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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“If you want to know your past – look into your present conditions. If you want to know your future – look into your present actions”
(Chinese Proverb)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Disability does not stop people wanting to travel for pleasure, or needing to travel for business (WTG, 2002). Provision of accessible facilities is by far the most important area of concern for achieving barrier-free tourism for people with disabilities. Taking into consideration that it is highly unrealistic to presume that the situation will change overnight, owing to cost and time limitations, what is required in the short term is that the tourism sector should strive to achieve a reasonable level of accessibility, which balances the needs of people with disabilities, the constraints of existing conditions and the resources available for such adjustments. In many cases, this relates to the issue of physical access, such as main hotel entrance access, appropriate access ramps, reception counters, disability-friendly rooms, and access to location of all public areas. In the long term, the approach will be to encourage major restructuring and/or refurbishment of hospitality establishments and tourism sites (UNESCAP, 2002). 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 everything 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).

The purpose of this chapter is to conclude and to make recommendations with regard to:

- The literature study
- The empirical study and
- Further research.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be deduced from the **empirical research** (chapter 4):

- The majority of the respondents (23%) are tour operators
- 26% of the tourism product owners' businesses are situated in the North West Province
- 64% of the respondents have 10 years or less experience in the tourism industry. Only 10% have 21 or more years of experience
- The primary market that the tourism product owners cater for is business travellers (59%). Only 24% cater for tourists with disabilities
- 88% of the respondents indicate that the market for tourists with disabilities is one that is undervalued and misunderstood
- 75% indicate that tourists with disabilities are a potential market
- 76% indicate that tourists with disabilities are an economically viable market
- 85% indicate that people with disabilities are a growing market for travel, sport and leisure-oriented products
- 81% of the respondents indicate that they will in future cater for tourists with disabilities
- 72% of the tourism product owners indicate that tourists with disabilities will not create any problems for them
- It is important that tourism product owners don't feel that tourists with disabilities have to pay more when staying at their facility. 84% of the respondents indicate that travellers with disabilities don't have to pay more when they stay at a facility or make use of their services. Only 9% indicate that tourists with disabilities have to pay more
- 64% of the tourism product owners indicate that they will not experience any difficulties with regard to tourists with disabilities
- 45% of the tourism product owners have an excellent attitude towards people with disabilities
- 6% of the respondents indicate that their attitude towards people with disabilities is causing them to lose business, whilst 74% disagree that their attitudes are causing them to lose business
- 32% of the tourism product owners indicate that tour operators feel uncomfortable when dealing with people with disabilities, whilst 38% disagree
- 35% of respondents feel that it will cost too much to make their facility or vehicles accessible for tourists with disabilities

- 63% of the respondents feel that the lack of trained personnel is one of the aspects that the Tourism industry can improve on
- 69% of the respondents feel that the lack of accessible and available transport is a major obstacle
- 53% of the tourism product owners indicate that travel agents feel uncomfortable when dealing with people with disabilities
- 86% of the respondents agree that a facility must be tested with a person with a disability with regard to its accessibility
- 36% of the respondents indicate that their facility or vehicles are excellent for people with physical disabilities
- 29% of the tourism product owners indicated that their facilities are very poor for people with visual impairments. Only 4% indicate that their facilities are excellent for people with visual impairments
- 5% of the tourism product owners indicate that their facilities are very poor for people with hearing impairments, 36% indicate that their facilities are excellent for people with hearing impairments
- 42% of the tourism product owners feel that South Africa's accessibility for tourists with disabilities is poor. Only 3% indicate that South Africa's accessibility is good with regard to people with disabilities
- 84% of the respondents will make their facilities accessible for people with physical disabilities
- 86% indicate that they will in future test the accessibility of the facilities
- 73% indicate that they will in future make their transport vehicle accessible
- 56% of the respondents indicate that SA is not physically accessible and barrier-free
- 90% of the respondents indicate that it is necessary to look at the accessibility of a facility before taking tourists with disabilities to the facility
- 48% include information for tourists with disabilities when marketing their tourism products or services
- 83% agree that it is necessary to test market tourism products or services in the disabled community
- 83% indicate that it is necessary to test a tourism product with the disabled community
- 84% of the respondents indicate that there is not enough information available on people with disabilities

- 5% of the tourism product owners provide information in Braille, whilst 86% do not provide information in Braille
- 76% indicate that they will attend conferences on people with disabilities
- 66% of the respondents indicate that they will send their personnel on training courses in order to provide a quality service to tourists with disabilities
- 47% of the respondents indicate that a universal design must be included in tourism products and services
- The importance of a universal design has been indicated by the respondents with regard to accessibility, programmes, services, devices and facilities. The majority of the respondents indicate that facilities (92%), devices (92%), services (92%) and programmes (91%) must serve a diverse clientele.

During the **literature study** (chapter 3) the following barriers and constraints that people with disabilities experience were identified:

- Lack of knowledge
- Attitudinal barriers
- People first language
- Lack of training for personnel
- Architectural barriers
- Transport barriers
- Communication barriers
- Operators are uncomfortable with people with disabilities
- Financial aspects with regard to travelling
- The government and authorities' role in people with disabilities.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of this study are organised in the following fashion:

- Accessibility
- Accommodation
- Pedestrian or design areas

- Transport
- Travel agents and tour operators
- Tourists with disabilities
- Service
- Organisations and authorities.

The following recommendations and solutions can be given with regard to:

5.3.1 Accessibility

For wheelchair access, entrance or side doors need to be ramped or levelled, with a minimum width of 80cm. Interior doors also need to be at least this wide, with no steps leading into public rooms (restaurant, lounge, bar, toilets).

There should be a route without steps and with a firm smooth surface which wheelchairs can use; this would ideally facilitate access to the swimming pool or beach without needing to negotiate steps. The availability or otherwise of a swimming-pool hoist should be indicated. The accommodation should be in a central position with shopping and entertainment facilities within easy reach, otherwise specially-arranged transport would be needed to enable holidaymakers with disabilities to travel (WTG, 2002).

- Provide a specific parking place near the entrance
- Ask a member of the staff to park the car
- Do not use carpets, or organise circulation routes without carpets
- Provide a direct entrance with a standard door (instead of a revolving door)
- Move all objects which can be obstacles
- Equip all stairs with gripping bars and install wheelchair ramps
- Use different texture on pavements and contrasting colours
- Use non-reflecting materials on pavements and walls in order to avoid false perception that people with visual impairments may have (Alpe *et al.*, 2002).

There are many people with disabilities who do not use wheelchairs, but are unable to use steps or stairs. If making enquiries about a hotel or guest-house with a lift, make sure that the bedroom is as

near to the lift as possible, and ask whether there are any steps in the corridor between the lift doors and the bedroom.

5.3.2 Accommodation

The nature and degree of the disability will dictate the type of accommodation required. The points below will be important, and are particularly relevant to wheelchair users; however, when booking, ask what facilities will be needed for minimum and maximum comfort, request these facilities, back up your request with a letter, and ask for confirmation in writing that they are available (WTG, 2002). When considering accommodation for individuals who use wheelchairs, the process must be conducted on a case-by-case basis with input from the person with the disability. Each individual who uses a wheelchair has different abilities and limitations that should be considered. For example, a person who uses a wheelchair because of a lower limb amputation is very different from a person who uses an electric wheelchair (SAFCD), 2001). If ground-floor bedrooms are not available, there should be a lift large enough to take a wheelchair, i.e. at least 140cm deep by 1100cm wide (WTG, 2002).

➤ Bedroom

The door should be at least 80cm wide (there should be sufficient turning space for a wheelchair, i.e. 140cm by 140cm and a free width of at least 80cm to one side of the bed (WTG, 2002).

➤ Bathroom

The door should be at least 80cm wide; enough room is needed to enter in a wheelchair and close the door, with space for a wheelchair to enable sideways transfer. Support rails near the bath are also needed (WTG, 2002).

- The bathroom should be accessible to wheelchair users: width of the door, space for turning with a wheelchair, gripping bar near the toilet seat and besides the bathroom. The ideal situation is a shower without edge
- Have a shower-chair available on request as well as a raised toilet removable seat
- The washbasin should be placed at a height accessible for wheelchair users (Alpe *et al.*, 2002).

➤ **Doors**

- They should have a width of at least 75 cm, the ideal situation is 90 cm for electric wheelchair users. If necessary, the bathroom door should be removeable (Alpe *et al.*, 2002).

➤ **Lifts and stairs**

- The best solution is to provide accommodation for wheelchair users on the ground floor
- In the lift, the buttons indicating the floors should provide the information in Braille and be embossed
- A mirror will give the possibility to a wheelchair user to identify the floor where the lift stops (Alpe *et al.*, 2002).

5.3.3 Pedestrian or design areas

- Basic design: all pedestrian areas should be unobstructed, and should ensure easy passage to pedestrians with disabilities who may be in wheelchairs, or are accompanied by a guide-dog, or using sticks, and who may not be able to easily avoid pedestrians
- Longitudinal gradients must be limited in order to allow access to self-propelled wheelchairs
- Suitable features such as dropped kerbs and handrails are required at any change in level, such as the road-edge. High-visibility and/or tactile pavements, are also required
- Pavement surfaces must offer acceptable friction in order to avoid the risk of accidents
- Street furniture must be designed to ensure that no hazard is imposed upon pedestrians, especially those with restricted vision
- Pedestrian areas need to be designed to allow access to all areas from designated parking or public transport
- Special care must be taken at any location where pedestrians conflict with road traffic
- A high level of consultation with a variety of persons with disabilities is essential if the eventual design is to be suitable, and ideally an accessibility audit should be undertaken.

5.3.4 Transport

Professionals designing or commissioning pedestrian areas, or vehicles, need to ensure that they maintain an effective consultation process with groups representing people with disabilities. Many vehicles or facilities which are ostensibly designed to be accessible still, in practice, exclude certain traveller groups. Others may be accessible, but require manoeuvres, such as the reversal of a

wheelchair into a narrow bay, which is impractical or difficult on a moving and crowded bus. High quality information systems may provide excellent visual information, but need to be backed up by auditory information for visually impaired travellers (ELTIS, 2001).

The following recommendations can be made to remove barriers to mass transit for people who are blind or visually impaired:

- Provide large-print, high-contrast, and non-glare informational signs in terminals, at bus stops, and on transit vehicles
- Place Braille and tactile information regarding available service at consistent locations near the entrances to and within transit stations
- Install a tactile domed high-contrast warning surface along platform edges
- Make stop announcements inside transit vehicles at main points along a bus or train route
- Provide external speakers that announce vehicle identification information
- Provide ticket vending machines with Braille and large-print markings, or audible output devices
- Train transit personnel to meet the specific needs of persons with visual impairments who use public transportation (AFB, 2002).

5.3.5 Travel agents and tour operators

Travel operators who specialise in services for, and provide tailoring packages to people with disabilities can be instrumental in assisting them with their vacation planning. They are able to provide them with information regarding the availability of accessible facilities suited to their needs. People with disabilities are more likely to rely on tourism professionals, such as specific travel agents and hotels that best serve their needs. It is therefore imperative that specific barrier-free tourism promotional activities be undertaken by travel agents in close cooperation with other professionals of the tourism industry, such as hospitality providers. Disability organisations may also contribute to these promotional efforts by drawing the attention of the tourism industry to the needs and desires of people with disabilities, especially with regard to flexibility in travel options (UNESCAP, 2002).

Following are some tips for agents who are looking to educate themselves about these potential clients and to expand their areas of specialisation:

- **Good questionnaires are a must.** The agency must have a list of personal questions to ask clients in order to find out their specific needs. It is imperative that the agency must be fully aware of the different categories of disabilities (visual, hearing, physical and cognitive), as well as the specific needs associated with each
- **Don't forget to probe.** According to Joan Diamond, president of Nautilus Tours & Cruises Ltd. in Woodland Hills, Calif. (quoted by Fillipino, 2000), travel agents must get to know their clients
- **Determine who will handle these clients.** Agency owners need to decide which people in their offices will be handling these clients, focusing on who will devote time to educate themselves, conduct research on accessibility and build contacts within the community. Agents who get involved must be patient, detail-oriented, and willing to work hard and follow through. The workspace must be accessible to people with disabilities. Retailers who go this route need to devote a portion of their Web site to these clients, use e-mail extensively and have a toll-free number. To work on a local level, signage in the window and appropriate symbols (a wheelchair is the standard) on business cards, letterheads and promotional materials are effective marketing tools
- **Travel agents must do their homework.** This is imperative. Trips for travellers with disabilities can sometimes take six months to a year to plan. Ann Litt, (quoted by Fillipino, 2000), owner of Undiscovered Britain in Philadelphia, advises agents to check the measurements of all accommodations with a hotel manager. The travel agent must go to a resort and see whether there is a ramp at the entrance, to measure the width of doorways, where grab bars are located, the specific set-up of bathrooms (is there a roll-in shower or a tub?), and whether such public areas as the lounge, bar and restaurant are wheelchair-accessible.

According to retailers who specialise in this niche, cruises are perhaps the easiest vacation for people with disabilities. Cruise lines are building ships with wider walkways, roll-in showers and more spacious cabins to accommodate wheelchairs. Passengers can request special meals and in-cabin refrigerators for medication. As far as tours go, certain destinations are trickier than others. Cities with cobblestone streets, for example, pose problems for people using wheelchairs.

- **Build rapport.** According to Litt (quoted by Fillipino, 2000), agents must make clients feel as comfortable and secure as possible. Small details must be taken very seriously, nothing can be assumed and the client's dignity must be maintained

- **Use all information avenues.** E-mail and the Internet have opened possibilities for people with disabilities and facilitate the flow of communication for this market. There is a wealth of information on the Internet, and through such organisations as SATH and the Paralysis Society of America for both agents and clients. Agents may want to consider joining some of these organisations and attending some of their trade shows. Such publications as *We, Open World* and *Sports & Spokes* may also be helpful. ASTA can provide the names of wheelchair tour operators, as can such Web sites as [www.access-able.com], [www.sath.org], [www.emerginghorizons.com] and [www.disabilitytravel.com]
- **Target referrals and repeaters.** The initial experience with the agency is vital (Fillipino, 2000).

5.3.6 Tourists with disabilities

- Tourists with disabilities must do their homework when travelling
- Ask questions when making arrangements
- Don't assume people know what "accessible" means. Ask detailed questions like "Is it a level entry?" "Do you have elevators?" "Are they working?"
- Tourists with disabilities must take responsibilities on themselves. Double-check everything with the travel agent
- Tourists with disabilities must understand their rights
- Tourists with disabilities must be assertive; be nice, but firm
- Have a positive attitude
- Be patient (Taylor, 2000)
- Tourists with disabilities must confirm their specific requirements in writing with the tour operator prior to booking a holiday
- Tourists with disabilities must choose a travel agent who is willing to ensure that all requests are passed on to the relevant agents involved in the holiday
- Tourists with disabilities must be honest with both tour operator and the travel agent with regard to their type of disability and limitations (UNESCAP, 2002).

5.3.7 Service

If a travel agent or any tourism product owner is not used to communicating with a person who has a disability and has any hesitations or concerns, the following key points must be remembered:

- Use common sense. Individuals with disabilities want to be treated the same way as everyone else
- Be polite. Show the person the same respect that you would expect to be given you
- Be considerate. Be patient, take time and try to understand the problem or need of the individual
- Offer assistance. Do not hesitate to offer assistance. However, do not automatically give help unless the person with a disability clearly needs or asks for it. If the person with a disability declines your help, do not insist on helping. Ask if assistance is needed and how it should be given
- Communicate. Talk directly to the person with a disability. It is not difficult to communicate with individuals with disabilities. In some cases, it may take a little time, depending on the type of disability
- Emergency action. Know the location of travellers with disabilities in the tourism facility to help with evacuation, if necessary, during an emergency (Parks, 1985).

➤ **People who are blind and people who are visually impaired**

- Leave out the prejudices linked to the appearance of a person with a disability
- Focus the attention on the person and not on the visual disability
- Always introduce yourself when speaking to a visually impaired person
- Stand close to the person so that he/she can identify you more easily
- Always talk directly to the visually impaired person, not to his/her companion
- Ask if the person needs help, don't assume it
- Rather than written information, propose an audiotape. If written, it should be in large letters, and in Braille (relief plans, menus, guides)
- If audio or written material is not available, read aloud, though with a normal voice tone, descriptions, menus, directions
- Make yourself understood through words, as he/she cannot see expressions and/or gestures
- Describe the environment and the services clearly, identifying the position of obstacles, furniture, table setting, etc., basing yourself on known references (clockwise, South, North)
- Be able to explain the way and/or to demonstrate the way if needed (specifying for example the beginning and the end of the stairs)
- Accept, in any situation, guide dogs within the structure

- Do not distract the animal and check if the dog can access all places
- Do not move personal objects or furniture in the hotel room during the customer's stay
- Announce stops vocally in transports
- Inform the person if you are going to leave him or her for any reason
- Co-ordinate your activity with that of other service providers
- Provide particular attention in cases of emergency (Alpe *et al.*, 2002).

➤ **People who are deaf and people with a hearing impairment**

- Place yourself in front of the person and establish a visual contact, with appropriate lighting for lip-reading
- Do not cover your mouth with your hands
- Always introduce yourself and explain your role/duties
- Identify, with the help of the person him/herself, what his/her personal situation is and the communication method(s)
- Choose a quiet environment for communication
- Be prepared to spend a longer time for the conversation
- Speak directly to the person, looking at him/her, speak slowly and take care to articulate
- Speak at a normal speed, without exaggerating mouth movements and without raising the voice level (this wouldn't help unless the person him/herself requires it); simple physical gestures can be helpful
- Use short sentences, clear words and be prepared to repeat what has been said
- Have writing paper at hand
- Always make sure that the information is well understood
- Give particular attention in cases of emergency
- Propose communication aids such as text phone or fax
- Accept to use small technical aids such as a microphone
- Make sure that the deaf person is included in the group conversation, otherwise he/she will remain isolated
- Co-ordinate your activity with that of other service providers (Alpe *et al.*, 2002).

➤ **People with a physical disability**

- Leave out the prejudices linked to the appearance of a person with a disability

- Identify, with the help of the person him/herself, what his/her personal needs are
- Leave enough time so that the person can express him/herself
- Address the person directly, not the accompanying person
- Let the person express his/her needs, do not assume them
- Provide information on the destination to help him/her face the "real situation" and, if possible, propose solutions (technical aids)
- Give accurate information on the level of accessibility (hotel, tourist site) and, if possible, check it
- Make sure, through appropriate information sources, of the reliability of the information given
- Offer help, if required, and in the terms it is required
- Co-ordinate your activity with that of other service providers (e.g. a travel agent booking a hotel room should make sure that the accommodation provider is in line with the needs of his potential client)
- Give particular attention in case of emergencies (Alpe *et al.*, 2002).

5.3.8 Organisations and authorities

Airport authorities should ensure that basic accessible infrastructure adjustments for people with disabilities are included in the design of new and/or airports, such as the introduction of greater areas of level access as well as the provision of access to toilets (UNESCAP, 2002).

Local advisory councils, which include people with disabilities, can play a significant role in this respect by raising awareness, identifying problems and contributing to the decision-making process. People with disabilities can participate in the development and testing of new solutions. The issues relating to accessibility in the environment and transport facilities must be addressed wherever barriers are found. This requires coordinated policies and action at local level with a view to analysing specific problems and finding the most appropriate solution for each barrier in an existing or potentially problematic situation. Strategies for action at local level require local actors to take responsibility for pursuing the goals of accessibility (Autonomia-Europe, 2001).

➤Strategic actions

(a) People with disabilities and disabled persons' organisations should:

- Develop empowerment programmes focusing on skills for advocacy and negotiation with the tourism industry
- Acquire skills in appraising tourism facilities, programmes and services, and in recommending action to raise their quality, as appropriate
- Learn to conduct access surveys
- Document and share information on the quality of tourism components and user experiences (accommodation, transportation, tourism sites and services, tour programmes, and information and communications systems)
- Create local access guides and maps for in-country and foreign visitors
- Serve as resource persons or advisors to training institutions and policy-making bodies concerned with tourism services
- Communicate rights and needs in an effective manner to people encountered in the course of travel, especially those who are unaware and inexperienced concerning people with disabilities or who are discriminatory in their behaviour
- Strengthen craft production and marketing skills among persons with disabilities as an economically viable interface with the tourism industry
- Support people with disabilities in acquiring training and employment in the tourism industry (Anon, 2000b).

(b) Government authorities should:

- Train immigration officers and ministry of foreign affairs staff concerned with visa applications on disabled person-friendly procedures to be observed in a systematic manner
- Work towards uniform disabled person-friendly immigration procedures at the sub regional level
- Improve the accessibility of immigration offices to facilitate travel document application by all tourists, including tourists with disabilities
- Exempt from customs duty all assistive devices required by people with disabilities for supporting their activities of daily living, including computers required by people with visual impairments
- Update annually a list of items that should be exempted from customs duty
- Simplify customs clearance procedures for all assistive devices required by people with disabilities for supporting their activities of daily living, including computers required by people with visual impairments

- Train customs officers on ways of communicating with people with disabilities, especially people with hearing impairments (Anon, 2000b).

(c) Tourism service providers should:

- Develop in-house programmes to raise awareness, sensitivity and skill levels to provide more appropriate services for people with disabilities
- Communicate more with people with disabilities and their organisations to exchange accurate and reliable information for strengthening tourism services to better meet diverse consumer needs
- Encourage tourism service providers to make their web sites accessible to people with disabilities, especially
- Involve people with disabilities with the requisite experience and skills in conducting access surveys of premises and to serve as resource persons and advisors in improving tourism services
- Introduce barrier-free tourism into the agendas of their regular meetings
- Introduce accessibility as a criterion in the ranking of hotels and restaurants (Anon, 2000b).

(d) Tourism training institutions should:

- Include in training curricula (for all levels) the following contents concerning a client focus that respects the rights and needs of diverse consumer groups, including persons with disabilities: attitude, knowledge and skills development, as well as cross-cultural understanding and appreciation
- Develop and use training modules for sensitising front-line service staff to relate, in an appropriate manner, with travellers with disabilities (Anon, 2000b).

(e) Inter-governmental organisations should:

- Foster inter-country exchange and networking concerning experiences and practices on endeavours towards barrier-free tourism
- Facilitate, in cooperation with sub regional organisations, inter-country discussion towards the adoption of uniform disabled person-friendly immigration procedures
- Work towards the lifting of discriminatory and restrictive conditions, such as the requirements of an accompanying person and medical certification, that are imposed on travellers with disabilities

- Explore possible means of granting accreditation to tourism industry establishments that are accessible by people with disabilities
- Develop an outline for core contents for training tourism personnel
- Develop training content and capability to strengthen passenger services at transport interchanges (bus, railway, ferry, ship and airplane terminals)
- Promote the application of universal design principles to improve the accessibility of tourism sites, especially cultural, heritage and pilgrimage sites (Anon, 2000b).

Fundamentally, people with disabilities want to travel. A substantial amount of pre-planning is required for people with disabilities to undertake travel. The government and tourism industry, as the key provider of travel services, can take steps to redress the social exclusion of people with disabilities. The area for immediate improvement is the provision of accurate access information. For those areas outside the control of the tourism industry (urban design, public transport) the industry can identify constraints and barriers and work with people with disabilities and relevant organisations/agencies to bring about improvements (Darcy & Daruwalla, 1999). Although the number of tourists who would benefit from accessible facilities and services is on the increase, most tourism services providers have still not yet recognized the importance of taking action on this issue (UNESCAP, 2002).

One key area is the formulation and implementation of related legislation in order to protect the right of persons with disabilities to utilize accessible facilities and environment (UNESCAP, 2002). Legislation can be an important strategy in removing disabling barriers, but effective implementation of those laws and monitoring of compliance are also necessary (Autonomia-Europe, 2001). Countries should be encouraged to continue developing such legislation as well as to introduce new amendments in keeping with changes in the tourism sector, including travel conditions, and the specific situations of different disability groups. While it is essential that legislation be reviewed in a continuous manner, it is imperative that members of the tourism industry be informed of their obligations and operational implications in order to protect not only their interests, but also those of the people with disabilities (UNESCAP, 2002). Obviously, more effort and dedication is needed to make this progress on disability legislation a reality in the lives of people with disabilities. One of the most important issues that need to be dealt with is the allocation to implement with concrete actions and changes the legislation those government bodies that

government has created. The active participation of people with disabilities and their organisations in the policy development and implementation process is also of vital importance (Wong-Hernandez, 2001).

The tourism industry should provide the same choices for all consumers to ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities, and to protect the individual's right to travel with dignity. Tourism master plans, policies and programmes should incorporate the principle of universal access to tourism infrastructure, products and services. Furthermore, access improvement in tourism benefits many other groups, including older persons and families with young children. The inclusion of universal design in tourism development can create environments, products and services that are useable by a wide spectrum of consumers, irrespective of their experience, knowledge, skills, age, gender, or their physical, sensory, communication and cognitive abilities. Thus the spirit of barrier-free tourism means the reduction of all physical and non-physical barriers and dangers so that they do not adversely affect tourism experiences and activities (Anon, 2000b).

From this research we can learn the following lessons:

- More and more people - with and without disabilities – are travelling more often
- People with disabilities are becoming more vocal in expressing their needs and desires, especially with regard to flexibility in travel options
- People with disabilities are more likely to be disproportionately loyal to businesses (such as specific travel agents and hotels) that best serve their needs
- People with disabilities are more likely to rely on a limited number of information resources from which to gather travel information. This is in part due to lack of service flexibility they encounter in negotiating with unexpected barriers during tourism experiences
- People with disabilities are more likely to choose newer facilities in anticipation that they will meet federal accessibility standards
- The tourism industry needs to aggressively market to the 54 million people with disabilities
- The tourism industry needs to become more familiar with accessibility standards and the needs of tourists with disabilities. Accessibility audits performed by knowledgeable people with disabilities may be a key to the improvement of facilities and services

- The tourism industry needs to increase its customer service training in order to serve those with disabilities and limitations. Comprehensive programs should include policy-setters as well as front-line staff
- The tourism industry needs to develop policies that are barrier-free with zero exclusion (Turco *et al.*, 1998:83-84).

5.4 FURTHER RESEARCH

From this study the following research questions were identified:

- What criteria can be used to standardise the accessibility of facilities in the tourism industry in South Africa?
- How will travel decisions and travel plans of tourists with disabilities be affected if the number of accessible attractions/facilities are increased?
- How can the tourism industry effectively promote tourism for tourists with disabilities?
- What is an expected level of service provided by tour operators and travel agents to tourists with disabilities and how can the current service delivery be improved?
- What contribution can tertiary tourism training institutions make to develop personnel/human resources in order to render a quality service to tourists with disabilities?

Barriers are imposed by others, not by persons with disabilities

L van Horn, 2001