

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND NATURE TOURISM: A SOUTH AFRICA CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Almost seven percent of the total population of South Africa are disabled, according to Statistics South Africa. Of this group, 21% are physically disabled. A lack of recreational opportunities is listed as one of the major sources of stress for this group. The accessibility of parks and reserves in the Limpopo Province for wheelchair-bound people is investigated in this case study. The province has a rich natural heritage as well as an abundance of wilderness areas, and although ecotourism already plays an important role in the economic development of the province, it is still under-utilised. Given the absence of rain and the moderate temperature in winter, the Limpopo Province is one of the most suitable in South Africa for outdoor recreational activities during the winter months. To evaluate parks and reserves in the province in terms of their accessibility to people with disabilities, especially those confined to wheelchairs, a model was developed with a set of criteria against which tourism venues could be tested. Values ranging from 3 for full accessibility to 0 for total inaccessibility were allocated and used to evaluate the parks and reserves in the study area. An average value was calculated for each venue. These averages were finally tested against the accessibility index to determine the extent to which the park or reserve is accessible to people with disabilities.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become an important sector in many countries as a growing source of foreign exchange earnings (Keyser 2002; Seddighi and Theocharous 2002). In addition to the generation of foreign exchange earnings, tourism also alleviates the balance of payment problems, creates employment and contributes towards the increase of income, savings, investment and economic growth (Shaw & Williams 2002; Lim 1997). The tourist industry consists of two forms of tourism, namely mass and alternative tourism. Mass tourism is characterised by large numbers of people seeking replication of their own culture in institutionalised settings, with little cultural or environmental interaction in authentic settings. Alternative tourism, however, usually denotes alternative forms of tourism or special interest tourism, which emphasise greater contact and understanding between hosts and guests, as well as between tourists and the environment (Smith & Eadington, 1992). One form of alternative tourism is ecotourism, which embraces tourism in the biophysical environment and is conducted in natural areas. It generally incorporates ecologically sustainable activities, conservation-supporting measures at the local level, active interpretation and/or education concerning the region being visited and the involvement of the local community (Dowling, 2000).

A distinction has to be made, however, between nature tourism and ecotourism. Laarman and Durst (1993) as well as Goodwin (1996) make a conceptual differentiation between these two forms of tourism. Nature tourism should be seen as tourism focused on nature, such as undisturbed natural areas, parks and reserves, as well as areas of protected flora and fauna in their natural habitats. This type of tourism, however, can include all forms of tourism – mass, adventure and low-impact tourism as well as ecotourism. Thus, nature tourism entails travel for the purpose of

enjoying undeveloped natural areas or wildlife (Goodwin, 1996:287). Goodwin (1996:288) sees ecotourism as low-impact nature tourism, which contributes to the maintenance of species and habitats, either directly through a contribution to conservation, and/or indirectly by providing revenue to the local community. These earnings should be sufficient for local people to value, and therefore protect, their wildlife heritage area as a source of income. The question to be addressed in this paper concerns the extent to which nature tourism and ecotourism are accessible to the physically disabled tourist in South Africa.

In the recent past access for people with disabilities to public buildings and facilities has become an important part of the political agenda, and internationally many public authorities are promoting strategies for an 'accessible built environment' (Imrie, 1996; Chouinard, 1997). In both Britain and the United States of America disability activists have campaigned for legislation to make it mandatory for public buildings to be accessible to people with disabilities. In the USA the American Disability Act (ADA) was passed in 1990 and was seen as a major victory for activists. In Britain similar legislation was finally passed in November 1995 in the form of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), after 13 earlier unsuccessful attempts had been made to introduce such legislation between 1982 and 1995 (Butler & Bowby 1997:411). In Australia the Disability Act of 1986 and the Disability Discrimination Act of 1992 were aimed at promoting the importance of valued roles and competencies for people with disabilities in the community (Patterson 2001). However, in South Africa there are at present no laws specifically for the benefit of people with disabilities, although the rights of this group of the population are entrenched in the South African Constitution, as well as the Bill of Rights (Du Toit 2002).

Because people with disabilities find it difficult to come into their own in a world that focuses mainly on the needs of able-bodied individuals, greater care should be taken to adapt the built environment for the benefit of this disadvantaged group in society. The day-to-day artifacts which the able-bodied person takes for granted are usually out of reach, or unavailable, to the wheelchair-bound person (Imrie 1996). The blind and the hearing-impaired can to a certain extent still cope in the world of the able-bodied; but it is the wheelchair-bound person who loses his or her independence in this world. From this discourse it is clear that certain everyday factors that are insignificant to the able-bodied person might spatially displace people with disabilities. Given this fact, this particular group of society might come to be regarded as being 'out of place' in such environments, both by other individuals and, very often, also by themselves (Hall, Healy and Harrison 2002). There is also some evidence that people with disabilities internalise some of the stereotypical attitudes towards them (Butler and Bowby, 1997).

In studying people with disabilities in an environment created for able-bodied individuals, the ecological theory should be taken into account. This theory assumes that there are multidirectional interconnections between individuals and their environment (Howe-Murphy and Charboneau 1987). Another facet of importance is the mutual influence of the individual on a system and the system on the individual (Germain 1991). In the case under discussion, the individuals with disabilities and the community in which they live, including the facilities and services, are related and influence each other reciprocally. Applying the ecological theory provides insight into the individuals' orientation to the environment in which they live and the way they operate within this environment (Devine and McGovern 2001), as well as the manner in which the environment influences them and the way in which they judge their worth in terms of future possibilities (Fridgen 1980). There are different assumptions that are associated with the ecological theory. One assumption is that problems or limitations within a system should be seen as the result of multiple variables rather than of a single causal factor (Munson 1991). Another assumption of the ecological theory is that the environment should be developed so as to be as unrestrictive as

possible and provide maximum support, thereby empowering the individual to attain optimal independence within a specific setting (Germain 1991).

DISABLED PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

In South Africa data concerning people with disabilities seem to be mainly linked to architecture and social work (Kotze 2003). The fact that people have some physical or mental impairment does not mean that their needs for, or abilities to benefit from, outdoor recreation are impaired. Lombard (1994) lists the lack of recreation as a major source of stress for disabled people. Many problems experienced by disabled people can be ascribed to the effects of a disabling environment rather than to personal deficiencies (Germain and Gitterman 1980). Disabled persons suffers as a result of their disability, but they are handicapped by their environment (Houghton 1989). Patton (1998) suggests that in cases where there may be environmental constraints to implementing an integrative facility, for example, when nature trails pass through a difficult terrain, it may be possible to facilitate the use of the initial portion of that trail. Such an approach will circumvent the spatial separation that would arise from providing separate specialised facilities.

Nearly as important as the design of facilities is the provision of information. This is a crucial factor, as people with disabilities cannot travel if they do not know beforehand which places are accessible to them. If parks and reserves can generate accurate information about their accessibility, and if such information can be disseminated to the disabled public, the resultant awareness is likely to promote confidence and increase the willingness of people with disabilities to visit these destinations. Furthermore, personnel of tourist venues must be sensitive and understanding in their interaction with disabled visitors and should be able to provide sufficient information.

In the USA the existence of barrier-free legislation facilitated the incorporation of disabled people into the tourism business more swiftly than has been the case in South Africa. In the United Kingdom the interaction of people with disabilities with parks and natural heritage areas is largely influenced by the efforts of community trusts and their respective initiatives. In Australia the State Park authorities are promoting access to the state parks through the provision of accurate and easily interpreted grading schemes. Whether through legislation, organisations or grading schemes, the aim is to incorporate disabled people into mainstream society. Special facilities are not patronised either by able people or disabled people (Filmer and Filmer 1996). Facilities should be designed for universal consumption as an effective measure of integration. Stigmatisation and inadequate opportunities in respect of recreation are one of the greatest sources of stress for people with challenges (Hoffman 1987).

The motivation for disabled people who are visiting parks is the desire to experience scenery and natural beauty, to view wildlife and experience nature on its own terms, to share the experience with family and friends and to escape the urban environment (Patton 1998). In America 78% of the respondents who visit parks see such visits as a personal challenge, while in South Africa a mere 3% regard visits to parks in this way. This could be related to the higher number of potentially dangerous animals in South African parks (Patton 1998). The parks in South Africa are therefore more geared towards game-watching from vehicles. Furthermore, American society is far more comfortable in its acceptance of people with disabilities, who are therefore more likely to look for the physical challenges offered by outdoor wilderness areas. Ninety-six percent of people with disabilities visited parks more often after they became disabled. Although it is difficult to isolate this figure, the high percentage could indicate that living with impairment may actually increase a person's desire to have contact with nature (Patton 1998).

INDEPENDENCE AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mobility is the key to independence for people with disabilities (Houghton 1989). When considering physical barriers, wheelchair-bound people often suffer the most. On the other hand, barriers concerning information are a more severe problem amongst people with visual and/or hearing impairments or mentally disabled people. London, Norton and Day (1988) argue that all citizens would benefit from architectural features that lend maximum flexibility to users. Various familiar temporary conditions exist in which people would feel more comfortable if designs were used which originally had people with disabilities in mind.

Not having transport greatly curbs the independence of disabled people. This is a serious problem in South Africa, where public transport in general leaves much to be desired. People with disabilities are often economically marginalised and therefore many do not have access to their own transport. In addition, many transport routes are unsuitable for the traveller with a disability, owing to insufficient stop-over points, especially ablution facilities. While this situation has improved in South Africa in recent times with regard to the major service stations along the main routes, the traveller with a disability cannot tour secondary routes with confidence (Patton, 1998).

Parking facilities are a further frustration for people with disabilities. Although parking space is usually not overcrowded at game reserves, the road from the car to the overnight facility or tourist attraction often creates problems. Furthermore, the vehicle which is used for the guided tour through the reserves and parks is unlikely to be equipped to cater for a tourist with a disability, and tour operators often provide coach tours that exclude disabled users.

In the relatively new approach of community-based rehabilitation, meaning the active participation and incorporation of disabled people into the mainstream of community life, it becomes even more important for people with disabilities to be able to visit nature reserves and parks in as independent a way as they desire, as far as their disabilities permit them.

THE DISABLED IN SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa approximately 2,7 million (6,6%) of the total population are disabled, according to Statistics South Africa (1996:35). Twenty-one percent of this group are physically disabled, 41% are visually handicapped, 14,4% are hearing-impaired and 7,2% are mentally disabled. This figure is an underestimation, as it excludes people who are institutionalised. It also fails to take people with temporary disabilities into account. There is thus an estimation that up to 12% of the South African population are moderately to severely disabled (Office of the President 1997). Although no legislation has been introduced in South Africa to date for people with disabilities, their rights are entrenched in the South African Constitution and the Bill of Rights, while accessibility to buildings is also ensured by means of the *National Building Regulations and Standards, Part S (SABS 040 of 1990)*. Therefore, since the disabled are seen as an integral part of society, public spaces should be accessible to them. The purpose of this study was to determine how accessible tourist attractions and destinations are for this group of the South African population. In the light of the fixation of the tourism authorities in South Africa with regard to promoting the country as a nature-based tourist destination, the Limpopo Province with its rich wildlife was chosen as a case study. The province has a rich natural heritage, and although ecotourism already plays an important role in the economic development of the province, it is still under-utilised. Given the absence of rain and the moderate temperature in winter, the Limpopo Province is one of the most suitable in South Africa for outdoor recreational activities during the winter months (Donaldson, 1995).

This paper evaluates national, provincial and municipal parks and reserves as well as private reserves in the Limpopo Province in terms of their accessibility to people with disabilities,

especially those who are confined to a wheelchair. The rest of this paper is divided into two sections. In the first section detailed information is provided concerning an evaluation model that was developed to evaluate the accessibility of parks and reserves in the province. In the second section these establishments are evaluated against this model.

EVALUATION MODEL FOR ACCESSIBILITY OF TOURISM VENUES

To evaluate parks and reserves in terms of their accessibility for people with disabilities in the Limpopo Province, especially those who are confined to a wheelchair, it was essential to develop a model with a set of criteria against which to test tourism venues. Values were allocated ranging from 3 for total accessibility to zero for total inaccessibility. A value of 2 was given when there were limitations to the personal freedom of the physically disabled, and a value of 1 if the disabled would need a lot of assistance in order to gain access (see Table 1).

The *National Building Regulations and Standards, Part S (SABS 040 of 1990)* highlights certain accessibility features, such as the availability of parking, ramps, lifts, corridors and toilets, that are necessary to make a building accessible for the wheelchair-bound person. Ramps should have kerbs, handrails, a gradient of 1 to 12 and a width of 1,1 metres to give proper access to buildings. Corridors have a prescribed width of between 0,750 and 1,150 metres. The size of the toilet enclosure is significant. A minimum size of 1,7 by 1,8 meters is prescribed, since this size is big enough to accommodate a wheelchair. The size of the door and the height and position of fittings are also prescribed. If these building regulations are adhered to, this will make a building accessible for the person with a disability.

TABLE 1
EVALUATION MODEL

Value	Description	Accessibility Index
3	Fully accessible	Value of 3 = Totally accessible
2	Limited accessibility	Values from 2 to 3 = Disabled-friendly
1	Accessible, but much assistance required	Values from 1 to 2 = Marginally accessible
0	Not accessible	Value of < 1 = Not accessible

All the developments in the parks and reserves in the study area, ranging from public ablution facilities and restaurants and shops to pathways and camp walks, were then evaluated in terms of these values. An average value was calculated for each venue. These averages were finally tested against the accessibility index (see Table 1) to determine the extent to which the park or reserve is accessible.

ACCESSIBILITY OF PARKS IN THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE

National parks, provincial reserves, municipal parks and private reserves are dealt with separately, because these nature areas cater for a different clientele and also have a different kind of infrastructure. Visits and telephonic interviews were used to gather data on tourist organisations as well as reserves and parks, in order to establish which venues are accessible and whether there are any special adaptations for people with disabilities.

NATIONAL PARKS

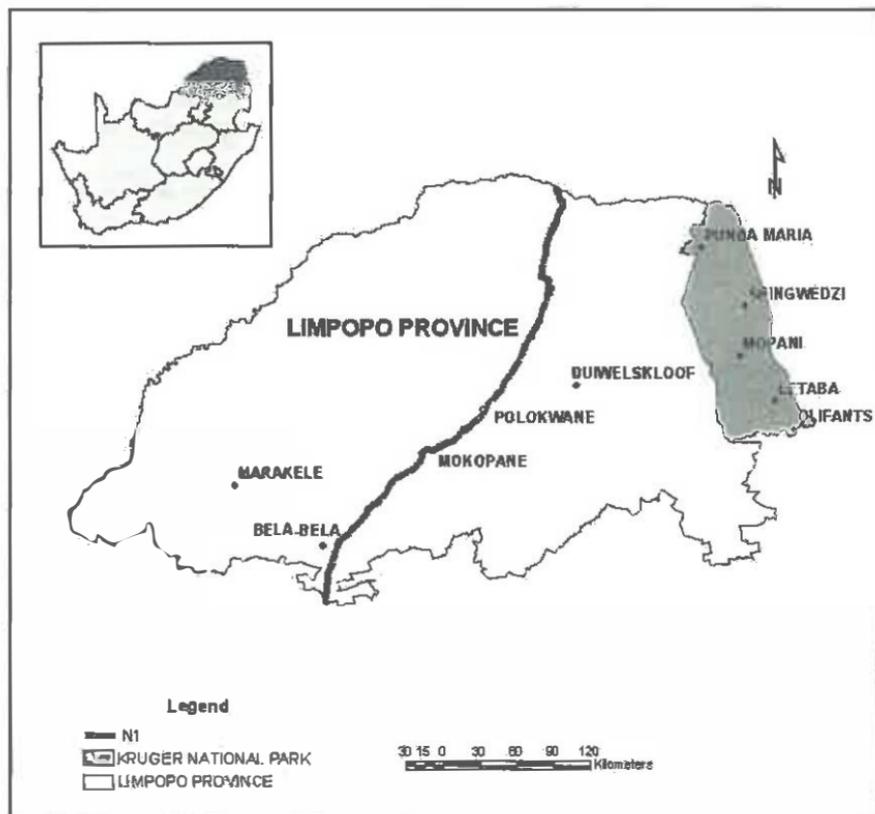
Two national parks are located in the Limpopo Province. The 53 000-hectare Marakele National Park, which has been open to the public since 1988, is not accessible for the physically disabled. Accommodation in the park is comprised of one main camp and one bush camp. Both provide accommodation only in tents. According to park officials, there is a possibility that they might upgrade their facilities in order make them more accessible.

The Kruger National Park is situated in two provinces. Only the part to the north of the Olifants River is in the Limpopo Province. For this reason only this part was included in the study (see Figure 1). This national park is one of the most accessible in South Africa. Four of the park's five camps that are situated in the Limpopo Province are accessible for the wheelchair-bound person (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
ACCESSIBILITY OF CAMPS IN THE KRUGER NATIONAL PARK

Camps	Reception Restaurant Shop	Overnight facilities	Public ablution facilities	Lookout points	Exhi- bitious	Camp Walks	Access value
Letaba	3	3	3	3	3	2	2,83
Mopane	3	3	3	3	n.a	1	2,60
Olifants	3	2	3	3	3	1	2,50
Shingwedzi	3	2	3	3	3	0	2,33
Punda Mnia	2	1	2	1	0	1	1,17

The Letaba camp with an average accessibility of 2,83 has two two-bedded huts and two six-bedded cottages with barrier-free facilities for the physically impaired. In addition there are several other units which have no steps and can be entered by a person in a wheelchair without assistance. The camp has a pathway around its perimeter, but it is only partly accessible as there are some steps along the way. Most of the path along the Letaba River is accessible. The exhibition hall, where there are several displays, is fully accessible to wheelchair users. The Olifants Rest Camp (accessibility average of 2,5) has ramps with suitable gradients fitted to the reception area, restaurant and shop. There are adapted toilets for day visitors, while access to the lookout point over the Olifants River has been facilitated by the construction of a ramp to provide a suitable gradient down a steep incline. One two-bedded hut has been fitted with barrier-free ablution facilities. The difficult terrain of the camp means that the walk around the camp's perimeter is not accessible to the wheelchair-bound person.



At the Sbingwedzi Rest Camp (2,33) the ground is firm and flat, while ramps give easy access to the reception area, shop, cafeteria and restaurant. There is a barrier-free toilet and there are ramped slopes everywhere, although steep in places. The camp also has four five-bed units with kitchen and bathroom facilities that are accessible. There is a unisex barrier-free toilet and shower in the communal ablution blocks. The day visitor's area can be reached by means of a wooden bridge that is firm enough for easy wheelchair passage. At Mopane Rest Camp (2,17) all the facilities, such as the reception, day visitor picnic area, restaurant, shop and cafeteria are accessible and each has an accompanying barrier-free toilet. This camp also had two four-bedded chalets with barrier-free facilities. The Punda Maria Rest Camp (1,17) has ramps at the reception area, restaurant and shop, but these ramps are not independently negotiable for the wheelchair-bound person. The family cottages have bath facilities that can be accessed. Although all ablution facilities in the camp can be accessed in a wheelchair, there are no barrier-free facilities inside. With the exception of Punda Maria, all the rest camps in the Limpopo Province sector of the Kruger National Park could be classified as disabled-friendly.

PROVINCIAL RESERVES AND MUNICIPAL PARKS

Although there are future plans for making provincial reserves more accessible for people with disabilities, the Nylsvlei Nature Reserve is at present the only reserve in the Limpopo Province which is accessible. The reserve, with an accessibility value of 2,25, has a bird-watching area, the Kingfisher hide, which was designed particularly for people who are wheelchair-bound. Two other hides in the reserve, developed at the main vleiland, are not accessible at all. There are no ablation facilities at the bird-watching hides, but the public ablation facilities at the camping terrain are adapted for people with physical impairments (see Table 3).

The three municipal parks, namely the Polokwane Bird Sanctuary, as well as Reierspark and Louis Botha Park in Duiwelskloof, were found to have some adaptations to cater for people with disabilities. The Polokwane Bird Sanctuary (which has an accessibility value of 2,6), with a checklist of 253 bird species which are regularly spotted, is known throughout the world. The area consists of large dams, which are used in the cleaning process of the city's sewerage, as well as walkways and nine bird-watching hides. It has an accessible lapa with two fully accessible ablation facilities, and people with disabilities can reach most of the hides by car. Most pathways are inaccessible and wheelchair-bound people will need assistance to move from their vehicles to some of the hides. Although the majority of hides are accessible, some of the ramps have gradients steeper than 1:12.

The Louis Botha Park (2,3) has adapted ablation facilities. A wheelchair-bound person will be able, with some assistance, to travel on the pathways and visit the orchard house. In Reierspark (1,5) a blind person is treated to a scent garden which is planted in a specific pattern, and two beds of trees with peculiar fragrances. The park consists of a three-hundred-metre trail with benches to rest for the severely disabled, but no provision is made for ablation facilities for the physically disabled person.

TABLE 3
ACCESSIBILITY OF PROVINCIAL RESERVES AND MUNICIPAL PARKS

Reserves and Parks	Public ablation facilities	Bird hides	Pathways	Other constructions	Lapa	Access value
Polokwane Bird Sanctuary	3	3	2	2	3	2,60
Louis Botha Park	3	n.a.	2	2	n.a.	2,30
Nylsvlei Nature Reserve	3	2	2	2	n.a.	2,25
Reierspark	0	n.a.	3	3	n.a.	1,50

With the exception of Reierspark, which is mainly adapted for the benefit of the visually impaired, all of the reserves are disabled-friendly. When directors of the various conservation regions were questioned as to whether there are any future plans concerning accessibility, they all remarked that there are no financial resources. The solution to this problem could be private sponsors as is the case at the Kingfisher hide at the Nylsvlei Nature Reserve. Lobbyists for the physically disabled, as well as the presence of someone promoting the interests of this population group at the provincial level, could also improve the situation regarding accessibility.

PRIVATELY OWNED RESERVES

A total of fourteen privately owned reserves claim to be accessible to some extent to people with disabilities. A place's adaptability for the benefit of disabled visitors also depends on the severity of their impairments. Most wheelchair-bound people will agree that one of the greatest physical handicaps is the inaccessibility of ablution facilities. Many of the reserves have adapted public ablution facilities, but only Tshukudu (Ed's Cottage), with an accessibility value of 2,6, seems to have a fully accessible overnight facility. Several officials of private reserves indicated that they put a plastic chair in the shower for people in wheelchairs. To be able to utilise this, a person with a physical impairment would more than likely need assistance. As the research emphasises the independent travelling of people with disabilities, this would not be regarded as full accessibility.

Table 4 shows all the reserves which claim to have some form of accessibility. Eight of these reserves had fully or partly accessible ablution facilities for their guests, leaving six without any ablution facilities, one of the most important amenities for the physically handicapped person to preserve his or her dignity. The camp walks and pathways did not fare any better: only six reserves have fully accessible pathways, while in the case of two reserves, handicapped guests will require much assistance with movement. Thirteen of these reserves also have vehicles to take guests on game drives, but not one of them has a vehicle adapted for people with disabilities. Respondents indicated that should a wheelchair-bound tourist visit the reserves, the person would be lifted into the vehicle.

TABLE 4
ACCESSIBILITY OF PRIVATE RESERVES

Reserves	Reception Restaurants Shops	Overnight facilities	Public ablution facilities	Camp walks and pathways	Vehicles for game drives	Access value
Tshukudu (Ed's Cottage)	3	3	3	3	1	2,60
Tishaba Lodge	3	2	3	3	1	2,40
Kapama	3	2	3	3	1	2,40
Entabeni	3	2	3	3	1	2,40
Touchstone	3	2	3	2	1	2,20
Sambane	2	2	2	3	1	2,00
Tibane	2	2	2	2	n.a.	2,00
Rhino Bushveld Eco-park	n.a.	2	0	3	1	1,50
MalatiPark	2	1	2	1	1	1,40
Leadwood	n.a.	2	0	2	1	1,25
Kambaku	n.a.	2	0	2	1	1,25
Nkaya	n.a.	1	0	2	1	1,00
KwaMbili	n.a.	1	0	2	1	1,00
Darisandi	n.a.	1	0	1	1	0,75

Seven of the privately owned reserves are handicapped-friendly. Of these Tshukudu, with 2,6, scored the highest accessibility value. Three others, namely Tishaba Lodge, Kapama and Entabeni, were each allocated values of 2,4. These four reserves, and for that matter all the reserves that had vehicles for game drives, were affected negatively with regard to the accessibility value calculated, because these vehicles are not adapted for the physically disabled. However, it should be borne in mind that these are expensive vehicles and to adapt them for the occasional handicapped person would make them even more pricey. The seven private reserves scoring values lower than 2 are problematic in the sense that the *National Building Regulations and Standards, Part S (SABS 040 of 1990)* was already published more than 12 years ago, yet some of these reserves still have ablation facilities that are not accessible for people with disabilities.

From this case study in the Limpopo Province, it seems clear that to date, national, provincial and municipal parks and reserves are much more disability-friendly, and more accommodating towards the physically disabled person, than privately owned reserves in South Africa.

CONCLUSION

Although South Africa does not have laws protecting the disabled population, such as the American Disability Act of the USA or the Disability Discrimination Act of Britain, the country has an exceptionally liberal Constitution and Bill of Rights that protect the rights of individuals. In 1990 the *National Building Regulations and Standards, Part S (SABS 040)* was published. Twelve years down the line, however, we are still confronted with venues in our tourist industry, as well as our cities, that are not accessible to the physically handicapped person.

In the Limpopo case study it was found that 14 out of the 23 parks and reserves included in the study are disabled-friendly. From this study it is also clear that although a park or reserve management may claim that the park or reserve is accessible for people with disabilities, the fact remains that if their ablation facilities are not barrier-free, their accessibility value will most probably be lower than two, and that the lack of such facilities will make the venue only marginally accessible. This means that it will be almost impossible for a physically handicapped person to travel independently. If the tourist industry in South Africa wants to include the 6,6% of the country's population that is physically handicapped, the industry (private and public) should make the necessary adaptation to infrastructure to make it possible for these individuals to travel independently.

The majority of places available for people with disabilities are situated south of the Olifants River, just outside the western border of the Kruger National Park, in the vicinity of Hoedspruit. The many game reserves, the proximity of the Kruger National Park and the well-established businesses associated with game farming in the Hoedspruit area could be the reason for this. A fair amount of accessibility is also found in the area between Bela-Bela and Mokopane. It seems as if the parks and reserves in these areas are all situated within a reasonable distance from the Gauteng area and also fairly close to the National Road (N1). One cannot ignore the potential snowball effect that would result if one reserve were to adapt its facilities, thus forcing others to follow suit in order to remain competitive.

As the Limpopo Province has a high incidence of disability amongst its inhabitants, it is important that some provincial parks should become more accessible. As Chapman (1998) has observed with respect to the Eastern Cape, this need not be a costly exercise. Instead, it simply needs someone with organisational capabilities who is willing to do something about the situation. Furthermore, there are organisations such as Eco-access which are providing valuable guidance in making venues accessible at a low cost. With the restructuring of Satour and the abandonment of the

National Accessibility Scheme, the interests of the tourist with a disability were also abandoned. The grading system which started under the National Accessibility Scheme was discontinued and to date the programme has not been resumed again. If South Africa wants to promote tourism and lure the growing number of international travellers with disabilities and impairments to its shores, the completion of a grading scheme is of vital importance. Such a scheme should include tourist attractions which provide an experience with nature for the tourist with a disability. A national grading system could save a tourist from the costly experience of booking accommodation, only to find out upon arrival that the facilities are not suited to his/her needs.

Notwithstanding the South African Constitution, the Bill of Rights and the *Code of Practice: Accessibility to Disabled Persons* of 1993, this country's public spaces, parks and reserves are still not entirely accessible to people with disabilities. With regard to the Limpopo case study, it seems that in many cases the built environment in South Africa is still being created to serve only the needs of the able-bodied person. This is evident in the omission of seemingly insignificant aspects such as the erection of a sign that indicates reserved parking for the wheelchair-bound person.

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