It has never been, and never will be easy work! But the road that is built in hope is more pleasant to the traveller than the road built in despair, even though they both lead to the same destination.

Marion Zimmer Bradley (1930 - _) US novelist

3.1 INTRODUCTION

It's everywhere: in a parking lot, in shopping malls, or on a restroom door - the icon for travellers/people with disabilities (Barker, 1997). One serious drawback is that the international symbol for access is used at random and is therefore not very reliable. As regards information, the word accessible should be defined and use more precisely (Autonomia-Europe, 2001).

Barriers to satisfactory tourism experiences by people with disabilities are economic, physical and attitudinal. These barriers are linked and operate in an interactive way to reinforce the significant disadvantages experienced by people with disabilities. In addition to much greater economic constraints (e.g. attendant costs, equipment hire, lack of budget accommodation, low employment rates), other major constraints to travel faced by people with physical disabilities include access to physical infrastructure needs, accessible accommodation, access at the destination as well as to attractions, and the lack of accurate information. The culmination of these constraints is a loss of enjoyment of the tourism experience (Darcy & Daruwalla, 1999).

In recent years much attention has been given to the rights of people with disabilities. Legislation and efforts of many consumer groups have spurred facilities modifications to ease access for people with physical impairments, and affirmative action to increase employment opportunities and television programming (for example DEAFTV and News broadcasting with a translator in sign language) to include realistic role portrayals for people with disabilities.

These developments – resulting from the recognition that people with disabilities are indeed valuable and equal members of society – have helped people who have disabilities to lead happier,
more productive lives. The hospitality industry is also beginning to respond to the needs of travellers with disabilities and recreationists. However, many able-bodied people have negative or uninformed attitudes, which may arise and interfere when they interact with a person with a disability. This may arise from fear of someone who is different in any way or simply form a lack of knowledge about disabilities. Despite good intentions and educational programmes, negative stereotypes and callous behaviour remain (Parks, 1985).

An issue relating to accommodation facilities and amenities concerns the different types of disability to be provided for. Indeed, the needs for people with vision or hearing impairment or intellectual disability are quite different from those with a physical disability. Most of hotels provide facilities and amenities responding more to the special needs of people with physical disabilities, and specifically those in wheelchairs. For example, among hotels that offer wheelchair access, few provide information available in Braille or in audiovisual format (UNESCAP, 2002).

This chapter focuses on the barriers and constraints faced by travellers with disabilities. Firstly, the chapter looks at barriers faced by each group of travellers with disabilities and then at more general barriers and constraints as pointed out by literature (Franklin & Bourquin, 2000; Passini & Rainville, 1992; Darcy & Daruwalla, 1999; Smith, 1987; Snow, 2001 ; Turco et al., 1998).

The chapter also features case studies on what is done to make South Africa more accessible to travellers with disabilities.

### 3.2 TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

The persons envisaged to fall within the ambit of the study are people that are visually and hearing impaired as well as people with physical disabilities.

#### 3.2.1 The blind

For travellers that are visually impaired to maintain independence, they often need to travel in the community. An important aspect of such travel is being able to cross a street safely and effectively. These travellers, therefore, would benefit from knowing how to obtain assistance for crossing streets more quickly, without diminishing safety (Franklin & Bourquin, 2000).
Public transportation is a major key to independence, productivity, and community participation for people who are blind or severely visually impaired — most of whom are not able to drive a motor vehicle because of their visual impairment. Mass transit services such as buses, trains, or special paratransit vans are frequently the only options blind or visually impaired people have for travelling independently to school, work, health care facilities, shopping centres and a host of other places in the community (AFB, 2002).

Difficulties with way finding are hurdles that travellers with visually impairments have to overcome to lead an autonomous and socially integrated life. Mobility is usually acquired through training and mobility courses. Even after mastering the necessary skills, way finding for a person with a visual impairment requires a constant investment of emotional and mental energy. Way finding is demanding; it is not uncommon for active people with visual impairments to feel exhausted and burned out when reaching middle life (Passini & Rainville, 1992:995).

People with visual impairments face a different kind of challenge. In order for them to orient themselves in a city, they need the streets to be levelled or not bumpy. In this way, people with visual impairments can "feel" the streets with their cane. A person with a visual impairment often feels afraid when crossing streets. The reason is that people with visual impairment are unable to see when the light is red or green. They rely on some kind of sound to announce that the light has turned green and they can safely cross the street. If, however, a person with a disability wishes to visit a tourist facility, they would have to investigate whether these places are accessible (Takahashi, 2001).

Guide dogs, personal readers, Braille print, Perkins machines and tape recorders have all contributed significantly to enhanced mobility, independence and quality of life of men and women who are blind or have severely restricted vision and, for many, remain indispensable (Oliver, 1997:103).

At the Transoranje Institute in South Africa, pedestrian crossings and traffic lights are equipped with sound signal mechanisms so that pedestrians with visual impairments can know when a traffic light is red or green (Coetsee, 1998:10).
3.2.2 The Deaf

The international tourist that is Deaf, although disabled with regard to hearing, still has the same interests and demands of a normal hearing tourist. If the communication disability is overcome, he is just another tourist. The size of the Deaf market is therefore the only determinant of the potential for Deaf international tourists to Southern Attica. Based on an assumed 1% profoundly Deaf and 3% “extremely hard of hearing”, the Deaf population internationally is estimated at 240 Million people (4% of the UN’s estimate of a 6 billion world population), based on the same ratios applicable to the total world population (Smal, 2000). According to Le Roux (1999:22) a big problem for the Deaf is their lack of verbal language and the ability to communicate in it.

A person’s failure to respond to a spoken request or warning may be the result of an inability to hear. There are several ways to communicate with a person who is hearing-impaired, such as lip reading, finger spelling, sign language, writing and electronic instruments (Parks, 1985). The integration of people with disabilities is often thought of in purely physical terms. Linguistic integration must also be considered, including acceptance of sign language for the deaf and hard of hearing (ELTIS, 2001).

3.2.3 People with physical disabilities

Unlike the rest of the community who can transfer to alternative venues if not satisfied with their choice of establishment, people with physical disabilities do not have this option because of a limited number of rooms available (Darcy & Daruwalla, 1999).

It is not easy for people with disabilities to go out and visit public places because very often public facilities are not completely safe for them. For example, a person in a wheelchair might be apprehensive about navigating the streets and sidewalks as they could easily tip over if the surface is not flat or wide enough. Ramps on sidewalks are a convenient solution for them (Takahashi, 2001).

3.3 MOST COMMON BARRIERS AND CONSTRAINTS FACED BY TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Barriers to tourism for people with disabilities can be categorised as intrinsic, environmental and interactive. Economic issues and the ability to travel are endemic to the whole notion of travel. However, they affect people with disabilities in a more profound way. This is more so to people...
with higher support needs who require physical infrastructure and personal care assistance to accommodate their travel and leisure experiences.

Economic circumstances have an impact on the type of and variety of consumer experiences people can choose from but it is not the only or most frequently cited constraint for people with physical disabilities. Economic constraints may well be a major issue for people with other disabilities, especially those reliant on social benefits for income (Darcy & Daruwalla, 1999).

3.3.1 Lack of knowledge

Information dissemination appears to be the one effective means of opening travel and tourism for people with disabilities. This includes not only the availability but the quality of information. Current systems include travel and tour agencies and special documents published by major providers of services. Others are available through public agencies. Many persons and organisations have suggested that greater use of special support groups and public agencies dealing with disabilities also be used as media for information dissemination.

Travel and tourism by travellers with disabilities require a systematic approach in its planning and delivering. Though no information is available in the propensity of people with disabilities to travel, this sector of the travel industry represents a not insignificant market segment. Enhanced development and dissemination of specific and useful information would perhaps provide the most effective means for increasing opportunities for both the traveller and the service provider (Cavinato & Cuckovich, 1992).

According to Anfield (quoted by Snyman, 2001), a member of Rolling SA visited Cape Town and decided to take an offer of flight, accommodation and car rental that was advertised at a very reasonable rate. The travel agents were very helpful and very insistent that the hotel was wheelchair accessible which put his mind at ease. To his amazement the travel agent did not know at all what she was selling, nor did the hotel know what they were doing when they fitted out the suite for people with disabilities and boasted that they are wheelchair accessible. Therefore he does not think it is the people with disability’s fault for not travelling. It is the duty of the travel agents and hoteliers to be educated to what is or is not required, not the assumption that it is fit for the use people with disabilities just because they put a ramp in or a bar around the toilet.
According to Woolf (quoted by Snyman, 2002), another barrier that occurs is that, when travelling, bathroom facilities for travellers with disabilities are often locked at pit stops. It is then that the challenge begins - you do not know who has the key to unlocked the door.

Mobility, (usually defined perhaps too narrowly) provides for wheelchair access, and also includes the needs of persons requiring assistance with lifting, accessing doors, eating, and use of bath facilities. Sight is often limited to Braille elevator floor markers and menus. However, hotel and facility layout information is often lacking for persons with blindness. Access is also very limited in air and ground transportation and hotels for persons communicating by way of sign language (Cavinato & Cuckovich, 1992).

3.3.2 Attitudinal barriers
An attitude is a feeling or emotion which a person has toward a fact, situation or a person. Awareness is the knowledge or perception about a situation, object or person. Attitudinal barriers are a way of thinking or feeling that blocks or limits people’s perception to the potential to people with disabilities to be capable, independent individuals. Attitudinal barriers include prejudice, ignorance, fear, insensitivity, bigotry, stereotyping, misconception, discrimination, dislike, insecurity, discomfort, tension and intolerance (Parks, 1985).

In the White Paper on an Integrated Disability Strategy (SA, 1997), one of the greatest hurdles faced by people with disabilities when trying to access mainstream programmes is negative attitudes. The change in attitudes is not something that happens automatically or spontaneously. A changing is a complex process, which involves moving in a series of stages, from one set of attitudes to another. Public education and awareness are central to the changing of attitudes.

Although attitudes are not necessarily manifested in overt behaviour toward the attitude object, there is ample evidence that the behaviour of many non-disabled people demonstrates negative public attitudes toward individuals with disabilities. Attitudinal barriers also encompass paternalistic attitudes that may arise from pity or from an able-bodied person’s desire to demonstrate positive feelings towards people with disabilities. Paternalistic attitudes result in solicitous behaviour such as giving excessive praise for accomplishments or providing unneeded physical assistance. Such behaviour convey the inaccurate message “that people with disabilities lack competence, maturity, and the capacity for independence” (Smith, 1987:381-382).
### 3.3.2.1 People First Language

In society, “handicapped” and “disabled” are all-encompassing terms that are misused. People with hearing or vision don’t need handicapped parking or restrooms. Many people with physical disabilities do need accessible parking and restrooms. Using “handicapped” and even “disabled” typically evoke feelings (sadness, pity, fear and more) and create a stereotypical perception that people with disabilities are all alike. All people with brown hair are not alike. All people who have disabilities are not alike. In fact, people with disabilities are more like people without disabilities than different from them. When misusing these words, barriers created by negative and stereotypical attitudes are reinforced. Disability labels are simply socio-political terms that provide a passport to services (Snow, 2001). Using People’s First Language (Table 3.1) can influence society’s views and treatment of people with disabilities.

**Table 3.1: Examples of People First Language**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAY</th>
<th>INSTEAD OF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People with disabilities</td>
<td>The handicapped or disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He has a cognitive disability</td>
<td>He’s mentally retarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She has autism</td>
<td>She’s autistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He has Down syndrome</td>
<td>He’s Down’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She has a learning disability</td>
<td>She’s learning disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He has a physical disability</td>
<td>He’s a quadriplegic/crippled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She’s of short stature</td>
<td>She’s a dwarf (or midget)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He has an emotional disability</td>
<td>He’s emotionally disturbed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She uses a wheelchair or mobility chair</td>
<td>She’s wheelchair bound, she’s confined to a wheelchair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He receives special education services</td>
<td>He’s in special education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical kids without disabilities</td>
<td>Normal or healthy kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congenital disability</td>
<td>Birth defect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain injury</td>
<td>Brain damaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible parking</td>
<td>Handicapped parking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She needs... or she uses...</td>
<td>She has a problem with...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many descriptions for example “special needs” need to be changed. A new way of thinking must be practised. Words reflect the way people think. Descriptions like “mentally handicapped, physically disabled, mentally retarded, learning disabled” and other words that focus on the conditions instead of the person must not be used. People First Language promotes dignity and respect for all (Snow, 2001).

### 3.3.3 Lack of training for personnel

In the White Paper on an Integrated Disability Strategy (SA, 1997), all training of personnel who deal with the public should contain disability awareness components. People with hearing or visual...
impairments note that airline staff occasionally treat them differently from they would people with physical mobility disabilities. Travellers with disabilities suggested that airline staff participate in sensitivity training to better understand the travel needs and constraints faced by travellers with disabilities (Turco et al., 1998:82).

In the White Paper on an Integrated Disability Strategy (SA, 1997), personnel training has been identified as a key component in providing a more user-friendly public transport system – not only for commuting for people with disabilities, but also for the broader South African and tourist population. It is essential that a disability awareness and orientation component for the transport industry is developed and implemented.

3.3.4 Architectural barriers

A major reason why many people with disabilities do not participate in existing recreation programs is simply that facilities are not physically accessible and barrier-free. While efforts to reduce architectural barriers have recently improved accessibility throughout the world, there are still many areas and attractions that are inaccessible to tourist who uses, for example, a wheelchair (Smith, 1987:382).

Attractions are the elements of a tourism destination that stimulate the purpose of a journey and visit. They may be of a leisure-type, such as visiting theme parks or participating in sport events; nature-based, such as seaside tourism or mountain trekking; historical, such as visiting museums or shopping for antiques; or socio-cultural, such as festivals or visiting friends and relatives. Most of the constraints encountered by tourists with disabilities in the course of these activities focus on site inaccessibility. For example, many beaches are not equipped to accommodate wheelchair users. Similarly, poor access to museums, historical monuments or shopping areas restricts people with disabilities from enjoying the opportunity of participating in these activities (UNESCAP, 2002).

Many travellers with disabilities find facilities at restaurants and pubs to be inaccessible. The newness of a facility, whether actual or in appearance, is a major determinant in deciding whether or not to visit the establishment. Some hotels promote their accommodation as accessible to people with disabilities. For example, showers with handrails accommodate some people, but for many in wheelchairs, bathtubs present a major problem. Some hotels also offer rooms that are too cluttered, thereby restricting wheelchair movement. Other frequently encountered barriers include restrictive
appliances, front desk counters that are too high and accessible rooms that are inconveniently located. Accommodation providers—and many park, recreation, and leisure professionals—need to increase their awareness of accessibility standards as well as to examine their own policies about general accessibility, room design and reservation procedures. Most staff in hotels and motels would benefit from additional training in sensitivity and awareness regarding travellers with disabilities (Turco et al., 1998:83).

Reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities constitutes still another set of challenges. For example, very few hotels offer accessible rooms with wider entrances, low-level switches, hand dryers, towels racks and beds, chairlifts and room information written in simple and concise language for people with cognitive disabilities. Of the rooms available, few have ground floor access. Access throughout hotels is also problematic. Few hotels have lifts to all floors on slow timers, easy access to reception, pool and bar areas, clear signage, visual alarms and clear access through the entire building. While the majority of hotels provide special parking areas, in many cases these are uncovered and quite distant from the main hotel entrances, requiring that steps be negotiated in order to access the buildings (UNESCAP, 2002).

This is the most difficult part in planning international travel for persons with a disability. Even countries that have enacted rules and regulations or codes of practice have difficulty meeting the needs of persons with a disability. The international wheelchair logo does not denote the degree of accessibility nor does it denote if accessibility is available to other forms of disability. Every person’s needs are different. A room may be accessible to a guest that using a wheelchair but inaccessible if a roll-in shower is needed and it is not so provided. A room may be accessible to a guest using a wheelchair but not to the guests who are blind or deaf. And many facilities, in foreign destinations, cannot be made accessible. How is the traveller to know what facilities are accessible according to the form of his or her disability before beginning his or her journey? (Rosen, 2001).

Many travellers with disabilities find facilities at eating and drinking establishments within tourist destination areas difficult to access. Some encounter problems when making hotel reservations. It was observed that in some hotels, specific accessible rooms, even when available, could not be reserved by an individual. In other instances, some rooms which were promoted as accessible actually appeared to be inaccessible to people with disabilities. For example, showers with handrails
may well help some people, but for many wheelchair users, bathtubs present a major barrier (UNESCAP, 2002).

Physical barriers that exist represent ignorance, unwillingness, or both, on the part of those involved in the design and management of the built environment. The ignorance is of the universal benefits of accessibility. The unwillingness is a serious attitudinal barrier towards addressing the needs of unglamorous groups like people with disabilities and older persons. However, those societies which are ageing ahead of others have begun to realize the wisdom of including barrier-free design in the built environment.

Today's planners, architects, engineers and builders, indeed anyone with a role in the design and management of the built environment, including public transport, are responsible for ensuring that their legacy for the next century is one of universally accessible environments. Now is the time to incorporate universal accessibility as a basic feature, like fire safety, in both building design and integrated transport planning. In planning for the construction, renovation or rebuilding of buildings and transport systems, the access linkages between buildings and transport modes must be integrated. The initial minimal cost of including barrier-free features must be weighed against the far greater cost of subsequent renovation in the face of swelling numbers of older users (ESCAP, 2001).

Until the issue of accommodation for people with disabilities is addressed on a national basis, together with the issues of barrier-free design of public facilities, transport and private mobility devices and essential supportive systems, transacting with this sphere of the physical environment will continue to lead to undesirable stress for the person with a disability (Hoffmann, 1987:233).

3.3.5 Transport barriers

For the frequent traveller, getting around an airport or hotel can be fairly routine – unless he is blind, deaf or have some other physical disability (Ziglar, 1994:13).

The availability of transport to all citizens is essential if they want to participate fully in society. By definition, therefore, the exclusion of a segment of society from a transport system is likely to reduce their ability to participate in other activities. Many potential travellers are restricted in their
mobility, either by permanent or temporary physical impairments, or by other circumstances such as the need to travel with children or luggage (ELTIS, 2001).

While air travel in general has become easier and airlines increasingly provide friendly services to the average traveller, people with disabilities still encounter inconveniences when travelling by air. For example, travellers in wheelchairs often face the difficulty of boarding and disembarking from the aircraft, changing flights and accessing aircraft restrooms. For blind people, identifying and retrieving luggage becomes an additional obstacle in the course of their already difficult journey. The pain of long-haul travel in an economy-class seat for someone with stiff limbs or arthritis, the sheer size of modern airports for those with mobility problems and endless forward planning for all are some of the challenges still facing travellers with disabilities (UNESCAP, 2002).

People with disabilities require suitable transport, not as a social service, but in order to remain living independently, or in employment. The denial of suitable transport may force people into residential care and unemployment, imposing a significant financial burden on the state. In many areas, dedicated specialist transport services are provided for people with disabilities. Often, however, these are limited in their scope of operation and over-subscribed. Whilst they may be of value to economically inactive people who undertake a small number of regular journeys weekly, they offer little service to active people with disabilities who need the flexibility and mobility which is enjoyed by the rest of the population (ELTIS, 2001).

People who are blind or visually impaired need to gather information about their physical surroundings and about the visible information that appears at transit stops, terminals, on transit vehicles, schedules, maps, and directories in order to use mass transit safely and effectively. Because of the visual nature of most transit information, people who are blind, severely visually impaired, or who have poor sight cannot readily use the wealth of information provided in mass transit environments for general information, wayfinding, and safety. For people who are blind or visually impaired, this visible information can be a barrier to using mass transit - a barrier that can be addressed by providing information in ways that blind or visually impaired people can use (AFB, 2002).
People who are blind or visually impaired experience the following transit information barriers (AFB, 2002):

- Route, timetable, fare and customer service brochures available only in print formats
- Print or graphic messages on signs, monitors, or maps displayed in transit terminals, on transit vehicles, and inside transit vehicles
- Bus stop locations that are not clearly marked, and bus stops which placement varies within a transit system, that is, some bus stops are placed just before the corner, some mid-block, and others are just beyond the corner
- Ticket vending machines that have only visible or touch screen operation controls.
- Safety hazard signs and warnings that are only visibly displayed (AFB, 2002).

The lack of available and accessible transport has been identified as one of the major obstacles to provide effective community leisure services to people with disabilities. The problem is even more acute for the tourists with disabilities because tourism, by definition, requires travel that often depends upon an interconnected system of transport modes. Any portion of the “vast infrastructure critical to movement of people” may be unavailable for use by a tourist with a disability, thus inhibiting his or her leisure experiences (Smith, 1987:382-383).

Most travellers negotiate the structural constraints associated with air travel by using other modes of transportation - car, bus or train. Private automobiles equipped with customized features have the advantage of providing schedule flexibility if used for pleasure travel. However, only a small group of affluent people with disabilities can afford such cars. Modern technology greatly facilitates bus travel by people with disabilities. People with physical disabilities can now journey in buses equipped with hydraulic lifts, which help them to board easily. So-called "low-floor" buses are gradually becoming the standard for intra-urban public transportation in a growing number of countries. These buses have a floor some 50 cm above street level, and feature a hydraulic "kneeling" function, which reduces the step to some 25 cm. However, in most developing countries, the availability of such specially designed buses remains limited. While trains could better accommodate the travel needs of persons with disabilities, in many cases the gap between the car door and the platform is too wide; access to toilets and compartments remains a constraint, especially for people with physical disabilities and wheelchair users (UNESCAP, 2002). An issue among some travellers with disabilities is the damage or loss of wheelchairs on airplanes. While
some travellers have encountered the misfortune of lost or delayed luggage, being without one's wheelchair is much more distressing (Turco et al., 1998:82).

According to the White Paper on an Integrated Disability Strategy (SA, 1997), people with disabilities should be able to travel, regardless of the purpose of the journey. Although the major airports have introduced extensive upgrading projects to make their facilities more user-friendly, smaller provincial and regional airports still remain extremely discriminatory against disabled commuters. This is, in part, due to a lack of information on national guidelines and minimum standards and norms. The larger airlines have introduced personnel training programmes to facilitate a more sensitive service from airline staff.

The transport sector of the tourism industry must take additional steps to remove barriers. A more serious review of accessible transportation features as well as continual sensitivity training for all staff needs to take place (Turco et al., 1998:82).

Thus, systems require many changes to become useful to all, and designers will need education and training in order to effect appropriate changes. Transport has traditionally been and will continue to be the most costly feature in improving the quality of transactions between persons with impairments and their physical environments, and South-Africa is the only country in the Western world where transport for people with disabilities is not effectively subsidised (Hoffmann, 1987:232).

Conventional parking spaces often do not allow adequate width for people with disabilities to board and alight safely. Parking spaces should allow adequate width for a person with a disability to enter or leave a car on either or both sides, without needing to enter the path of moving traffic (ELTIS, 2001).

There may be a need to ensure that fellow passengers are tolerant of people with disabilities. Many public transport facilities offer services such as designated seats and wheelchair bays for the use of people with disabilities, but these may also be used by able-bodied people, especially during peak hours when public transport becomes congested. Staff training may help to ensure that bus drivers, for example, are able to deal with such conflict in an assertive, but non-confrontational manner. The consequence of the inaccessibility of public transport, at present is that many people with reduced

The needs of tourists with disabilities

52
mobility, if they have access to a private car, will prefer to travel by car. As well as increasing the social exclusion of travellers with disabilities who do not have access to a car, this raises the need to exempt such essential users from restrictions on urban parking and access. Whilst such exemptions are generally accepted as desirable, they greatly complicate the enforcement of wider efforts to improve environmental quality of city centres (ELTIS, 2001).

The provision of a fully accessible public transport system has significant cost implications. It is, for instance, estimated that the cost of fitting a wheelchair lift to an existing public transport vehicle is at least R34 000 and the cost of providing a lift at a pedestrian bridge over railway lines at a station is approximately R110 000. The cost of a new fully accessible bus can be between 30% and 70% higher than that of a conventional bus. It is, however, intended for the relevant improvements to be phased in over time to an extent indicated by the available resources and actual demand, as existing facilities and rolling stock are refurbished or replaced and new infrastructure and rolling stock acquired. At this stage it is not possible to determine the cost implications with any degree of accuracy. Should funding for public transport not be significantly increased in future, the phasing in the relatively expensive services for passengers with disabilities will result in a re-prioritisation of other important infrastructure projects (CMPT, 1999:98).

3.3.6 Communication barriers

User information is a vital necessity. It is particularly important that information should be accessible at the point of interface between an information system and the end, the user. Information technology can be used as a means of increasing both the supply and the quality of information provided (Autonomia-Europe, 2001).

According to Snyman (2000:46-51), the following were deduced from a pilot study done on the needs of a traveller with disabilities. Communication seems to be a major obstacle. Many tourists with disabilities, whether travelling abroad or in their own countries, experience similar communication difficulties. These difficulties may arise from cognitive, speech, or hearing disorders, or they may be associated with social skill differences. Regardless of their origin, however, communication barriers are rarely one-sided (Smith, 1987:382-383).

To assist the blind, basic instructions and information should be made available in Braille, for instance evacuation procedures in case of an emergency, menus at restaurants, what attractions...
and/or services are available in hotels and recreational areas. Staff at reception desks at hotels, restaurants and other recreational facilities should be trained in the basics of sign language. This could improve communication and create the feeling of being welcome (Snyman, 2000).

3.3.7 Operators are uncomfortable with people with disabilities

Many travel agents feel uncomfortable in dealing with travellers with disabilities. Travel agents need to improve their communication with customers with disabilities to ensure that all needs are properly handled. People generally don’t want to talk about two things, firstly death and secondly that they have a disability. Providers of travel services should develop a client profile that keeps their specific needs on record. Don’t ask clients about the nature of their disability; ask them what services they need. To assume that persons with disabilities will all create problems is a big mistake (Cavinato & Cuckovich, 1992).

For people with disabilities, planning a vacation can be somewhat complicated. Depending on the type of disability, the would-be travellers need to ensure that during the envisaged vacation due attention will be given to their special needs, such as special lifts for coaches and adapted hotel rooms. Such arrangements cannot be made without the assistance of travel agencies that cater to those special needs (UNESCAP, 2002).

Firstly, many travel agents do not have access to all the disability-related information necessary to plan a full trip. Most frequently they lack comprehensive information about ground transportation incidental to air travel for the people with disabilities. Secondly, travel agents may have inaccurate information. Most hotels and restaurants hold their services as being "accessible" when in fact many are less than fully accessible to particular disabilities. There is also some lack of consistency of services to people with disabilities within hotel chains between the company-owned units and franchise-owned units. Thirdly, many travel agents have a limited background in working with travellers with disabilities. They may not fully comprehend the needs of the travellers with disabilities above and beyond what is apparent, and some critical trip-planning details may be overlooked. Many of the problems associated with regular travel agents are circumvented when people with disabilities choose to use a tour agency that caters to travellers with disabilities. The experience of the owners helps to insure that most of the possible problems that could arise are addressed and avoided. These trips offer individuals the chance to be part of a group with similar
disabilities and this may be a welcome change for some. The pace of these trips are specifically set for the needs of the group (Cavinato & Cuckovich, 1992).

The drawback of these tour companies is that the individual has little say in the planning and timing of the tours. The tours depart at times which may not be convenient, and they may be too long or too short for some persons. The tours may also not be going to areas of interest for some. Additionally, these tours may be simply too expensive for some persons. Lastly, these services tend to be designed for tourism purposes and not necessarily for point-to-point, non-vacation travel (Cavinato & Cuckovich, 1992).

For individuals who choose to plan their trip independently there are several advantages. Firstly, this can often be the least expensive way to plan a trip. Secondly, some people find it an adventure to research and plan their own trip. Thirdly, there is much information available for travellers with disabilities. But there are drawbacks to planning a trip independently. Firstly, while there is much information available, there is no one place from which to obtain it. Secondly, there is a wide variety of interpretations for the word accessible. One hotel and restaurant might interpret it as wheelchair accessible, while others include this as well as electrical connections for assistance equipment and providing for a wide range of dietary needs (Cavinato & Cuckovich, 1992).

As for several years accessible tourism has shown promising signs of expansion, tour operators have started to appreciate the potential of a market that has traditionally been poorly served. However, tailoring packages to people with various disabilities requires labour-intensive work, making it a low-margin business. Yet specialised agents, especially in Europe, are joining forces through trans-national associations to exchange information, set up databanks, launch joint marketing campaigns and lobby for better services. At the same time, specialised European travel agents and non-profit organisations have been cooperating by pooling what they have learned about the availability of special facilities in various countries (UNESCAP, 2002).

Tour operators are challenged by a new, unique situation. Operators must accommodate a person with a disability even if it does affect an itinerary or tour operation (Spritzer, 1993:19).
3.3.8 Financial aspects with regard to travelling

When a person with a disability goes out of town, he or she invariably incurs more cost. Travelling by a higher class in the railways or by air is not a luxury but a necessity for a person with a disability. Staying in just any hotel is not feasible. One has to look for hotels which are more or less accessible to the needs of people with disabilities. Such hotels are mostly on the expensive side. Most people with disabilities travel with an escort and therefore the cost of both travel as well as staying in hotels goes up automatically, according to Tanuja Varma, executive officer, NCPEDP - National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (quoted by Sharma, 1999).

According to Anfield (quoted by Snyman, 2001), South African travellers with disabilities have a fear of getting stranded in an unknown place or to travel full stop. There are also financial constraints that a person with a disability endures, as people with disabilities in other countries receive liveable grants whereas in SA one has to be quite well off to travel. It is also a quite costly exercise for hoteliers and Bed and Breakfasts to adapt their premises and not get the business, and so the person with a disability is compelled to seek refuge in some international hotel at enormous cost, as they are the ones that can afford to adapt their premises. According to Woolf (quoted by Snyman, 2002), when it is necessary to take a caregiver, the accommodation costs are immediately doubled. Also, it is necessary to make provision for extra tips where lifting a wheelchair in and out of the car and other unforeseen assistance is required.

3.4 THE IMPLICATIONS THAT BARRIERS HAVE ON LEISURE AND TOURISM

The many barriers that tourists with disabilities interact to, restrict significantly their opportunities for leisure experiences. From the outset, these barriers affect the number and nature of activity options that are available to the tourist with a disability (Smith, 1987:385-386).

Not only do barriers to participate limit perception of freedom for the travellers with disabilities, but specific barriers may further restrict the tourist’s feelings of personal control and competence. If efforts to overcome environmental barriers are unsuccessful, or the challenges of an activity exceed perceived skill-levels, the tourist with a disability may attribute lack of success to his or her own incompetence. People strive for feelings of personal control over their own behaviour and the environment, thus barriers that inhibit a tourist’s feelings of personal control and competence may
restrict participation or, at the very least, significantly reduce the satisfaction derived from the experience (Smith, 1987:385-386).

Because barriers to participation disproportionately affect tourists with disabilities, the potential for a traveller with a disability to experience “generalised helplessness” would appear to be considerably greater than that of the non-disabled tourist. Even if a tourist with a disability does not experience feelings of helplessness, there are several reasons to hypothesize that the leisure satisfaction he or she derives from tourism may be lower than those of other tourists.

Since tourists with disabilities are confronted by more barriers than non-disabled tourists, they might be expected to experience less leisure satisfaction from tourism than their non-disabled counterparts. A second reason that the tourists with disabilities may experience reduced levels of satisfaction is related to the dialectic nature of tourism motivation. The multifaceted nature of tourism may also contribute to reduced levels of satisfaction among travellers with disabilities because some important aspects of the overall experience may be inaccessible to people with disabilities. Access to facilities has been demonstrated to be an important variable in leisure participation among the general public (Smith, 1987:385-386).

Finally, an additional impact of barriers to participate may be to relegate many travellers and their companions with disabilities to “special” package tours. Tours such as these might offer some of the same outcomes attributed to conventional group tours, but they severely limit the opportunities for people with disabilities to choose from among the many social roles associated with tourism (Smith, 1987:385-386).

People with disabilities represent a not insignificant portion of the population. With a continued increase in social awareness and acceptance of people with disabilities in all walks of life, it is appropriate to examine the constraints and opportunities for travel and tourism for people with disabilities (Cavinato & Cuckovich, 1992:46).

When one examines the barriers to participation experienced by tourists with disabilities, the emerging image is of a network of interrelated forces that limit the individual’s opportunities to leisure. These barriers may reduce the amount of leisure satisfaction derived from tourism. It may foster a distorted view of tourists with disabilities as passive individuals who have vastly different
motivations for travel than their non-disabled peers. Rather, the desire among people with disabilities for travel opportunities that are unencumbered by needless barriers underscores their normality. Reducing barriers to participation, therefore, is the responsibility of everyone involved in the tourism industry. The end result will not only increase leisure satisfaction for tourists with disabilities, but the greater emergence and visibility of tourists with disabilities will have the educative effect upon every dimension of society (Smith, 1987:386-387).

3.5 CASE STUDIES

Accessibility at facilities has improved in South Africa over the past couple of years through various organisations and individuals involved in accessibility and particularly accessibility to tourist facilities.

3.5.1 A hiking trail for people with disabilities

A hiking trail for people with disabilities with a specially equipped overnight hut is being planned for the Goukamma Nature Reserve outside Knysna. The hiking trail will most probably be the first of its kind in the Cape and even in South Africa.

According to Mr. Niel van Wyk (quoted by Anon, 1988), vice-director of the Cape Province Nature Conservation Authority and owner of the Reserve, for a long time there could not be provided for the needs of people with disabilities. In the past these people have been neglected. One realises that they also want to enjoy nature and nature reserves and that special facilities must be developed for them. During the past five years the planning of buildings makes provision that people with disabilities can utilise them now and in the future. There are reserves where one can plan on a limited scale to provide facilities such as hiking trails for wheelchairs. One of these reserves is the Karoo Nature Reserve outside Graaff-Reinet where a wheelchair track will be built from the parking area up to the viewpoint at the Valley of Verlatenheid.

Mr. Kobus du Plessis, Regional head of the Cape Nature Conservation Authority for the Southern Cape (quoted by Anon, 1988), says that the Goukamma Nature Reserve lends itself to the building of a hiking trail for people with disabilities, because there are four ecological systems that exist in a
fairly compact area inside the reserve. This type of terrain is unfortunately not suitable for the building of wheelchair tracks and can only be developed at a very high cost.

A concept document, which will serve as a manifest for the rights of people with disabilities in South Africa, will be submitted for approval to a national congress for people with disabilities in Durban. The purpose of this manifest is mainly to provide guidelines for the formulation of laws regarding people with disabilities.

Mr. Michael Masutha, a blind legal expert (quoted by Anon, 1988), says that the issues regarding people with disabilities has for too long been regarded by the government and the public as the responsibility of welfare organisations. People with disabilities from all walks of life participated in work sessions and seminars and their grievances and proposals were incorporated in the above-mentioned concept the document (Rademeyer, 1992:8).

3.5.2 Hiking trail near Pretoria for people with disabilities

A new hiking trail that is designed to cater for people with disabilities is due to be developed at the De Wildt Cheetah and Nature Centre outside Pretoria. The Reach for the Wild—Project is made possible through the combined efforts of the SAVV, Eco Access and Wild Care in co-operation with the South African Council for the Blind and other organisations.

This hiking trail will enable people who are blind, Deaf, and with physical and cognitive disabilities to participate in various activities. Hiking trails with ramps for wheelchairs and guided routes are being planned. The first pilot test that took place recently was a great success (Rademeyer, 1998:9).

3.5.3 Transport for people with disabilities improved

The Cape Metropolitan Council will approve important policy proposals that will provide for transport needs of travellers with disabilities. A concept document entitled “Study to determine the transport needs of the mobility disadvantage person” was accepted and will be incorporated into the CMB’s transport plan. The study estimates that provision must be made in the present and future public transport systems for at least 700 000 passengers with special needs of whom 100 000 passengers suffer from serious vision, hearing, physical or cognitive disabilities.
All new facilities will be planned with ease of access in mind, and a program will be prepared in order to make existing facilities more user-friendly in the next decade. An important element that will have an impact on the motor industry is the setting of accessibility standards in co-operation with the transport authority involved for all new road vehicles and buses. It is acknowledged that accessible transport is necessary to enable people with disabilities to be involved in the community (Kraai et al., 1999:10).

3.5.4 Klein Karoo National Arts Festival wants to adapt for people with disabilities

The management of the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival is negotiating with the owners of the festival venues to make their buildings more accessible to people with disabilities. According to Mr. Rayn Smit (quoted by Anon, 2000a), logistics manager of the festival, the needs of people with disabilities have also been discussed with the Oudtshoorn Transitional Council, and the council will undertake to adapt powerments in the centre of the town to make it more accessible for people with disabilities. Mr Nolan Beukes, spokesperson for the office of the city engineer (quoted by Anon, 2000a), says that parking facilities will be available for people with disabilities close to some of the halls, whilst seating guides will be informed as to where user-friendly seating in the halls will be available.

3.5.5 Garden on wheels – new tourism initiative

The Calitzdorp Tourism Bureau is investigating the possibility of establishing a Garden Safari Tour where visitors can meander through the indigenous aloes and succulents that the town is famous for, but Cynthia and Ron Wege are taking this a step further in creating a garden for tourists with disabilities. According to Cynthia Wege, the garden will have solid pathways which will allow easy access to travellers that use wheelchairs, as well as for the elderly and tourists with Down syndrome (Mackenzie, 2000).

3.5.6 Cape hotel makes room for people with disabilities

The 35-room Grande Riche hotel in Paarl, Western Cape, has made more room for guests with disabilities, having remodelled one of its luxury suites. Featuring a new dressing room, larger bathroom with easy access to the shower and wider doorways, the suite also has a private garden patio. Guide dogs are welcome at the hotel and the establishment is fitted with access ramps to all venues on the premises (Mackenzie, 2001).
3.5.7 Western Cape Tourism Board reaches out to the blind

In a first for tourism in the Western Cape, “Talking Tourism”, the official newsletter of the Western Cape Tourism Board (WCTB), was issued in Braille. The bold initiative is a combined effort by the WCTB and Willie Mathys of the Weshop Employment Project in Serepta, Kuilsriver which provides training and employment to people that are blind and have other disabilities. Mathys also owns and operates Batho Travel and Tourism, a company that strives to promote and make local tourism possible for people who are blind or have other disabilities. Mike Fabricius, CFO of the Western Cape Tourism Board (quoted by De Sousa), says “to make tourism accessible to people that are blind, we need to give them access to the same resources that the rest of the domestic tourism population has – this means printing at least basic information in Braille.” Mathys added (quoted by De Sousa), “Printing ‘Talking Tourism’ in Braille is a step forward providing the blind with current tourism news in the Western Cape, and we hope that other tourism publications will follow suit” (De Sousa, 2001).

3.5.8 Operator launches "touch" safari for the visually impaired

MCFARLANE Safaris, has launched an 11-day safari, entitled “Touch Trail SA”, aimed specifically at tourist with visual impairments, incorporating strong elements of the other senses - sound, touch, taste and smell (Mackenzie, 2002).

3.5.9 People with disabilities get their own trail in Addo Elephant National Park

A revolutionary new access trail for people with disabilities has been launched in the Addo Elephant National Park. The solid but stylish 2km PPC Discovery Trail, the first of its kind in Africa, loops through a section of typical Addo thicket near the main park camp. A doubly environmentally friendly development, the surface of the trail is made out of polywood, a material produced from recycled plastic, and it is raised slightly above the ground to avoid damage to vegetation. It also ensures a smooth ride for visitors using wheelchairs. Another aspect is a rope railing running along each side of the trail to help people that are partially sighted to navigate. Expansion is planned, with the addition of more circular routes. Innovations like moulded animal spoor, interesting rock features and even Braille boards or audio booths could be built into the trail for visitors with visual impairments. Initiated by honorary ranger Virginia Thomas, the concept of the trail was taken up by the park’s management team and implemented with the help of sponsorship from PPC.
According to warden Lucius Moolman in paying tribute to the park’s long relationship with PPC, the launch marked the start of accelerated growth and improvement, with a large amount of money suddenly having been made available from the government and the World Bank. About R100-million is due to be spent in the park in the next six years. According to Chris Patton SANP tourism and marketing manager who is disabled, the trail was an excellent initiative and added that often people with impairments are restricted, but now they can enjoy the sights, smells and the feel of the bush (Rogers, 2002).

3.6 CONCLUSION

People with disabilities are a growing group and consumers of tourism services. However, the majority of tourism service providers do not understand the economic and social significance of early action to create barrier-free tourism. The built environment (buildings, streets, parks, public-transportation and communication infrastructure) has a major impact on the quality of tourism experience, especially concerning its safety, convenience, efficiency and enjoyment aspects. There is insufficient integration of the planning and development of the built environment and tourism development, both within and across countries. 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 main reasons for people with disabilities being excluded from the tourist market are the inaccessibility (or perceived inaccessibility) of the tourist product, the lack of appropriate and reliable information about the product and the lack of staff training in dealing with clients with disabilities. All these lead to a lack of confidence about travelling (Autonomia-Europe, 2001).

There are three issues that need attention:

a) The formulation and implementation of related legislation in order to protect the right of persons with disabilities to accessible facilities and environment
b) Education and training on awareness and sensitivity to disability
c) Provision of accessible facilities in the tourism sector (UNESCAP, 2002).
The improvement of access and the removal of constraints and barriers are not just an issue of providing a legal solution to physical access issues. It is in the broader sense an attack on the legal, political, social and economic structures and perpetuate their existence. According to Smith (quoted by Darcy & Daruwalla, 1999), the leisure pursuit of tourists with disabilities is affected by intrinsic, environmental and interactive issues. These all need to be addressed in the widest sense of access, if the ultimate goal of eliminating social injustice for people with disabilities is to become a reality (Darcy & Daruwalla, 1999).