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INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

I have wandered all my life, and I have travelled; the difference between the two is this -- we wander for distraction, but we travel for fulfilment.

Hilaire Belloc (1870 - 1953) English writer, poet

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Some people travel for diplomatic reasons, some for business, but the majority travel for pleasure, and leisure, and the thrill of exploring new and different countries (Rosen, 2001; Saayman, 2000). For the person who does not suffer from any form of disability, travelling by air, or by rail, or by bus, or taking a tour, or enjoying a river barge excursion, or taking a cruise, poses no problem. Staying in a hotel or resort and enjoying all that the facility has to offer, poses no problem. The opportunity to relive history by visiting the sights that have had an influence on mankind poses no problem. But for persons with a disability, the chance to enjoy these same pleasures is very limited. This limitation is not because of their disability, but because of the failure of many governments and product owners to address the problem of making all forms of transportation and accommodation accessible within their own country, and even when a country adopts laws that mandates that transportation be accessible to all, there is no universality to these rules and regulations (Rosen, 2001).

The lack of facilities in South Africa for people with disabilities means that the country cannot take full advantage of tourism for travellers with disabilities, a sector that has the potential to significantly increase South Africa's tourism receipts. Due to the increased awareness by society at large of people with disabilities and the less than user-friendly amenities available to them, it is now the opportune time to examine the constraints and to develop opportunities for travel and tourism disabilities in South Africa for people with (Snyman, 2000).

Access varies depending on disability and goes well beyond the physical type alone. Darcy (quoted by UNESCAP, 2002) has characterised access from three main dimensions:

- a) **Physical access**, which involves people with disabilities requiring the use of wheelchairs or walking aids and requires the provision of, for example, handrails, ramps, lifts and lowered counters
- b) **Sensory access**, which involves people with hearing or sight impairment, requiring the provision of, for example, tactile markings, signs and labels, hearing augmentation-listening systems and audio cues for lifts and lights
- c) **Communication access**, which involves those people who have difficulty with the written word, vision, speech, and language problems.

In the current context of transformation in South Africa, disability has been embarked on as a national priority issue (Bhagwanjee & Stewart, 2001). Since the advent of the Bill of Rights a new and better awareness has been developed with regard to the people with disabilities, amongst others. Legislation has also assisted to bring about a change in society's attitude towards people with disabilities (Cavinato & Cuckovich, 1992:47). The Constitutional Law of the Republic of Southern Africa (act 108/1996) states that Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedom to all members of society.

Disability is a global phenomenon of huge proportion, eliciting growing local, national and international concern (Bhagwanjee & Stewart, 2001). According to Van Horn (2001), more than 600 million people in the world have some type of disability.

In this study both travellers and tourists with disabilities will be referred to. Whether one is a tourist or a traveller with a disability, the same services and accessibility are required. The main goal of this chapter is to give information on how this study is going to be executed and planned.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

People with disabilities have a right to, and want to enjoy travel and leisure experiences. However, their travel experiences are still characterised by transportation constraints, inaccessible accommodation and tourism sites, and inadequate customer services (UNESCAP, 2002).

People with disabilities have a significantly different tourism experience. For many travellers with disabilities, a situation like the following is a familiar one: public transportation is difficult and often not accommodating, and/or hotel rooms do not always meet accessibility codes. Many constraints and barriers exist, and general physical access is still the major constraint encountered by people with disabilities (Darcy & Daruwalla, 1999). Avoiding barriers to travel require great skill and patience on the part of the traveller (Turco *et al.*, 1998:79).

Tourists with disabilities, to a greater extent than hitherto possible, wish to integrate in the tourism mainstream, notwithstanding the numerous architectural and transportation barriers to their mobility they still have to put up with. This is further aggravated by the fact that information about the choice of appropriate tourism opportunities is not readily accessed by the prospective tourist. Hence there is a need to step up communicative marketing efforts in the field of tourism for travellers with disabilities, to enable broader dissemination of available tourism opportunities adapted to specific and individual needs (Wilken, 1997:121).

Pam Taylor (quoted by Sheridan, 2001) of the Cape-based company, Flamingo Adventures Tours and Disabled Ventures, says that there remain difficulties in arranging suitable accommodation for larger groups, given that a few hospitality establishments conform to offering minimum accessibility standards, which includes fully roll-in showers as an example, though most of the hotels built in the last two years have one designated “disabled-friendly” room per 100. Pam Taylor also says that their company always take along their own specialised equipment and it is often very difficult to find suitable accommodation, especially in the smaller guesthouses, which are in high demand by travellers with disabilities.

According to Rama Chari, executive officer, the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) (quoted by Sharma, 1999), the environment that is being created today has not kept in sight the needs of people with disabilities at all. Whether it is day-to-day access to public transport, schools and colleges or access to government buildings, there are many restrictions. Even the staircases are not meant for people with physical disabilities.

South Africa’s inbound travel market for people with disabilities is generally regarded as one that is currently untapped, a “fledgling market with huge potential”, according to Eugene Armer of Wilro Tours (quoted by Sheridan, 2001).

Accessibility can be used in relation to three main forms of human activity: mobility, communication and understanding. All people, regardless of their functional or mental abilities, face barriers in all these areas: moving, communicating with other people or obtaining information, understanding messages, instructions, machines or systems (Autonomia-Europe, 2001).

The particular problem for people with disabilities is that they face barriers to access to a great extent and often on a regular or systematic basis, which can lead to varying degrees of discomfort, dissatisfaction, annoyance, pain or even injury. The effects of such barriers can also extend to social exclusion, disempowerment, stigmatisation, and negative psychological consequences for the individual concerned. Society's failure to remove barriers to mobility, communication and understanding is symptomatic of the unequal consideration given to those with reduced abilities. The opposite is also true: every barrier to access that falls, takes us a step closer to achieving an equal society (Autonomia-Europe, 2001).

Little is known about tourism patterns and experiences of people with physical disabilities (Darcy, 1998). It is necessary to guarantee access to places where people with disabilities can go on holiday by themselves, or with their families and friends. Although there has been progress in the tourism industry in providing facilities for people with disabilities, awareness of this fact has not been properly communicated to the millions of potential users who could, and would, avail themselves of these services (Bas, 1992:7).

The tourism industry is not in a position to fulfil the needs of people with disabilities in South Africa. The problem could stem from a total unawareness, a lack of interest or even ignorance with regard to the needs of tourists with disabilities and thereby disregarding the economic contribution that tourists with disabilities can make to the industry itself. If one takes into consideration how many people with disabilities there are in South Africa, then an effort should be made by the government and the tourism industry to take cognisance of the problem and to put in a concerted effort to acknowledge that people with disabilities have similar needs when it comes to recreation and travel, and to provide for these needs (Snyman, 2000).

To create tourism that caters to the full range of consumer needs, there is a need to improve the usability of transportation, accommodation, tourism sites and services, and tour programmes (Anon, 2000b).

The question that this research will attempt to address is: **What are the barriers and constraints faced by travellers/tourists with disabilities?**

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 Goal

To determine what the barriers and constraints are for people with disabilities.

1.3.2 Objectives

The objectives are directed towards the achievement of the goal of the study and are as follows:

- To establish the economic importance of tourists with disabilities for the South African tourism industry
- To establish the importance of a universal design in facilities
- To make recommendations for the improvement of tourism marketing for people with disabilities.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 Literature Study

The study is based on articles, books and an Internet survey. Literature and the following databases were used:

- Library database
- Internet
- RSAT (SA Magazines)
- Interviews with people with disabilities.

1.4.2 Empirical Research

The empirical research was conducted in South Africa during September 2002. Questionnaires were handed out to various sectors in the tourism industry, for example the accommodation sector (hotels, guesthouses, Bed and Breakfasts), tour operators and travel agencies. A quantitative research was

used during the empirical research. The aim of a quantitative research method is to generalise about a specific population, based on the results of a representative sample of that population (Martins *et al.*, 1999:125). A systematic random sampling was used and is unique in that all elements in the population have an equal chance of being included in the sample (Martins *et al.*, 1999:257). As a result of poor response, a convenience sampling method was then used and a hundred questionnaires were handed out and received. A convenience sampling means that respondents are selected on the basis of convenience or availability (Martins *et al.*, 1999:253).

The questionnaire covers the following aspects:

- Demographic information of the various tourism product owners
- General information for example:
 - Market potential of tourists with disabilities
 - Barriers and constraints
 - Accessibility of facilities or transport
 - Marketing and a universal design.

A 5 point Likert scale was used where:

1 = strongly disagree and
5 = strongly agree
or
1 = very poor and
5 = excellent.

The sum of these statements reveals the attitude to or perception of a given subject or institution (Martins *et al.*, 1999:228).

Analysis of the data was done at the Statistical Service of the University of Potchefstroom for Christian Higher Education in Potchefstroom, South Africa. The statistical analysis includes descriptive statistics and correlation factors.

Graphs and tables are devised to support the findings following the conclusion of the empirical process.

1.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following concepts were used frequently, therefore it is necessary to define them.

1.5.1 People with disabilities

According to the Employment Equity Act (55/1998), “people with disabilities” means people who have a long-term or recurring physical or mental impairment which substantially limits their prospects of entry into, or advancement in, employment.

According to the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) 1990, an individual with a disability is a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. Disability can also be defined as an impairment that hinders an individual in achieving full physical, mental, or social potential and that is hampering in one or more areas of life, such as education, work, or family relationships (Saayman *et al.*, 2001).

1.5.1.1 The Deaf

According to Smal (2000:1), The Deaf Federation of South Africa states in its “Memorandum: Freedom of Information Bill” dated 9 February 1999 the following: “Exact prevalence and figures on Deafness is not available, but Deafness is considered the largest single disability in the RSA. It is estimated that at least 10% of the SA populations has some degree of hearing loss.” It is further estimated that in South Africa 1.6 million Deaf and extremely hard of hearing people use Sign Language as first language.

Table 1.1 Prevalency figures on people that are Deaf and hard of hearing in South Africa based on Central Statistical Services – 1995 Mid year estimates

Province	Total Population	Profoundly Deaf (1%)	Extremely Hard of Hearing (3%)	Total
Western Cape	3 721 200	37 212	111 636	148 848
Eastern Cape	6 481 300	64 813	194 439	259 252
Northern Cape	739 730	7 397	22 192	29 589
Free State	2 782 470	27 825	83 474	111 299
KwaZulu-Natal	8 713 100	87 131	261 393	348 524
North West	3 351 790	33 518	100 554	134 072
Gauteng	7 048 300	70 483	211 449	281 932
Mpumalanga	3 007 040	30 070	90 211	120 281
Limpopo Province	5 397 200	53 972	161 916	215 888
Total	41 242 130	412 421	1 237 264	1 649 685

(DEAFSA - The Deaf Federation of South Africa, 2001b)

- **Hearing Loss**

According to DEAFSA (2001a), hearing loss in general is the impairment of the sense of hearing to an extent that it interferes with communication and affects the social, emotional, educational and vocational aspects of life of an individual.

People with hearing loss could be divided into two main groups:

- 1. Hard of hearing**

This term refers to a person with a minimum to moderate hearing loss whose primary mode of communication is the spoken language and who could in most circumstances benefit from the use of a hearing aid.

- 2. Deaf**

People that are deaf can be divided into two sub-groups depending on the time the hearing loss set in:

- a) Prelingual/congenital deafness**

This refers to a person who was born Deaf or who became deaf before the acquisition of the language of the immediate family. Such a person who has a moderate-severe to profound hearing loss belongs to the Deaf culture and uses Sign Language as the prime mode of communication.

b) Postlingual/deafened

This refers to a person who acquired moderately-severe to profound hearing loss after the acquisition of a spoken language and who is dependent upon the visual sense for additional information for the purpose of spoken communication (DEAFSA, 2001a). The big problem is their lack of verbal language and the ability to communicate in it (Le Roux, 1999:22).

1.5.1.2 The blind

According to the 1996 Census, the South African population is estimated to be around 37 859 000. The accepted prevalence of blindness is 0,644%. This means that there are approximately 243 812 people in South Africa that are blind and around 21 906 people that are partially sighted. This puts the total number of people with visually disabilities in South Africa at 365 718.

The primary cause of blindness in South Africa is cataract, which accounts for 59% of the total blind population. Glaucoma accounts for 22% and all other causes make up the remaining 19% (SANCB, 2001).

The question remains: how does one determine if someone is blind or has low vision? In Table 1.2 the categories of vision and a description of each is given.

Table 1.2 Categories and description of vision

Category of vision		Visual Acuity (with best possible correction)	Synonymous and Alternative Definitions
Normal Vision	• None	• 0.8 or better (5/6, 6/7, 5. 20/25, or better)	• Range of normal vision
	• Slight	• Less than 0.8 (<5/6, 6/7, 5. 20/25)	• Near – normal vision
Low vision	• Moderate	• Less than 0.3 (<5/15, 6/18 or 6/20, or 20/80 or 20/70)	• Moderate low vision
	• Severe	• Less than 0.12 (<5/40, 6/48 or 20/160)	• Severe low vision – legal blindness in some countries; count fingers at 6m or less
Blindness	• Profound	• Less than 0.05 (<5/100, 3/60 or 20/400)	• Profound low vision or moderate blindness – count fingers at less than 3m
	• Near-total	• Less than 0.02 (<5/300, 1/60 or 3/200)	• Severe or near-total blindness, count fingers at 1m or less, or hand motions at 5m or less, or light perception
	• Total	• No light perception (NLP)	• Total blindness (including absence of eye)

(SANCB - The South African Council for the Blind, 2001)

1.5.2 Tourist

A tourist is a person who contributes an economic input with regard to any other area than that in which he/she generally lives and works. Or a tourist is a person who voluntarily visits a place, away from his normal abode for a period of at least 24 hours, but for less than a year (Saayman, 1997:3-4).

Types of tourists can be distinguished on the following:

- Reasons for travelling
- Length of stay
- Place of origin
- Group size
- Method of travelling

(Saayman, 1997:3-4).

According to the Tourism White Paper (SA, 1996), a tourist is a person who travels away from home, staying away for at least one night. A tourist can be a domestic tourist (for example a resident of Johannesburg staying for one night in Durban), a regional tourist (a visitor from Zimbabwe spending one or more nights in the Free State) or an overseas tourist (a resident of Germany staying for one or more nights in the North West Province).

An international tourist is a person who travels to a country other than that in which he/she has his/her usual residence, but outside her/his usual environment, for at least one night but for less than one year, and the main purpose of whose visit is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the country visited. Due to markedly different travel and expenditure patterns, a distinction is drawn between international tourists and tourists from the rest of Africa.

1.5.3 Travellers

According to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (1995:1485) a traveller is defined as a person who travels or is travelling.

1.5.4 Tourism

According to the White Paper on Tourism (SA, 1996) tourism entails all travel for whatever purpose that results in one or more nights being spent away from home. According to Lickorish & Jenkins (1997:2), the concept tourism refers to the phenomenon arising from temporary visits (or stays away

from home) outside the normal place of residence for any reason other than furthering an occupation remunerated from within the place visited.

Tourism is the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction among tourists, business suppliers, host governments, host communities, origin governments, universities, community colleges and non-governmental organisations, in the process of attracting, transporting, hosting and managing these tourists and other visitors (Weaver & Oppermann, 2000:3).

1.5.5 Tourism marketing

Tourism marketing is the process through which a tourism company first anticipates consumer needs, then manages and satisfies those needs to achieve sales. It is also the way in which the company identifies what consumers want and how it makes sure that those requirements can be met in a profitable and efficient manner, and in a way that satisfies consumers on a long-term basis. Tourism and hospitality marketing involves finding out what tourists want (marketing research), developing suitable offerings (product development), telling them what is available (promotions), and providing instructions on where they can buy the offerings (place), so they in turn can receive value (pricing), and the tourist and hospitality organisation make money (George, 2001:19).

1.6 CHAPTER SEQUENCE

This study has five chapters. Chapter 1 focuses on the Introduction and Problem statement. Chapter 2 aims at a universal design in tourism and tourism marketing. Chapter 3 entails the barriers and constraints faced by travellers with disabilities. Chapter 4 will reflect the results of the survey. Chapter 5 will reach conclusions and make certain recommendations.