investigating this reality thanks to the collaboration of the researcher with the project creator. The availability of information, dialogue and comparison during the drafting of the paper made it possible to contextualize, even historically, the entrepreneurial experience, and to identify the most important explanatory variables of the phenomenon and its distinctive features.

The case was developed by combining different data collection methods (Eisenhardt, 1989) and using a variety of information sources, in particular: i) institutional documents and information material of the project; ii) information available on the official website of the *Like your Home* network (www.bblikeyourhome.com) and on the B&B websites; iii) questionnaire for B&B managers (in a structured form and with a field for personal comments); iv) audio-visual material (official presentation video and others available on the web); v) articles and press reviews; vi) written motivations of the awards received. As stated, the collaboration with Mrs. Ummarino, a “key actor” for her active role in the design, promotion and operational implementation of the project, has provided many valuable elements for the case development and subsequent analysis. The discussions took place during the different research phases: from the collection of the first information elements on the project to periodic conversations during the case development to clarify certain aspects (for example, the primary purpose of the project), share meanings (such as the concepts of “disability” and “accessibility”) and specify the dimensions of the value generated by the initiative to which to attribute greater importance. During the telephone conversations, we took note of what was being discussed, underlining what was perceived to be relevant. In the drafting phase of the case, the dialogue allowed the necessary changes and/or additions to be made.

and registered at the SIAE section OLAF n° 2016/000627 and n° 2021/00773). We thank Mrs Ummarino for her kind availability, the information provided and the valuable comparison.

3.2. The “Like your Home” project

The primary purpose of the *Like your Home* project is to offer people with disabilities (physical, intellectual, sensory) or with special needs (in case of celiac disease, allergy, food intolerances, etc.), new employment opportunities, as well as social inclusion, through the management of a bed & breakfast and/or a tourist apartment. In particular, its motivations are related to the purpose of: i) promoting the self-employment of people with disabilities or special needs considering their difficulties in the labor market; ii) developing an activity that meets their socialization needs; iii) increasing the offer of accessible accommodation services in the non-hotel sector based on a critical assessment of the legislation.

The project was born in the Campania region in the provinces of Naples and Salerno. The start-up of the network was funded in 2014 by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers as part of the «Young non-profit» Cohesion Action Plan.

In the first implementation phase of the project, some young people with disabilities and special needs were selected in the provinces of Naples and Salerno through the web and meetings organized in the area. The selected young people then participated in the training course to acquire the necessary skills. Administrative assistance for the opening of the business was provided by technicians who guided the participants in their relations with institutions. Another team of experts managed the tourism marketing activity by also creating an online portal; during the start-up period, the young managers of the Bed & Breakfasts were supported by professionals in their most important decisions.

The team of experts permanently supports the project, which is divided into the following activities: i) selection of participants; ii) tourism training; iii) administrative assistance; iv) start-up and tutoring; v) tourism marketing.

The project has some distinctive elements and is characterized by some key values. In order to the former, we can distinguish them as follows:

- The Bed & Breakfasts are managed by people with disabilities or special needs with the support of the family and/or other people who assist them. They offer accessible accommodation and tourist services since their homes are already equipped with the necessary aids for their needs (for example, alarm clocks for the deaf, screen magnifiers for the visually impaired, breakfast for celiac or allergy sufferers, etc.). The B&Bs have adopted the HACCP system and are authorized to administer meals and breakfast; there is also the possibility of setting up an exhibition space for the sale of handicrafts and typical products, made by people with disabilities, with the *Like your Home* logo (ceramics, souvenirs, honey, etc.), thus integrating income.
- The project provides for the tourist/practical training of people with disabilities or special needs (if necessary accompanied by a family member or a tutor). The training course consists of classroom lessons and educational workshops related to various themes (such as preparing the apartment, managing reservations, welcoming guests, fulfilling administrative formalities). At the end of each course, the *Like your Home Disciplinary* is delivered to the B&B manager, a document containing all the lessons, operating practices and procedures for providing services to customers. Together with the *Disciplinary*, the B&B managers receive a *Regulation*, a document that indicates the house rules and the needs of the host family to be communicated to the guests.

- The family is able to adopt the most appropriate behaviors with tourists who have the same disability.
- The place where the activity is carried out by people with disabilities or special needs is their home. The use of modern digital technologies and the development of social networks allow him/her to “stay in the world” even while staying at home.
- The entrepreneurial activity is carried out within the *network*, made up of the various accommodation facilities managed by people with disabilities or special needs affiliated with the *Like your Home* brand, whose logo is present in all promotional and communication material. The team of experts is responsible for the marketing of the network, also through participation in sector fairs. The network promotes the development of social relationships, both among young people with disabilities or special needs, and among their families who can undertake collaborations or organize meetings to discuss issues related to disability and special needs as well as relating to tourist services.
- The project promotes a different vision of people with disabilities in society: from “assisted” by the State to “entrepreneurs” present on the market.

The B&Bs *Like your Home* aim to offer a quality hospitality service, as evidenced by recent market recognition: the B&B Miranà won the *Booking Guest Review Award* in 2017 for the best guest stay experiences.

The *Like your Home* project is characterized by some key values which involve the human and social dimensions. In particular, we can highlight the value of the family on which this type of hospitality is based, the values of social inclusion and the improvement of the quality of life of the B&B managers and tourists, the essential values for the satisfaction of all tourists (attention, respect and sensitivity), and again, the value of social relationships.

Like your Home has received numerous national awards for its human, social and tourist value. Among others: the Unesco “Premio Turismo Cultura” (Padova, 2016); the “HostAbility School/University LyH” of the Italian Responsible Tourism Association (AITR) (Siena, 2017); the “Welcoming Cities” (Rimini, 2017); the prize of the competition “Adopt a tourist” of the I.TA.CA Festival (Bologna, 2017); the “Inclusion 3.0” Award of the University of Macerata, (2018). Furthermore, the network has also achieved important awards for the innovativeness of its entrepreneurial formula, since it was selected as the best start-up at the “BTO Buy Tourism Online Event Startup Italian Open” (Florence, 2016) and finalist of the eighth edition of the “Eurointerim Woman & Work Startup Competition” (Padova, 2018).

3.3. Aspects of Social Inclusion and Accessibility of Tourist Services

The *Like your Home* project originates from a specific social hardship and the need for work placement and social inclusion of people with disabilities or special needs given the difficulties still present in Italy. It has allowed the employment and active engagement of these people, especially young people, in the non-hotel hospitality sector. The need for work placement is accompanied by rationality and participation in the life of the community, offering one’s contribution with dignity.

As shown by the analysis, the project allows a) the possibility of carrying out a job compatible with one’s needs and expectations; b) the possibility of obtaining economic remuneration; c) the possibility to entertain new relationships with tourists, guests and other managers of the *Like your Home* network. To a lesser extent, B&B managers refer also to the possibility of feeling part of the

local community by having relationships with other people (e.g., restaurateurs, tour guides, etc.). In this regard, the mother of a person with cognitive disabilities spontaneously states that “giving hospitality is a wonderful opportunity to feel part of the world and to have an income”.

The project promotes the social inclusion of people with disabilities and is likely to intercept different dimensions of life, equally important, to which each person can attribute a different value, as can be seen from the following statements:

Thanks to the B&B “I finally have a job”, “I feel more useful for society” and “I have given a new meaning to my life” (Manager of the Bed & Breakfast “Miranà”). And again, the B&B allowed me to “put my studies and/or my experience to good use” and to “get to know other people and make my city known” (Manager of the Bed & Breakfast “Coccolhome”).

The tourist offer presents some distinctive features concerning: a) the facilities (structural characteristics of the accommodations, specific equipment and supports); b) the hospitality service; c) the image projected on the market.

With regard to the available *facilities* (see Table 1), the accommodations are independent apartments (in family villas) or located in buildings with physical accessibility requirements (presence of standard lifts, slides for wheelchairs, etc.). Given the particular condition of owners with disabilities, they are provided with the necessary equipment and aids for their needs (for example, alarm clocks for the deaf, screen magnifiers for the visually impaired, etc.).

The Bed & Breakfasts provides a variety of *services*. As already mentioned, in addition to accommodation, the managers are authorized to administer meals and breakfast (with sweets or jams they produce), having adopted the HACCP system and received the related training. Furthermore, there is the possibility of selling handicrafts and typical products made by people with disabilities. The distinctive feature of the hospitality service concerns the personal characteristics of the B&B managers and their families. Based on their situation and experience, they have acquired knowledge and skills on specific forms of disability (in particular, motor, cognitive, autistic, and Down syndrome). Therefore, the host family can adopt the most appropriate behaviors for welcoming tourists with the same disability (particularly important in the case of cognitive disability). Furthermore, it is also able to adequately inform and guide tourists during their holiday, by transport advice, information on accessible cultural sites, and so on. In this regard, the analysis shows that managers have a habit of using their time in a useful way to organize and enrich the tourist service, searching for tourist information on the Internet, consulting promotional material, giving useful information to guests, exchanging advice and observations with the other B&B managers of the network.

Lastly, the tourism offer is characterized by an *image* that projects the spirit of the project, and its moral and social values into the market, promoting accessible tourism and a culture of disability and social inclusion. The tourist offer is characterized by its “sensitive” welcoming spirit based on the value of the family and it is aimed at *all* tourists. Moreover, the project promotes a different image of people with disabilities since in this case, they are “protagonists” of the tourist offer, not just “users” of tourist services as traditionally we are used to thinking when the debate on disability and accessibility involves the tourism sector. The initiative has had a certain echo in local communities, as evidenced by the press and online articles, and has received numerous national awards for its human, social and tourist value. This has given it wide visibility in Italy in recent years and has plausibly contributed to spreading its values.

Table 1. The Bed & Breakfasts of the Like your Home network

Bed & Breakfast	Type of disability	Distinctive B&B features	Beds (n.)
B&B Miranà (Napoli)	Cognitive disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-room flat • Skills in cognitive disability 	3
B&B Vamàrav (Cava de' Tirreni - Salerno)	Disability with walking problems due to rare genetic disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent apartment in the family villa • Skills in motor disability 	6
B&B "CoccolHome" (Napoli)	Cognitive disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apartment in a new building, with a standard lift, without architectural barriers • Skills in cognitive disability 	4
B&B RoseMary (Cava de' Tirreni - Salerno)	Disability for Down Syndrome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent apartment in the family villa • Skills in cognitive disability 	5
B&B Jamme (Napoli)	Autistic disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apartment in a building in the historic center of the city • Skills in cognitive disability 	4
B&B Rosso di sera (Gragnano - Napoli)	Motor and cognitive disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apartment in a building in the city center, with a standard lift and a slide for wheelchairs • Skills in motor and cognitive disability 	2

Source: Own elaboration

4. DISCUSSION

Two qualifying profiles of the entrepreneurial initiative can be highlighted. It seems to be an effective response to the need for social inclusion of people with disabilities and also represents an innovative way of offering accessible and quality tourist services.

With regard to the first aspect, the initiative by its nature and explicit purpose promotes the work placement of disadvantaged people, through self-employment, and favors the integration of young people with disabilities who very often "disappear" for the few opportunities present in the labor market after school or university training. According to [Balcazar et al. \(2014\)](#), entrepreneurship can become a viable employment option for people with disabilities. Our results demonstrate that it promotes a working life and social inclusion through the start-up and management of a B&B.

We can highlight two specific areas of intervention contemplated by the *Like your Home* project that promote social inclusion: professional training and support services. Attention to the professional training of young people with disabilities⁵ represents an important element considering both the lowest level of training of people with disabilities ([Alonso, 2014](#); [Martínez-León et al., 2019](#); [Park & Bouck, 2018](#); [World Health Organization, 2011](#)) and the absence in many cases of specific training ([Istat, 2021](#); [Maritz & Laferriere, 2016](#)). The lower levels of training represent a disadvantage in a possible path of entrepreneurship ([Renko et al., 2016](#)). [Rozali et al. \(2017\)](#) argue that providing education and training programs can encourage people with disabilities to engage in entrepreneurship. In this sense, the influencing factor on the entrepreneurship interest of people with disabilities is the learning condition that supports them in acquiring useful business knowledge ([Setiawan et al., 2022](#)). The targeted training provided by the *Like your Home* project enhances the knowledge and skills of future managers (see also [Migliaccio](#)

⁵ The *Like your Home* Disciplinary and the *Regulations* are delivered to managers at the end of the courses in order to have written information on management practices to be followed.

& Ummarino, 2022). In this way one of the barriers to entrepreneurship indicated by Maritz and Laferriere (2016) and Bakara et al. (2016), namely the lack of relevant business knowledge and skills, is directly addressed. Therefore, this study confirms the importance of identifying and strengthening certain skills of people with disabilities to start a business as argued by Olmedo-Cifuentes and Martínez-León (2019).

In addition to the professional training, a team of experts permanently supports the project, providing administrative assistance and managing communication and tourist promotion activities. The analysis has shown that the project must be properly presented to potential recipients, being quite innovative; the idea was considered “visionary” by a manager’s mother. Communication therefore plays a central role and conferences and public presentations of the project and its peculiar form of hospitality are periodically organized, where also the expressions of interest of families can be collected. Our results highlight that training, support, advice and guidance of private professionals are relevant to undertake an entrepreneurial path, similar to what Pagan pointed out (2009).

The objectives of work placement and social inclusion are also achieved by enhancing the connections with public and private institutions. A further project promoted by the *Like your Home* network, called “*HostAbility School/University*”, is connected to hospitality and enhances the collaboration with Italian universities for the training and employment of young people in the tourism sector. In particular, it is aimed at graduate students with disabilities (or special needs) interested in starting an accommodation business for the reception of Erasmus or non-residents students, visiting professors and, more generally, to intercept the tourist demand generated by congresses, fairs and events⁶ (for further details see Migliaccio & Ummarino, 2022). This project is favoring the expansion of the initiative on the national territory and the startup of new Bed & Breakfasts⁷.

In addition to their work placement, this initiative contributes to the quality of life improvement of B&B managers by virtue of the new social relationships and empowerment processes generated by the entrepreneurial path, two elements highlighted in the study by Moulaert et al. (2013). Indeed, these people have the primary need to carry out an activity that meets their socialization needs, even before the economic ones, and tourist hospitality represents a privileged area in which to develop social relationships. Also, the possibility of changing one’s condition influences the quality of life of people with disabilities (ANFFAS, 2015) and the project *Like your Home* offers this opportunity. It favors independent life projects by enhancing the skills of young managers. The start-up and management of the business are quite simple and streamlined under administrative and fiscal simplifications. Representing a form of integration to family income (B&B Italia Report, 2016), the activity does not generate a particularly significant income considering the expenses, but it has important familiar and social implications. The initiative supports the desire of each parent to guarantee their children’s work, autonomy and personal gratification; for parents, the B&B can be an economic activity that ensures a certain continuity and future stability, thus creating the conditions for greater family serenity.

⁶ It is also aimed at students of the Degree Course in Tourism Sciences interested in carrying out a period of tutoring and training at Bed & Breakfasts for marketing and communication activities.

⁷ Thanks to a public call from the Lazio Region won by the Capodarco cooperative, eighteen bed & breakfasts and/or tourist apartments will be created in Rome, managed by young people with disabilities with the support of the Tor Vergata University of Rome. A project for the opening of accommodation facilities in Benevento with the support of the UniSannio University, presented as part of the «Youth in the social» public call, is awaiting evaluation.

Moreover, self-employment may provide a realistic opportunity for a working life for the person with a disability and his/her social inclusion. Above all, this economic activity is well suited to some specific needs of people with disabilities (flexibility and part-time hours, health care, assistance from family members) since they can work without leaving their home environment. In this regard, Gouskova (2020) has stated that people with disabilities might choose self-employment because of better accommodations between the needs imposed by their disabilities and their work environment. The results of our study are consistent with this view. Also, Hagner and Davies (2002) have highlighted that the major disadvantage for business owners with cognitive disabilities is that it is difficult and labor-intensive to manage a business and also obtain the needed support and services.

Concerning the second aspect, another qualifying profile of this form of hospitality is the «intrinsic» accessibility of the accommodation and tourism services by virtue of the home characteristics and knowledge and skills of the host family.

The homes of people with disabilities are already equipped with the necessary aids for their needs, so where available for tourist accommodation, guests (with or without disabilities) can use existing structures and services to spend their holidays. Indeed, this type of business allows families to optimize certain costs incurred over time to make their homes accessible. In this way, an *optimization of housing and aids* is achieved: tourists who have the same disability as the B&B manager find in the accommodation the necessary aids for their specific needs. This form of hospitality presents an «intrinsic» accessibility also by virtue of specific skills, knowledge and personal experience of the host family. It can adopt the most appropriate behaviors for welcoming people with the same disability. Therefore, the project also provides for the *optimization of the skills* of parents and families. Furthermore, the manager and his/her family can adequately inform and advise tourists, promoting the territory and initiatives suitable for particular needs. Indeed, given their personal experience, they represent a valuable resource of knowledge of local tourist attractions and their degree of accessibility. In this perspective, people with disabilities can become the best communicator of his/her territory and offer their contribution, even original, to tourist promotion.

In Italy, non-hotel accommodations, such as B&Bs, are not subject to obligations relating to accessibility and therefore people with specific needs must often choose more expensive hotels. The *Like your Home* network intercepts this demand, by providing accessible accommodation and services at lower prices, and contribute to the reinforcement of the tourist offer (extra-hotel) in Italy that is widely desired (Agovino et al., 2017; Baldarelli & Cardillo, 2012; Migliaccio, 2019; Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 2013). In this sense, the *network* and these entrepreneurial experiences can be considered an innovative way of responding to growing market demand in Europe and Italy (Agovino et al., 2017; UNWTO, 2013). In particular, the *Like your Home* Bed & Breakfasts do not present physical and architectural barriers for guests (physical accessibility of the building); they offer adequate, complete and reliable information (Michopoulos & Buhalis, 2013) with particular reference to tourists who have the same disability, as well as useful advice during the holiday (accessibility of information); they are economically less expensive than hotels (economic accessibility); and they are characterized by a marked aptitude for welcoming *all* the guests and offering services fit for specific needs (psycho-social accessibility). In turn, this allows tourists with the same disability or special need to enjoy tourist experiences with a positive impact on their physical and emotional well-being, quality of life and social inclusion (Richards et al., 2011).

Naturally, the possibility of satisfying the access needs of people with the same disability as entrepreneurs make it possible to partially overcome the social barrier linked to the discrimination of potential consumers mentioned by [Maritz and Laferriere \(2016\)](#). In fact, in this case, the disability represents an element of strength and allows to attract tourists with the same disability and/or special need, making these accommodation facilities competitive. The risk of discrimination is present since the tourist offer is aimed at *all* potential visitors, regardless of special access needs. However, some information on the typology of visitors reveals that among travelers there are also “common” people who do not have any form of disability or special needs. In this regard, the project creator believes that this form of hospitality can certainly attract the interest of people whose activity is closely linked to the world of people with disabilities (for example, because they operate within the representative associations) and/or tourists particularly sensitive to the issue of disability. After all, in recent years there has been an increased sensitivity of tourists toward the issues of solidarity and social justice ([Picciotto, 2019](#)).

5. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The promotion of self-employment opportunities and entrepreneurship of people with disabilities is strongly recommended by the international community to national authorities in the tourism sector ([Declaration from the World Summit Destinations for All, 2014](#)). This paper has analyzed a specific initiative undertaken in Italy aimed at promoting entrepreneurial activities in some forms of non-hotel accommodation, i.e. Bed & Breakfasts. It has been funded by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and has received numerous awards and recognitions for its social, human and tourist value. This makes this practice particularly interesting and represents one of the reasons originating this research.

Through the analysis of a representative case study, the paper can offer a useful contribution by highlighting the distinctive elements of a business model that promotes the work placement of people with disabilities and their social inclusion, as well as accessible tourism.

First of all, the idea of the promoter able to develop a network business model and offer accessible tourist services in the non-hotel accommodation sector can be considered a key element. This entrepreneurial initiative increases the participation of people with disabilities people within society. Its strength is represented by the original idea of enhancing these people, placing their resources (homes, knowledge and specific skills) at the service of others. In this way they can offer their contribution to the community with dignity. The study highlights that the initial idea of promoting the entrepreneurship of people with disabilities has been translated into a concretely implemented entrepreneurial project, enhancing skills, relationships and available resources. Specifically, the skills and relationships of the project creator and the team of experts, together with the financial resources allocated by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of Italy, made it possible to translate the initial idea into concrete job opportunities for some young people with disabilities.

Secondly, the study has highlighted the aptitude of this form of entrepreneurship to promote social inclusion processes in the tourism sector from a dual perspective: provider and user of the hospitality service. From the *provider's* point of view, the initiative represents the tool that allows B&B managers with disabilities to carry out an independent autonomous activity capable of satisfying their needs for personal fulfillment and socialization. As pointed out by [Martín-León et al. \(2019\)](#), economic independence and autonomy contribute to effective participation and inclusion in society, promoting the integral development of persons with disabilities

and making these feel more socially useful. From the B&B *user's* point of view, all tourists (including people with disabilities) can benefit from facilities and services characterized by intrinsic accessibility, which allows them to overcome some of the barriers that typically make the tourist experience difficult (architectural and physical barriers, information and economic barriers, as well as cultural and attitudinal barriers). **Small and Darcy (2010)** have emphasized that social inclusion just occurs when all individuals can participate fully in tourism. In this perspective, the analysis has shown the possibility of creating a *virtuous combination* in which the work placement and social inclusion of people with disabilities are intertwined with the increased possibility of touristic use of territory.

This form of hospitality could help a country to diversify and enhance the tourist offer in the non-hotel accommodation sector by attracting new tourist flows. Unfortunately, data on tourist presence and occupancy of rooms are not available to date. This represents a limit of the research because it would have been appropriate and interesting to analyze also this aspect. Further research efforts are therefore needed in this direction, as well as the peculiarities and management criticalities of these structures could be investigated in the future.

With regard to the managerial implications, this study highlights the strengths of the business model and the critical issues to be overcome for a possible diffusion of similar entrepreneurial initiatives in other territorial contexts. As for the strengths, the following emerged from the analysis: i) the internal training of people with disabilities; ii) the provision of support services of a team of experts for the start-up and management of Bed & Breakfasts; iii) the development of the network, which promotes and fosters relationships among B&B managers and their families; iv) a unique brand, recognizable on the market and adequately enhanced in the promotional activities. The critical issues that emerged from the analysis essentially concern the need for adequate financial resources for the project communication and promotion activities among potential recipients, as well as for the management of the various activities functional to the start-up of the accommodation business. Regarding the first aspect, the entrepreneurial experience is new and the topic is delicate, therefore adequate communication of the project is a key aspect to devote energy to and invest in for the progressive diffusion of the initiative in other territorial contexts. As for the second aspect, adequate financial resources are clearly needed to: a) organize conferences and public presentations of the project; b) make visits to homes to ascertain their characteristics and functionality for hospitality accommodation, as well as the type of disability and/or special need; c) manage the selection and training phases of the participants, as well as start-up and tutoring; d) promote the project and the tourism offer.

Moreover, considering the novelty, the potentially interested families prefer to undertake the entrepreneurial path within an institutional framework outlined by a public call, which structures the procedure and makes financial resources available. Also, **Migliaccio and Ummarino (2022)** highlight the opportunity for public contributions to encourage investments, albeit modest, necessary for these entrepreneurial initiatives. After all, most entrepreneurs with disabilities use a combination of personal and public investments to capitalize on their business (**Hagner & Davies, 2002**).

The case study confirms the possibility that disabilities do not preclude the possibility of undertaking an entrepreneurial activity in the presence of specific contextual conditions (**Alonso, 2014; Martínez-León et al., 2019; Migliaccio & Ummarino, 2022**) that favor these experiences (specifically, targeted institutional policies and cultural sensitivity). Targeted public policies

at the national and/or local level that explicitly support initiatives of this type are certainly appropriate, thus overcoming some of the previously mentioned barriers (improvement of institutional policies and inadequate funding). We, therefore, agree with Pagan (2009) and Toldra and Santos (2013) who underline how policymakers should encourage and ensure self-employment among disabled people in order to improve their employment opportunities. The main form of state support for people with disabilities in the field of entrepreneurship are grants (Bekmansurov et al., 2019). We believe that other financial support measures (such as the availability of loans at reduced interest rates) are also desirable and often necessary to promote the self-employment of people with disabilities, especially considering their lower economic level and the difficulties to obtain funding to start business projects (De Klerk, 2008; Martínez-León et al., 2019; Pagan, 2009; Renko et al., 2016). Indeed, as specified in the *World Report on Disability* (World Health Organization, 2011), where the informal economy predominates and the support of friends and family has its relevance, it becomes important to facilitate access to microcredit through awareness, accessible information and customized credit terms.

In conclusion, the authors believe that adequate attention to the specific needs of people with disabilities is appropriate to plan medium and long-term targeted actions to promote social inclusion and fully implement their citizenship rights. In our opinion, the entrepreneurial initiative presented here represents an interesting solution from this perspective and it has also significant cultural implications. The project promotes a different image of people with disabilities and the dissemination of their stories in the community, which is one of the ways to increase public awareness of disability (World Health Organization, 2011). It aims to overcome a well-known prejudice that considers people with disabilities “consuming wealth”, rather than highlighting the concrete possibility of “generating social, human and tourist value” with these entrepreneurial experiences.

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