tourism

Department:
Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Final Report
on the State of Universal Access in Provincial Parks
June 2014

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DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Accessibility: refers to the measure of the extent to which products and services are used by a person with disability as effectively as can be used by the person without disabilities. Accessibility should enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life. Persons with disabilities should be able to access, on an equal basis with others, the physical environment, transportation, information and communications – including information and communications technologies and system and other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and rural areas.

Accessible Tourism: enables people with access requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments. This definition is inclusive of all people including those travelling with children in prams, people with disabilities and senior citizens.

People with disabilities: All persons who, owing to the environment being encountered, suffer a limitation in their relational ability and have special needs during travel, in accommodation, and other tourism services, particularly individuals with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities or other medical conditions requiring special care, such as elderly persons and others in need of temporary assistance (UNWTO).

Responsible Tourism: tourism management strategy in which the tourism sector and tourists take responsibility to protect and conserve the natural environment, respect and conserve local cultures and ways of life, and contribute to stronger local economies and a better quality of life for local people.

Universal Design: is the design of products and environments to be accessible to all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for personal adaptation or by specialized design.

DCWPD: Department of Children, Women and People with Disabilities
DTI: Department of Trade and Industry
NDT : The National Department of Tourism
NTSS: The National Tourism Sector Strategy
RSA : Republic of South Africa
SADA: South African Disability Alliance
TGCSA: The Tourism Grading Council of South Africa
UA : Universal Accessibility
UAT : Universal Accessibility in Tourism
UNWTO: United Nations World Tourism Organisation

1. INTRODUCTION

The National Department of Tourism (NDT) identified Universal Access (UA) in Tourism as an important initiative to enhance South Africa's competitiveness, in line with the desire to be one of the Top 20 tourism destinations by 2020. Universal access in Tourism responds to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) Global Code of Ethics for Tourism: (Article2.2) which states that:

"Tourism activities should respect the equality of men and women; they should promote human rights and, **more particularly, the individual rights of the most vulnerable groups, notable children, the elderly, the handicapped, ethnic minorities and indigenous people.**"

The UNWTO recommendations on "Accessible Tourism for All" (2013) have been approved and endorsed by the General Assembly. Updated from the 2005 version, the recommendations outline a form of tourism that involves a collaborative process among stakeholders to enable people with access requirements to function independently through universally designed tourism products, services and environments.

In line with the above recommendation by UNWTO, the Responsible Tourism Directorate in partnership with industry stakeholders and organisations representing people with disabilities established a UA Stakeholder Forum in March 2010. The stakeholders included and is not limited to the following organisations with enormous knowledge on the field of UA; The Department of Children, Women and People with Disabilities (DCWPD), the South African Disability Alliance (SADA), the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa (TGCSA) and Tourism Associations.

The same Forum developed the UAT Declaration and the UAT Action Plan. The UAT Declaration is a commitment to the implementation of UA principles by role players in the broader tourism value chain while the UAT Action Plan contains a detailed plan of action aimed at ensuring universal accessibility within the tourism sector as well as responsible organisations, entities, and government departments. The UAT Declaration was signed and launched by the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Honourable Ms Tokozile Xasa on the 15th May 2012 at the Tourism Indaba in Durban.

The National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) identifies Universal Access as a quality issue. The Tourism Grading Council South Africa (TGCSA) has a mandate to grade tourism establishments to ensure they offer quality to customers. Traditionally, the grading system in South Africa excluded the UA component. In 2009 the TGCSA appointed KPMG to undertake a review of the grading process and one of the recommendations arising from the review was the incorporation of UA grading within the standard grading process. UA grading now forms part of the standard grading criteria for all-star grading categories of accommodation. The TGCSA has also developed a sensitivity training to sensitise front office staff on UA issues. The South African National Minimum Standard for Responsible Tourism (SANS 1162), launched in September 2011, advocates for a Universally Accessible Tourism sector. The Standard comprises of 41 criteria and one of the major criteria relating to UA states:

The organisation shall provide access for all people with disabilities and special needs" and as a result it is imperative for tourism facilities to be UA compliant.

This report will focus on the status of UA in provincial government owned parks and partially highlight the status of UA in the National Parks as consulted to establish if UA initiatives were implemented in the SANParks and the detailed report is attached as **(Annexure A)**.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in partnership with tourism stakeholders undertook the accessible tourism market assessment study during 2011. The findings of the study indicated that only basic accessibility features were provided for in tourism attractions and or accommodation establishments. The DTI study further identified Universal Accessibility (UA) as a niche market and recommends the development and promotion of Universally Accessible products and destinations.

The findings of the economic impact assessment outlined the impact that Accessible Tourism has on the SA Tourism industry. These impacts are highlighted as follows:

- Potential to generate new business sales of R12, 439 Million;
- Potential to create 29 249 new employment opportunities; and
- Potential to generate an income of R5, 32 Billion, contributing approximately 3% to the GDP of the Tourism sector and 0.23% to the national GDP.

It is against this background that the NDT identified a need to conduct a study on the status of UA in Provincial Parks. This relates to both the economic benefits that could be incurred as well as realising the rights of people living with disabilities. The study assessed the current status of Universal Accessibility compliance in the provincial parks of South Africa. The study was conducted to support the following UA objectives:

- Increase access to tourist attractions by people with disabilities/elderly and those with accessibility needs.
- To enhance SA's ability to compete for events and conferences that require UA destinations
- To highlight industry awareness of organizational benefits that flow from accessible product supply in tourism.
- To encourage building of new tourism structures and facilities which are universally accessible compliant and;
- To encourage development of tourism experience attractions and destinations that is universally accessible.

1.1 Strategic importance of the study

The assessment of UA compliance in Provincial Parks is seen as a strategic step in realising the success and identifying the challenges ahead in ensuring that South Africa is a universally accessible destination. The findings have assisted in identifying the existing gaps in the UA agenda which in return have informed the NDT of what is required to achieve UA compliance in provincial

parks. These recommendations will assist NDT and relevant role-players in formulating an implementation plan to address UA initiatives in Provincial Parks.

1.2   Research questions

The research was aimed at addressing the following key questions:
- How many national and provincial tourism parks are government owned?
- What is the state of universal accessibility in the various government owned tourism parks?
- How many of the parks are accessible within the following categories of accessibility:
  - ✓ Mobility;
  - ✓ Vision; and
  - ✓ Communication
- What are the obstacles and or challenges impeding implementation of universal accessibility within government owned tourism parks?
- What actions or measures need to be taken by government to speed up the implementation of universal accessibility within government owned tourism parks?

1.3   The purpose and objectives of the study

The primary purpose of the study was to determine the state of Universal Accessibility in Provincial Parks. It was also to inform the NDT of what role can be played in supporting the implementation of UA in Provincial Parks.

The objective of the study was to:
- Determine the number of provincial parks.
- Determine the state of universal accessibility in the various provincial parks.
- Determine the number of the parks accessible for the three categories of universal accessibility (mobility, communication and vision)
- Determine the obstacles and challenges to the uptake and implementation of universal accessibility; and
- Recommend a strategy that can be put in place to speed up the implementation of universal accessibility within government owned tourism parks

2   RESEARCH APPROACH

2.1.   Research Methodology and Data Collection

A combination of both qualitative and quantitative research design approaches were used for the study. Primary data was collected through the development and distribution of a survey questionnaire. Letters were written to the 9 Provincial Departments and Conservation Entities responsible for the management of provincial parks requesting meetings with each Provincial Department and Conservation Entity to discuss the survey questionnaires All 9 provinces committed to the dates

allocated and participated during the provincial consultations. The questionnaires were completed based on the parks identified by the provinces.

Meetings were held as per the schedule attached as **Annexure B.**Table 1 below shows the number of parks with tourism activities in each province and the total number of questionnaires completed per province. Other provinces elected to have more responses whilst some delegated the job to the Business Development Managers with extensive knowledge of the infrastructure in the parks and other provinces delegated to Senior Managers within the tourism portfolio, whilst others requested Park Managers to be available. In the case of the provinces that delegated to the Business Development Managers or Senior Managers, one questionnaire was completed based on UA developments in all parks within that province.

Table 1: Number of parks with tourism activities per province

Province	Entity Interviewed	Site of Interview	Number of parks per province	Number of respondents per province
Gauteng	Gauteng Department of Agriculture & Rural Development	NO. 68 Ellof Street, Diamond Corner Building, JOHANNESBURG	5	3
Western Cape	Cape Nature	PGWC Shared Services Centre, CNR BOSDUIF & VOLSTRUITS STR	42 but with 27 that has tourism facilities and access	1
Northern Cape	Department of Environmental Affairs & Conservation	LONGSTREET 90, SASKO Building Boardroom 2, KIMBERLY	5	3
Eastern Cape	Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency	Palm Square Business Park, IRONWOOD HOUSE, EASTLONDON	15	1
Free State	Department of Economic Development & Tourism	34 Markgraaf Street Fountain Building 1ST Floor, BLOEMFONTEIN	21	7
Limpopo	Limpopo Tourism Agency	ERF 92/688, Portion 2 Southern Gateway, Ext 4, N1 main Road, POLOKWANE	10	1
Mpumalanga	Mpumalanga Tourism Parks & Agency	Mpumalanga Parks and Agency, Dining Room Auditorium: Hall's Gateway on the N4 National Highway	20	1

| Province	Entity Interviewed	Site of Interview	Number of parks per province	Number of respondents per province
North West	North West Tourism Parks & Agency	North West Parks and Tourism Board Offices	15	11
Kwazulu Natal	KZN Ezemvelo Wildlife	1 (Hluhluwe Nature Resort)	114	1
TOTAL			**232**	**29**

2.2. Data Analysis

The quantitative information was analysed using excel and the qualitative information was analysed by focusing on the common points from the discussions held during the consultations.

Quantitative data is based on information that could be measured and grouped. The questions addressed awareness of strategies by the NDT, whether provincial departments have developed policies around UA and whether the resorts in the provincial parks have been assessed by the TGCSA (if yes) have they been assessed specifically for UA within the new grading criteria that includes a UA component and if any of the parks have been certified under a Responsible Tourism Scheme.

2.2.1 UA Strategies or Policies

The question addressed awareness around the strategies of NDT that advocate universal accessibility such as the NTSS and the South African National Standard for Responsible Tourism. The question further wanted to establish if provinces have strategies and policies addressing universal accessibility and whether their existing policies had elements of UA and what made them develop UA policies or not developing the policies.

Figure1: Awareness of UA Policies/Strategies
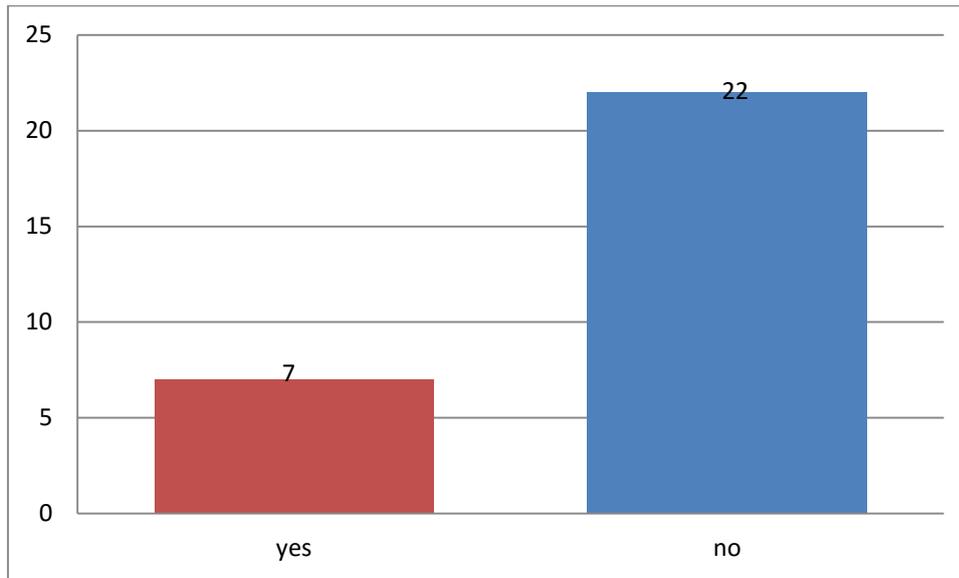
The above figure indicates parks 'level of awareness about the existing UA policies or NDT Strategies relating to Universal   Accessibility. The figure shows that out of the 29 respondents only 7 were aware of the UA policies or NDT strategies that relates to universal access. The figure shows that most of the respondents were not aware of the existing NDT Strategies or those that relates to UA, these is seen through the high number of 22 respondents who replied no when asked if they were aware of the existing policies and this indicates that there is huge need to create awareness about existing strategies especially those that relates to universal accessibility.

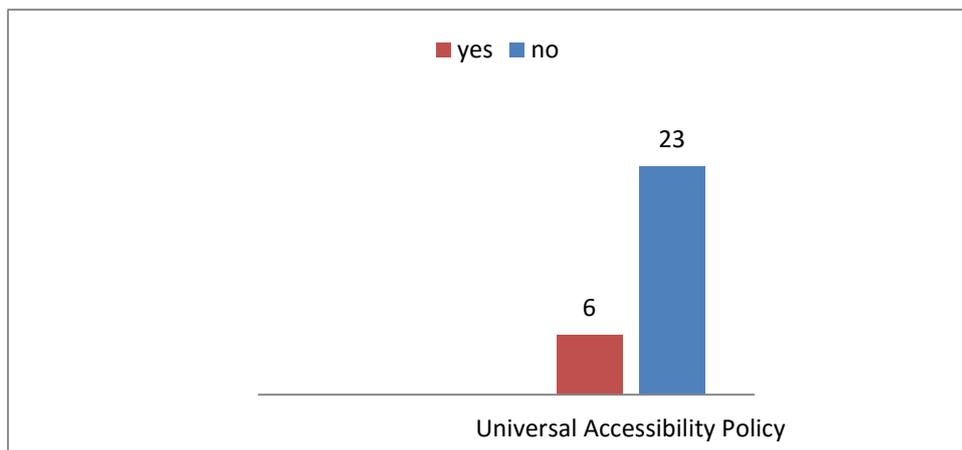**Figure 2: UA Policies development by Provinces**

Figure 2 above shows respondents who have developed UA policies and out of the 29 respondents only 6 have developed own policies on UA and 23 have not developed UA policies. This relates with the interpretation of figure 1 about the awareness levels of UA policies or strategies. The above shows that many respondents are not aware about existing policies as well as developing their own policies.
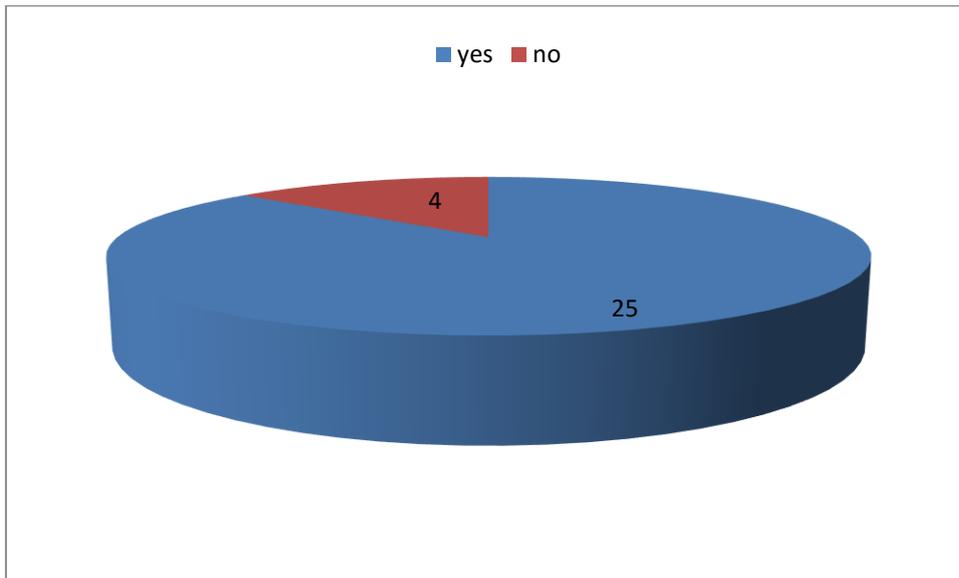
Figure 3: UA Policy development in the future

Figure 3 shows the respondent's level of willingness to develop UA policies in the future. The figure indicates that 25out of the 29 respondents were interested and agreed in developing UA policies in the future and 4 were not considering having UA policies developed as they replied no to the question. The figure shows that there is high number of respondents willingly to develop and have UA policies in the future.

2.2.2. UA initiatives and assessments

The questions were set out to establish if there were any or no initiatives that the provincial parks have undertaken towards UA and also to establish that out of all the activities offered at parks where have these initiatives been developed. Another aim was to find out whether the provincial parks have been assessed by the TGCSA and if so, was the assessment specifically for UA.

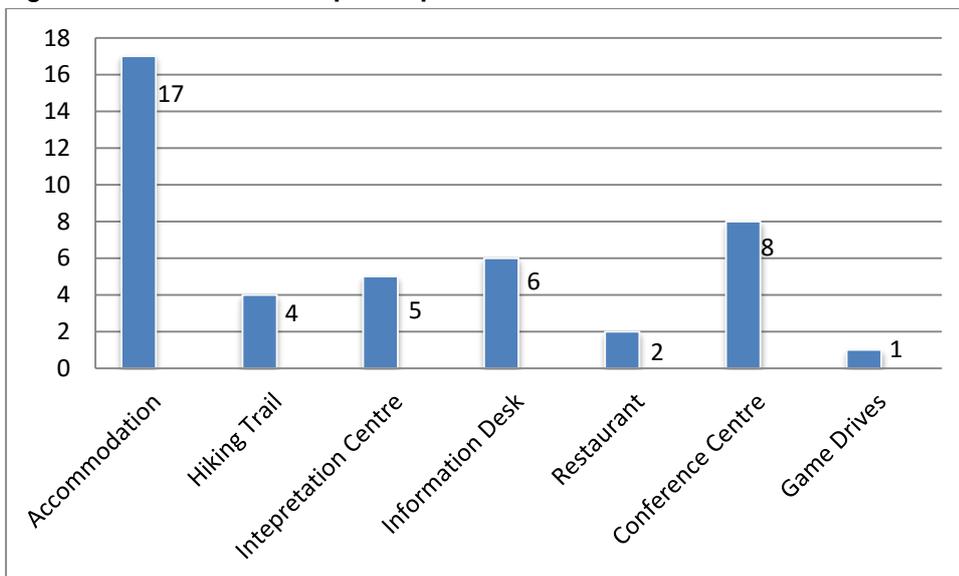**Figure 4: Initiatives developed to promote UA**

Figure 4 gives a breakdown of the different facilities and activities in the parks that have been designed for universal accessibility and how much has been done in relation to UA development. Out of 29 respondents, only 17 have implemented UA in relation to accommodation establishments by offering rooms that are wheelchair accessible with conference facilities following suit. The table shows that that there are limited initiatives that have been developed to address universal accessibility within restaurants, game drives, hiking trails and interpretation centres.

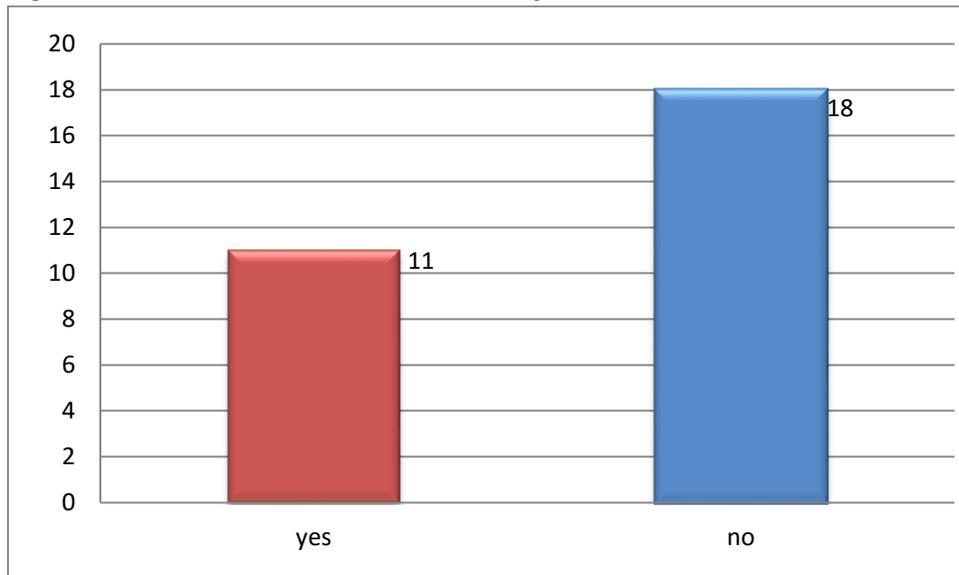**Figure 5: Assessment of establishments by TGCSA**

Figure 5 reveals the number of establishments that have been assessed by the TGCSA. 11 establishments have been assessed and 18 have not been assessed.

Figure 6: Establishment assessed for UA

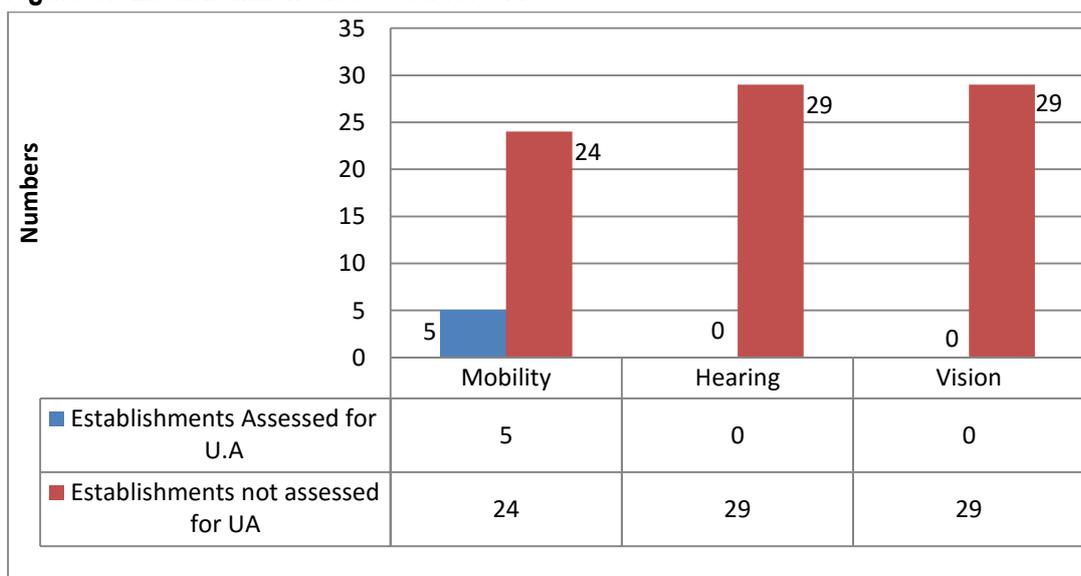|	Mobility	Hearing	Vision
Establishments Assessed for U.A	5	0	0
Establishments not assessed for UA	24	29	29

Figure 6 becomes specific and looked at facilities that were assessed by the TGCSA specifically for UA or rather establishments that were assessed under the new grading criteria that incorporates UA elements on mobility, hearing and vision. The figure shows that out of the 29 respondents only 5 have been graded and

assessed for UA on mobility by the TGCSA and 24 have not been assessed for mobility. The figure further reveals that no assessments have been conducted for hearing and vision impaired customers and this means that no initiatives have been implemented on vision and hearing.

2.2.3. Certified under any responsible tourism scheme?

The question wanted to establish if management of parks were guided by Responsible Tourism Principles and if so have they their properties been certified under any responsible tourism scheme. The findings show that all 29 respondents replied no to the question meaning that the responsible tourism principles were not followed. Awareness on National Minimum Standard for Responsible Tourism needs to be implemented.

3.   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In this study, certain limitations were encountered, thereby influencing any observations and conclusions:

- The sample was beyond NDT's control as the provinces identified parks to be surveyed.
- A self-survey questionnaire was utilised to collect information and due to time limitations information was not verified through site assessments.
- In order for NDT to have better understanding of each park, technically qualified UA assessors will be required to assist with the analysis of facilities and activities for UA.
- The final results are based on the 29 respondents that were surveyed and are not representative of the true picture of what is going on in each province, e.g. some provinces completed more questionnaires than others

4.   KEY FINDINGS FROM THE PROVINCIAL CONSULTATIONS

Part of the questionnaire was based on open-ended questions and the information received has been analysed and summarized on common points as follows.

- There is a lack of awareness on Universal Access in general which is evident from the little that has been done in implementing initiatives that promote UA as shown in figures 1 and 2. Most respondents are not aware of the NDT strategies and its contents on the importance of UA. The lack of awareness is also evident from the fact that only 6 out of 29 respondents have existing policy on UA and also 4 of the respondents still replied no to the question of developing a UA policy in the future.
- The representatives from the parks that attended the consultations raised a concern that the decision makers within their respective organisation(s) were/are not involved in the project and these may create challenges in getting buy-in or support from management in supporting and funding the implementation of UA. One province specifically requested that an awareness workshop on UA should be arranged for Senior Management (executive) in order to make them to understand the importance of implementing UA and the different types of initiatives which can be implemented.
- When the question "what barriers are you facing to implementing UA?" was asked; the response given was that it was expensive to implement UA and no allocations have been set aside and lack

of capacity within the organisations was also a barrier. They further advised that they will request that in the future budget should be allocated for future developments although were doubtful that the current infrastructure can be changed.

- A concern was also raised on the sustainability of implementing UA. An example was made that a park could spend funds on a braille trail but was there a guarantee on return of investments because parks were under pressure from their funders who expected them to be able to sustain themselves from the income incurred from visitors utilising the products and services. Where return of investment is not guaranteed they were almost sure that funds will not be released for those initiatives.

- There is a lack of technical knowledge on what needs to be done to design facilities suitable for the blind and deaf and how to design correct facilities suitable for mobility. This is evident when looking at figure6; it shows that only 5 out of the 29 respondents had been assessed for UA and only on mobility, all respondents have never been assessed for vision and hard hearing. Guidance on technical developments that could be implemented is vital.

- The staff at the provincial parks have not been trained to specifically deal with people with disabilities, the elderly and others needing universal access. This means that if the interaction is flawed it may influence the enjoyment of a perfect product or service as the experience of a service begins with services of the front office staff.

- SANParks was also consulted to give a report on the state of UA in the National Parks that they manage. The SANParks report indicates that out of 2074accommodation units only 121 units are UA compliant with other visitor facilities in the parks built to accommodate visitors with mobility impairment.

- During the consultations with the respondents it came out as a common point that they had no knowledge of what changes need to be implemented to accommodate vision and hearing impaired customers and some of the provinces such as the Northern Cape have never been assessed by TGCSA for UA compliance.

- All parks have not been certified under the any Responsible Tourism Scheme as all replied no to the question and this means that the responsible tourism principles and guidelines are not followed.

5.   RECOMMENDATIONS

The different provinces have initiated some component of UA in their service offerings although the standard needs to be improved. The provinces have different ways of implementing UA within their parks due to different challenges and environment e.g. some provinces are aware of UA and what needs to be done but do not have the necessary resources for implementation whereas other provinces are not aware of UA and have even little knowledge on initiatives to implement UA. Each recommendation given below needs to be scrutinised in isolation and prioritised according to needs of a provinces. The following key recommendations are informed by the findings in the study:

5.1. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
Different stakeholders will need to be engaged to support and assist in the driving and the implementation of the recommendations. Below is the list of identified:

- National Department of Tourism(Responsible Tourism Directorate)
- The Tourism Grading Council of South Africa
- Provincial Government Departments
- Provincial Tourism Agencies
- Provincial Tourism Authorities or Agencies
- Department of Public Works (Infrastructure Development)
- Disability Organizations
- Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities
- Relevant professionals such as Architects and Engineers for technical guidance
- Training institutions or providers with UA expertise and knowledge

5.2. AWARENESS CREATION ON UNIVERSAL ACCESS

Evident from the findings discussed in detail above there is a need to create awareness on universal accessibility and to ensure maximum outputs of the awareness, the following is recommended:
- UA be conducted by a person or an organization with extensive knowledge and expertise of Universal Accessibility and include technical perspective, including building regulations etc.
- Should be interactive and informative with relevant staff implementing or responsible for UA
- Should be done with the involvement of the relevant bodies such as the Tourism Grading Council of South Africa and the disability organizations such as SADA, to ensure that it enhances capacity building and all relevant stakeholders becomes part and involved.
- Should include a guide document for reference at a later stage
- Should involve the decision makers of organizations amongst the target audience

5.3. TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- It is recommended that the skills of the people working with people requiring special needs be developed.
- Engage a relevant service provider to conduct sensitivity training for all staff at provincial parks

5.4. INFRASTRUCTURE

There is further a need to improve the development of UA initiatives on service offerings and the facilities. As mentioned in the limitations of the study, site assessments were not done as part of the study and thus there was no way of verifying the information given by the respondents.

- On site assessments need to be conducted by accredited assessors to verify given information and existing developments in UA and whether there is technically compliance or not
- The assessments will also inform what infrastructural initiatives need to be developed and responds on what interventions should be focused and prioritized.

5.5. FUNDING PROPOSALS

Drawing up funding proposals for specific interventions listed in the recommendations. This intervention affects the allocation of human resources, time and financial resources due to the fact

that the actual actions to be performed include utilising services of people and organisations independent of the NDT.

The following interventions will require funding proposals:
- Implementation of the awareness programmes
- On site assessments for AU compliance
- Skills Development of staff working on UA projects
- Sensitivity training for employees at provincial parks
- Infrastructure development.

6.   CONCLUSIONS

From the responses to the questionnaires and information collected during the consultations with the provinces and relevant stakeholders the following conclusions are made;

- There are 232 provincial parks that are government owned that provides different facilities and services ranging from accommodation, restaurants, game drives etc. Only 5 parks have been graded for UA on mobility and no assessment on vision or communication have been done. The grading has been of accommodation establishments and meeting venues only. This could be due to the fact that the TGCSA has got grading criteria for grading accommodation establishments and meeting venues only. Initiatives need to be developed within other services such as restaurants and game drives as figure 4 showed that it is within these activities that little has been developed towards UA. There are numbers of challenges or impediments revealed during the consultations which affects the implementation and development of UA in provincial parks which are listed as follows:
  - ✓ Lack of training or skills development that has been done on how to service customers with Universal Access needs
  - ✓ Lack of awareness about UA and knowledge to implement UA initiatives
  - ✓ There is a common concern on the cost and capacity involved in the implementation of UA.
  - ✓ The Provincial Departments and Organisations managing provincial parks are relatively unaware of the UA agenda in its entirety.
- There is awareness around giving access to people with mobility needs but very limited on vision and hearing, this is evident on figure6 with little number of respondents assessed for mobility and none assessed for vision and hearing. There is need for technical guidance in the type of initiatives to be done.
- The provincial parks need to have their establishments, products and services assessed by the TGCSA within the new criteria that incorporates UA. This will result in a true reflection of the status of UA in parks to be attained.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Accessible Tourism Market Assessment Study, the Department of Trade & Industry, 2011.

- United Nations World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) Global Code of Ethics for Tourism: (Article2.2)
- SANS 1162: 2011: Responsible Tourism Requirements.
- National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) 2011
- Universal Access(UA) in South African National Parks-2013 Status Report

8. Annexure A: UA in South African National Parks-2013 Status Report

9. Annexure B: Schedule for Meetings held with Provincial Parks

10. Annexure C: Copy of questionnaire utilized for the Study