



World Summit on Accessible Tourism

Destinations for All

Brussels 1-2 October 2018

Audio Description Associates, LLC – “The Visual Made Verbal” presents



**Audio Description:
Making Your Events and Facilities Accessible for
Visitors Who Are Blind**

Shakila Maharaj, President

Disability Management Services – Durban, South Africa

Joel Snyder, PhD, President and Director

**Audio Description Associates, LLC – Audio Description Project
American Council of the Blind – Washington, DC USA**

“Accessibility Tools” – Monday, October 1, 2018 – 11:00 am-12:30 pm





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Shakila Maharaj – South Africa

relevance of the visual world for people who are blind

You will relate to this when I say that the stereotypical thinking by the non-disabled world is if we are blind then we do not need to see and hence the visual world is not relevant.

This type of flawed thinking is applied to different disabilities. Blind persons do not operate in a void but live in the same visual world as sighted persons. Understanding the visual world is essential for our effective functioning, participation, contribution and ultimately integration. Audio description is the method by which we access the visual world supporting also our development and creativity.





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audio description is key to making those elements of our world accessible

When you think about tourism it is ultimately the indulgence of the senses-- sights, sounds, tastes, touch, smells-- as we experience different lands, people, cultures, animals, plants, food etc. the experience of which for blind tourists is enhanced and made more accessible through audio description. We need to understand shapes, colours, spatial dimensions, foreground, background, movement verses stationary etc. These descriptive aspects are essential to contextualize and recreate the living visual world in our imagination. I am continually discovering that audio description works beautifully when combined with other methods to convey information to the blind tourist. When carrying out audio description training with game rangers at SA safari parks, I included training on real time audio description of the natural habitat, the animals in view, descriptive commentary of the animals in motion, connecting sounds with their sources. However I further enhanced this by adding the art of tracing in the air, the distant views outlining with my fingers the scenery of landscapes undulating hills, valleys, winding rivers dense jungles, distant giraffes grazing on trees, marching herds of elephants disappearing over hills. Also, combine AD with tactile experiences: here I am specifically referring to life-size or scaled-down models. While I have had the incredible opportunity to briefly touch a living lion, elephant and cheetah in capture, nevertheless, I acquired the most amazing holistic grasp of South African wild life by stumbling upon a farmer's vast exhibition of taxidermic creatures, rhinos, wilder beast, leopard, lion and many more. The absolute thrill and privilege of touching and feeling the real animal (now stuffed and preserved) combined with vivid audio description gave me an amazing realistic experience of proportion, and not to mention, left me with the wonderment of the majesty of creation.



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tourism is central to understanding and enjoying our world at thousands of destinations within so many different cultures

Through the use of audio description, tactile elements and experiential activity (“tracing the air”), we can make tourism accessible to all and more meaningful for everyone:
safaris, training tour operators/guides, gardens, cruises, etc.

Combining audio description with being part of the action--there is no better way to provide access to the tourism experience for the blind traveler. Let me illustrate: I was receiving audio description of a tribal Zulu dance. The descriptions of costumes, colours and movements certainly created pictures that enhanced my understanding, however when I was included in the dances themselves and moved in rhythm with the tribal dancers, I immediately understood and replicated the movements and had a total grasp of the dances. Tourism itineraries for blind travelers must aim to ensure that we are allowed to sample and be involved directly in the activity.



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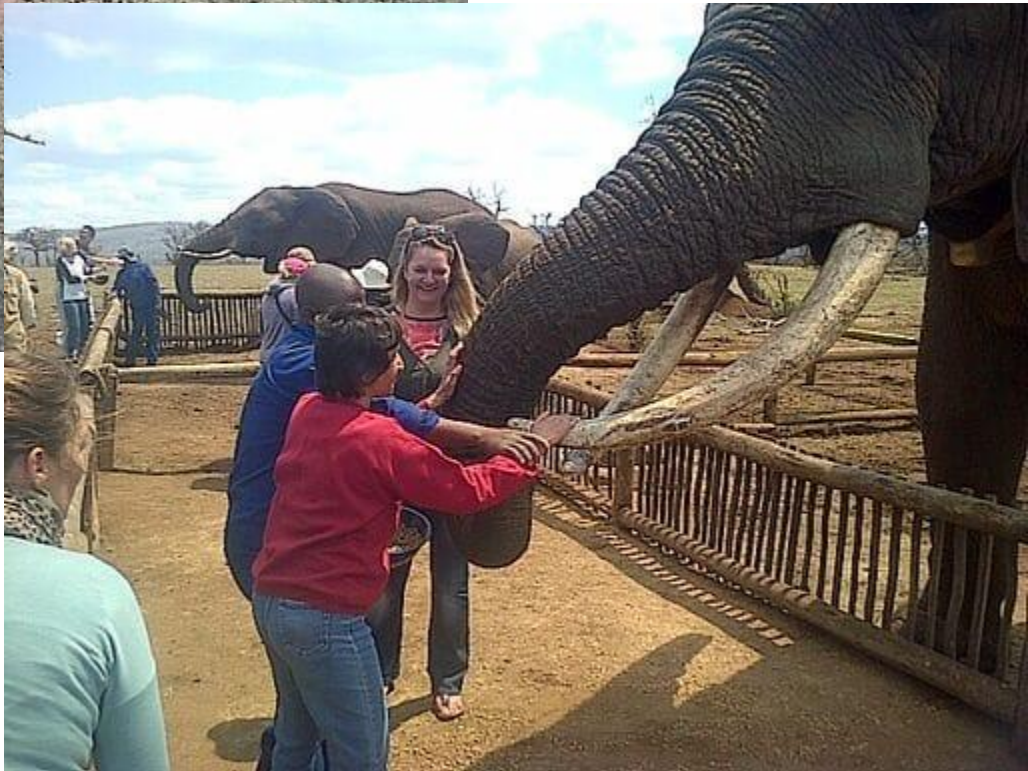
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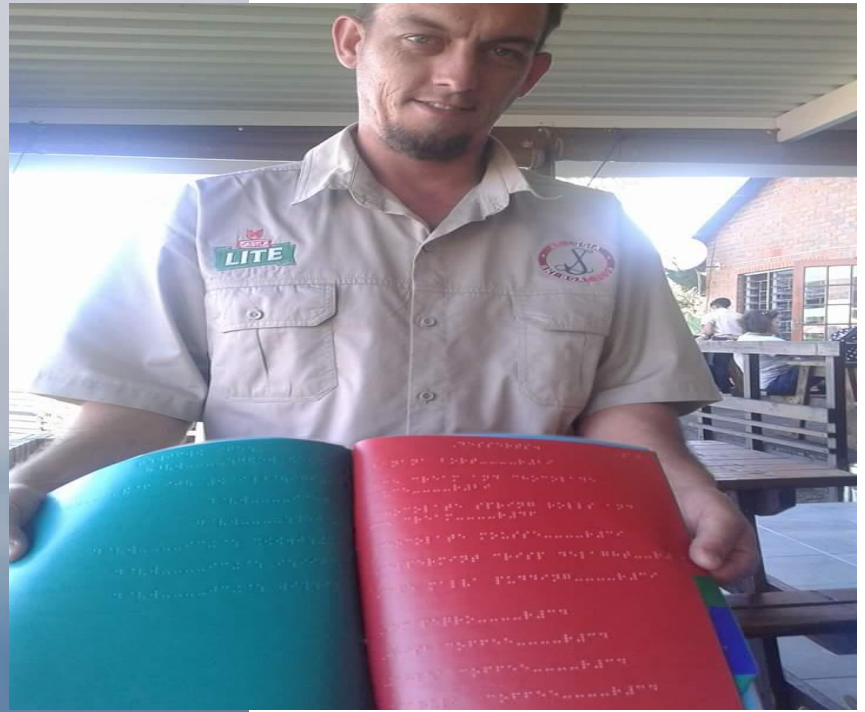
accessibility opens tourism sites to all ...

and can tap millions of dollars in unrealized earned income (in the U.S. alone—over 20 million people who are blind or have low vision—that extrapolates to well over 50 million individuals worldwide). Tourism continues to be a significant contributor to the economy of countries both in the developed and developing world. The blindness sector have the potential to participate and contribute at all levels in the tourism industry as consumer and service provider. Policy makers and industry players need to awaken to this market segment by both employing the talents and in turn understand the needs to be addressed, and services required--thus, grow their market share. My sense is that the blindness travel market is a sleeping giant awakening for which the travel industry has to be prepared.











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Dr. Snyder is the author of

The Visual Made Verbal:

**A Comprehensive Training Manual and Guide
to the History and Applications of Audio Description**

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