

Good evening. I need tools for my two disabilities, to read my glasses and for English some notes.

Two words to introduce NATIVE, the network of Hotels with Charm and Accessible Tourism, working from an accessible web platform and providing hotels with easy tools for a more comfortable stay for clients with any kind of physical limitations.

I was going to apologize for having chosen this headline for my speech, but then I realized that no, that because if the minister of tourism of any country has or acquires a disability is not a divine punishment, and even less can become a human punishment. Any of those present in this corner can start having a disability beginning today, by accident, by age limitations, and not for that reason lose rights. Do we lose rights from the day we have a mobility limitation?

Does our society allow with no shame that a citizen who pays taxes and is human like everyone else lose their rights when they lose mobility? We may lose the ability to climb a mountain for ourselves, to cross a river by swimming, but not the right to go to the city center by public transport that we pay through taxes, because cities and public spaces are designed by people with moral criteria. Or less moral.

It is collected and assumed by the Charter of the United Nations Human Rights that we all have equal rights, and is articulated by law that everyone is entitled to access to public spaces, museums, restaurants, hotels, cinemas, buses. Priority should be public funding of universal accessibility, rather than public support for theater performances, for example, a private consumer product. Probably is not the best example. Public financing of political parties it might be better.

*“White Only”* Philosophy in the southern states and in South Africa was beaten in thirty years, not only politicians and laws decided it was not possible to make the skin color an argument to treat people differently in public or private services. Society also responded and assumed that we all have equal rights and live under the same sun. But disability in the XXI century is still a stigma. Politicians and laws have articulated a set of rules, but those laws and regulations are not met in most cases.

Because society and entrepreneurs has not totally assimilated that people with limitations are people with rights. Many hotels in the world don't have any of their rooms suitable for a customer in a wheelchair, or blind, or deaf. Wheelchairs, in many luxury hotels, go in the back door, like supermarket merchandise, and don't use the lift but the freight elevator. Are those hoteliers satisfied to put their 80 year old mothers in the freight lift?

I put two examples that seem to me dramatic. In this same WTM 2012 I spoke with the manager of a château in the Loire, 4 stars luxury, own golf, Caudalie wine spa and Michelin star restaurant. 2 rooms suitable for wheelchair. To incorporate his hotel in the NATIVE website available in 6 languages and built in accessible code to be surfed by all, even by blind people, users with Parkinson's, arthritis and other limitations, including the hotel photo report, representation in international fairs, accessibility audit, press promotion ...

it cost him the price of a room and a half. At the fair he was delighted with the idea, marveled at our solutions, such as Braille and relief plans for clients with low vision, transparent braille signage, web that speaks six languages and at different speeds, or translated into Braille metallic dots text... "please, send me all the information, we would like to join NATIVE".

The week after the fair, we sent the proposal. His response was "Congratulations on your commendable work. We thought it was free". Free Translators, photographer free, accessible code webmaster free, travels to fairs and free stands. In short, a luxury hotel manager, university-educated, well-traveled was linking accessibility with charity.

And we can consider that his hotel, being invisible on the Internet for the 400 million people who can't navigate if the website is not accessible, wears a sign in the main entrance that says something like "people with disabilities are invited to find a more appropriate place for your vacation". Then, "White only", again.

Another dramatic example in France is the owner of a design hotel, 40 rooms, 4 accessible to wheelchairs. The week after our visit was marrying a girl in a wheelchair. The cost of a year in NATIVE was 2 rooms. He also said *No* to be visible on the Internet for all and to have visual accessibility solutions, among others, to his hotel.

In the other hand, Jordi Ferre, the manager of the design hotel Gran Claustre, in Tarragona, Spain, when he entered NATIVE and we inform him not to worry about the aesthetics of the hotel because braille signs were transparent, that would not be very visible , said: "on the contrary, I want them to be visible, I want our customers to know that we care for all our guests". Thank you very much for that phrase, Jordi, that's the spirit to spread.

In Costa Rica there is no license to open a hotel if you don't have a room suitable for wheelchairs. In Brussels, political heart of Europe, we can find hotels with 100 rooms but not adapted room for clients with special needs.

The numbers are conclusive, more than 400 million people searching for hotels with some accessibility, and travel in most cases accompanied, meaning that bill customers of accessible hotels more than double the standard customer invoice. Many of them spend more time than average in the hotel, so they are also customers for restaurant services, spa and massage, for example.

Ultimately, the customer volume of business with a mobility limitation exceeds this of the customer without limitations. That, unfortunately, is an element that we have to make clear to skeptical hoteliers.

To the surprise of many, a study conducted in Italy in 2011 on accessible tourism 15,000 users revealed that the highest valuation services of a hotel was, for 95% of them, the treatment received. No physical elements of accessibility, but the personal treatment.

With respect to accessibility legislation, this is developed in most of the developed countries, but with different criteria, such as the degree of the ramps (in northern Spain are 12% and south of 14%, then you must take a stronger breakfast in Andalusia than in the Basque Country). Also signs and technical standards are different depending on the countries.

Universal signage is required as universal STOP signal. Not very complicated, but we still don't have a standard. Welcome the standards, but the personal touch will remain an essential element of accessible tourism. It is people who apply the law or breach it. They violate the laws all public spaces that show the sign "White only" because they put ten steps as the only access, those who couldn't wake-up a deaf client in case of fire, those which impeded its customers to receive the information of their websites on internet, in accessible code.

NATIVE currently has 60 hotels in Italy, Spain, Portugal and Morocco. It's an NGO and aims to be an international reference of beautiful hotels in which find the will to do more pleasant the stay of customers who have the enjoyment of leisure time a little more complicated than us.

Our web structure, in 6 languages, not only complies with the international standard W3C WAI web accessibility, but also offers new tool Inlusite to navigate by blowing into the microphone of the headset, and other solutions. We could say that today, professor Stephen Hawking can find black holes in space but not a nice hotel on the Internet unless he looks for in a web platform as NATIVE. Today you can find hotels in NATIVE website even without hands. It looks fantastic. And we are thrilled that we were able, as journalists, not to communicate anymore, for all but not for a few.