

CHAPTER FOUR: WAYS FORWARD: TOWARDS AN ACCESSIBLE WORLD

Having outlined a guideline for accessibility we should ask, 'where to from here?' The humanistic aims of universal design cannot be fully captured in a set of guidelines and requirements set out in a manner that is as objective and quantifiable as possible. Local and National Government have a role to play in promoting the concept of Universal Design, primarily through the creation and re-assessment of policy, legislative and statutory requirements. The concept of Universal Design needs to be incorporated into the training of architects, engineers, designers and other professionals who are responsible – one way or another – for the creation of our built environment. The publication of a manual such as this one is simply a beginning step, and further steps need to be taken.

The question of accessibility needs to be adopted with a 'holistic global' approach. Instead of focusing on one particular isolated issue, accessibility needs to be approached contextually and understood in its relation to the whole. For example, a successful accessibility project would focus not only on providing accessibility to just one attraction, but would also provide links to other attractions by means of an accessible tourism system. Multi-sector collaboration can generate unique and creative responses to accessibility problems, using resources and skills from the private and public sectors. Strategic partnerships and networking can improve the co-ordination of systems, services and resource utilization. Partnership also offers an opportunity to include all stakeholders in the planning and implementation of projects.

Promoting accessible tourism cannot happen overnight, and requires gradual implementation in order to secure the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure accessibility projects are successful. Change takes time to implement, and time is needed to create consensus and engage stakeholders.

Definite opportunities for research need to take place. Research is the only way to define the size and features of the market of travelers with different forms of disability and of tracking changes and progress. Education and training, with a focus on awareness and sensitivity, is another target area for future work to promote accessible tourism.

Recommendations:

1. Accessible Tourism needs to be developed in a context of national and regional strategies that would help organizations deliver accessible services;
2. Develop tourist areas to meet the full range of consumer needs: transportation, accommodation, access to tourism sites and services.
3. Identify organizations for persons with varying forms of disability and foster their participation in accessibility issues.
4. Study and improve existing organizational networks for barrier-free tourism.
5. Develop and adopt consistent terminology and criteria for national surveys, in co-operation with organizations representing persons with disabilities.
6. Initiate, support and share research on social, economic and accessibility issues that affect the experience of travelers with disability. Include studies on population size, its economic value to tourism, and the behaviors of such travelers.
7. Develop and disseminate accurate and readily available information on accessible tourism products.
8. Provide information and guidance to tourism operators and service providers about how to better cater to tourists with disability. Develop a recognition program, such as annual awards for best accessibility practices.

9. Develop educational programs aimed at tourism service providers on disabled persons' rights to access and customer services for persons with disabilities.
10. Invite the collaboration of organizations dedicated to disability concerns, the tourism industry and the education sector; facilitate the development of the required training programs.
11. Increase participation of organizations for persons with disabilities as advisors to training institutions and policy-making bodies concerned with accessible tourism services, and foster partnerships based on such activities.
12. Initiate regulatory measures to remove obstacles to participation in indoor and outdoor physical environments.
13. Offer the community of tourism operators and travelers with disability, information on disability policy and measures to achieve accessibility.