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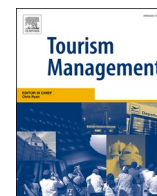https://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/id/eprint/19592/

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Leveraging accessible tourism development through mega-events, and the disability-attitude gap

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ABSTRACT

Able-bodied, and increasingly people with disabilities, represent a key audience for mega-events; occasions that act as crucibles where social problems endemic to host destinations can be exposed and tackled through targeted social policy. Drawing on the social model of disability, the paper examines how Japan utilised Tokyo 2020 as a field configuring event to disrupt systems of ableist thinking and tackle physical and attitudinal barriers restricting Persons with Disabilities (PwD) to accessible tourism. Qualitative evidence reveals national commitments to relegitimise, improve accessibility for - and acceptance toward - PwD in Japanese society, through transformations to the built environment, national awareness, and educational campaigns in the build up to Tokyo 2020. An over-emphasis on physical as opposed to social structural change mean negative attitudes often persist, where disability remains stigmatised, leading to PwD immobility and social exclusion. Our policy recommendations and managerial implications, alongside research directions attend to this *disability-attitude gap*.

1. Introduction

Accessible tourism has emerged as a key strand of tourism scholarship over the last two decades (e.g. Abeyratne, 1995), reflecting the wider dissemination of disability studies as an interdisciplinary research domain since the 1970s (Watson, Roulstone, & Thomas, 2012). Much of the recent emphasis in disability research within social science has been concerned with the research-policy-practice divide, with underlying concerns around how different societies continue to see disability as a stigmatised term, despite the use of more inclusive language in policies and actions such as accessibility, people-friendly, and barrier-free provision to achieve a more inclusive society (United Nations, 2020). It is arguable that an *accessibility turn* has yet to become more embedded in most forms of tourism provision, with the tourism sector (in which events are subsumed), viewing accessibility narrowly in terms of government legislation and compliance requirements, which has pecuniary penalties where managers demonstrate a failure to meet minimum requirements (Small, Darcy, & Packer, 2012).

The pursuit of inclusive societies has been promoted by global organisations such as the United Nations, and tourists have been exposed to these developments in the tourism industry as consumers, particularly with mega-events. It has been acknowledged that such events act as crucibles and drivers for fomenting new, and catalysing existing, social policy that shapes the host population in terms of leisure and domestic tourism visits, and through the attendance of international tourists that are a hallmark of many mega-events (Glynn, 2008; Lampel & Meyer, 2008; Smith, 2012). Event owners like the International Olympic Committee, and national governments that bid for and stage mega-events, are increasingly positioning the way their events can play a key role in advancing inclusivity and social sustainability objectives (IOC, 2022) which then impacts tourist awareness, consciousness, and behaviour. Despite a burgeoning literature on tourism and events, these types of interconnections remain poorly understood in terms of their theorisation and practice (McKercher & Darcy, 2018).

Since the turn of the century, we have witnessed a shift away from prioritising economic objectives as the key rationale for hosting mega-events which international and domestic tourists attend [due to limited evidence on financial return on investment (Zimbalist, 2015)],

toward levering mega-events for exposing and tackling the social injustices of everyday life (Dickson, Misener, & Darcy, 2017; Duignan, Everett, & McCabe, 2022). Examples include addressing apartheid conflict and social cohesion at the 2010 South Africa FIFA World Cup to utilising London 2012 to level-up socio-economically deprived communities in East London. However, only limited research has explored the impacts of mega events on marginalised groups within the host community and it is not until recently that owners have required host cities to articulate detailed implementation plans to confront endemic social problems, mandated, for example, in the International Olympic Committee's new Olympic 2020 + 5 Agenda (IOC, 2022).

Our article focuses on the social injustice of failing to attend to the needs and rights of Persons with Disabilities (PwD), with a specific emphasis on physical disabilities and mobility-related challenges in the tourism industry and for accessible tourism (Randle & Dolnicar, 2019) as one strand of this emergent narrative on social inclusion and tourism. Although significant progress in the inclusion of PwD has been made in both work and home settings, leisure settings warrant further attention, specifically, the task of removing barriers to participate across the tourism industry (Hansen, Fyall, Macpherson, & Horley, 2021). Tourism stakeholders and destinations at-large have come under criticism for struggling to comprehend – and even ignoring – the complex needs of PwD (Small et al., 2012; Kong & Loi, 2017), thus alienating PwD as both a social group and potential tourist market (Hansen et al., 2021; McKercher & Darcy, 2018). This has a particular problem for destinations seeking to use mega-events to boost their global image and for whom seeking to become a global tourist destination is their long-term objective. This issue also conflates with more systemic and historically stigmatic views of PwD (Darcy & Dickson, 2009) that are now out of step with tourist expectations of visiting other global destinations. One such example is Japan's ambitious tourism development agenda, as Saito Tamaki – one of Japan's leading psychiatrists and the academic who coined the concept of the 'Hikikomori' [extreme social withdrawal endemic to Japan] – claims, *"there is a deep-rooted belief in Japan that people with disabilities and other such difficulties should be isolated from society (…) Japan still has a culture of gathering people with disabilities under the same roof – you could say our country is peculiarly backward in this respect."* (Saitō, 2021: online].

Japan's pervasive stigma awkwardly juxtaposes contemporary global social policy movements committed to tackling PwD im/mobility, physical and attitudinal related exclusion. These include Articles 9 and 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) which state that PwDs should have equal and inclusive access to the physical environment, including transportation, attractions, and other venues (UN, 2006). Intimated by Saito Tamaki, we must however recognise both physical *and* attitudinal barriers, aligning to the way scholars have shifted the debate from the 'medical model of disability' that emphasises the physiological and psychological aspects of disability restricting the individual (Randle & Dolnicar, 2019), to a *social* model of disability (defined, p.6) that claims it is the environment, the place, and people, that are the primary barriers of PwD inclusion. We draw upon the prevailing concepts and arguments associated with promoting a social model of disability in the theoretical perspectives guiding this study.

The other theoretical perspective we utilise is a field configuring events (FCE) lens to conceptualise how and why mega-events may become crucibles and drivers of social policy to tackle societal problems such as disablism. Tokyo 2020 is theorised in this paper as a field configuring event: A powerful mechanism of social change that, in our case, catalyses field development simultaneously across two interrelated 'organisational fields' (defined, p3), namely *'industrial fields'* – in our case the transformation of Japan's tourism industry for accessible tourism, and *'geographical fields'* – with respect to place- and people-specific changes in Japan, particularly Tokyo where we can observe physical and attitudinal structural change taking place. Therefore, this research primarily contributes to the tourism research literature, and

more specifically accessible tourism scholarship. This is achieved by utilising this theoretical lens to critically examine how mega-events plug in to tackle existing endemic problems at the host destination level, such as discrimination toward PwD, and in turn, help disrupt this system of ableist thinking, using Tokyo 2020 and Japan as an extreme case, so that the treatment of tourists and leisure travellers are less dis/affected by disablist practices. Disablism is defined as 'a form of social oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments and the socially engendered undermining of their psycho-emotional wellbeing' (Thomas, 2007, p. 73) and thus also similar to other types of oppression, such as racism and sexism (Goodley, 2013). Specifically, we challenge ableist attitudes toward PwD, whereby discrimination takes place in favour of able-bodied people, and how physical built environments are designed in ways that embody normative values (Nourry, 2018) in contrast to current thinking around concepts such as universal design that seeks to remove restrictions PwD face in accessing physical and social spaces.

To achieve this aim, we conducted 32 interviews and triangulated 4 key stakeholder group perspectives, including senior event and tourism managers and consultants, tour operators and PwD, specifically those who face physical and mobility-related challenges. The central reason why we focus on this specific group is because Japan has been behind implementing fundamental physical and mobility-related changes to the country's urban and tourism environments to make cities and attractions accessible. Furthermore, a focus on physical and mobility-related challenges reflects Japan's policy priorities, not only because of this policy void but also because of the country's ageing population and age-related disability concern. Therefore, our research responds not only to the wider disability-attitude gap seen globally but also these local and contextual challenges too. Alongside primary research, we include document analysis and on-the-ground observational work across Japan but primarily Tokyo city. We argue this research is significant now as a growing body of evidence reveals how im/mobility and negative attitudes lead to mental health issues, psychological disorders, depression, and social exclusion (Oliver & Barnes, 2012) and the wider Hikikomori problem endemic to Japan (Shirasawa, 2014). Alongside tackling PwD exclusion, Japan hosted Tokyo 2020 to put the country and city on the global tourist map, and therefore, excluding certain social groups (and therefore tourist markets), serve to undermine Japan's all-out-tourism-growth strategy deployed pre-COVID and to be catalysed in the coming years.

Our article addresses the following research questions.

1) How and why do mega-events catalyse industrial and geographical field development to advance accessible tourism agendas?
2) To what extent have the Olympic and Paralympic movement and events themselves addressed structural and attitudinal aspects of the social model of disability?
3) How can we optimise field development in future to attend to the rights of PwD across event bidding, planning, live staging, and legacy phases?

2. Literature review

2.1. Field configuring events

This section builds on the theory and practice of field configuring events to explain how short-term interventions (events) transform industries and geographies (fields) in different ways across their protracted lifecycle (configurations) (Lampel & Meyer, 2008). Organisational fields are defined as *"… those organisations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognised area of institutional life; key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organisations that produce similar services or products"* (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 148). The size and scope of an event's objective significantly influences the way organisational fields can be developed through

event-led or event-related interventions (Glynn, 2008) – that's why events of all sizes can influence field development, making field configuring events approach applicable not only to mega-event-led development but all development related to different types of events.

Field configuring events are powerful mechanisms of social change primarily because they exist in tractable geographical settings and have a date for institutional termination (Glynn, 2008), although, of course, legacies are bequeathed long-after the Closing Ceremony (Preuss, 2019). These spatial and temporal strategic imperatives, together, enable cities to take targeted social policy interventions, as one can easily identify and critique what, where, when, for and by whom social change is achieved (Lampel & Meyer, 2008). The power of mega-events to expedite decades of social progress is helped by having deadlines for completion, under the gaze of the world and the world's media, and by bringing together sometimes disparate stakeholder networks to coalesce around a shared vision for social good (Smith, 2012). Beyond mega-events, to encompass trade shows, business conferences, and cultural festivals too, Lampel and Meyer (2008) explicate some of the reasons why events can be field configuring by bringing together,

"… people from diverse organizations and with diverse purposes [to] assemble periodically, or on a one-time basis, to announce new products, develop industry standards, construct social networks, recognize accomplishments, share, and interpret information, and transact business.

FCEs are arenas in which networks are constructed, business cards are exchanged, reputations are advanced, deals are struck, news is shared, accomplishments are recognised, standards are set, and dominant designs are selected.

FCEs can enhance, reorient, or even undermine existing technologies, industries, or markets; or alternately, they can become crucibles from which new technologies, industries, and markets emerge." (Lampel & Meyer, 2008, p. 1026).

Lampel and Meyer (2008) posit events that are *"an important but understudied mechanism shaping the emergence and developmental trajectories of technologies, markets, industries and professions"* (p.1025), helping to capture short-, medium- and long-term field development interventions and outcomes that are often lost in snapshot event case study work (Yin, 2013). Scholars have studied a range of social policy areas from how events coalesce and intensify interactions between decision makers to advance critical global and national policy agendas (Schüssler, Rüling, & Wittneben, 2014), through to the way mega-events can regenerate post-industrial urban districts and attend to the needs of vulnerable social groups like homeless communities (Glynn, 2008). That is because events act as bat signals, alerting stakeholders to policy and managerial challenges existing both at the domestic and international level, who then, can choose to institutionalise endemic social problems (or ignore them) or use the protracted bidding-and-planning periods in the lead up to hosting mega-events to foment new, and catalyse existing, social policies and implement solutions to advance the social agenda in question (Lampel & Meyer, 2008).

It is therefore unsurprising that mega-event led development has become synonymous with broader government planning processes – often positioned as key opportunities and turning points for the transformation of host city economies and societies (Smith, 2012). More recently, scholars have examined how to lever mega-events for social inclusion, particularly in the tourism industry, to achieve accessible tourism (Hansen et al., 2021) – whether that be new accessible tourism itineraries to step-free transport options. Depending on the time period, or where you look, organisational fields are always at varying stages of field development; they may either be new fields, emerging fields, or mature fields (Duignan, 2021). For example, at the 1948 Stoke Mandeville Games (the forebears of the Paralympic Games) the global accessibility movement as we know it today was at a relatively new field formation stage with only limited protection and thought for PwD across home, work, and leisure spaces (Brittain, 2016). The terms accessibility

and accessible tourism have received significant stakeholder attention and financial investment, even in destinations like Japan who have historically neglected PwD' needs and rights. Therefore, one could argue accessible tourism is a maturing field globally but in either new field formation or emergence in Japan – warranting scholarly, policy and managerial attention to help benchmark it against the standards that exist in other global (tourist) cities. Indeed, global movements like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), the UN Declaration on Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) have provided a northern star: Complete with a series of international norms, policy recommendations and managerial implications to help standardise local attention toward the needs and rights of PwD (Hansen et al., 2021; Michopoulou, Darcy, Ambrose, & Buhalis, 2015).

At a national level, more developed nations have disability legislation in place to protect the rights of PwD. Two in particular standout: 1) the UK's Equality Act 2010 (United Kingdom Government, 2010); and 2) the USA's Americans with Disabilities Act (U.S. Department of Justice (USDoJ), 2010). Both served as a blueprint and inspiration for countries without legal and regulatory protections for PwD, including Japan's Disabilities Japan Disability Act (2005) introduced in the years following the hosting of the Japan and South Korea 2002 FIFA World Cup (Hansen & Fyall, 2021; Lindqvist & Lamichhane, 2019; Nyanjom, Boxall, & Slaven, 2018). Here, it is useful to understand how each event, individually, and together, cumulatively contributes toward field development at the host level, whilst also influencing international social policy agendas too. This is conceptually significant as each mega-event is delivered in wildly contrasting social contexts that demand localised and contextually sensitive solutions as opposed to a one size fits all policy. That is because the rights of stakeholders like PwD is determined by what or whose interests are deemed legitimate in a specific social context– posing a challenge for event owners like the IOC and FIFA, who must recognise endemic social problems and the complexity of dealing with the barriers that PwD face inside the social system where the event is hosted (Brittain & Beacom, 2016).

2.2. The social model of disability: Exploring structural and attitudinal barriers for people with disabilities in accessible tourism and mega-event cities

Participating in society refers to full and effective participation in home, work, *and* leisure spaces (Hansen et al., 2021). This is enshrined in Article one of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) which states '*… persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'* (2006: [online]).

This is the primary concern of accessible tourism, which seeks to advocate and implement physically and socially accessible tourist experiences for PwD that help maintain individual independence and dignity (Benjamin, Bottone, & Lee, 2021; Gillovic, McIntosh, Darcy, & Cockburn-Wootten, 2018; McKercher & Darcy, 2018; Randle & Dolnicar, 2019). Importantly, we distinguish between impairment and disability, with the understanding that an impairment results in a functional limitation, such as sensory or physical capacities, whilst disability takes place when said functional limitation prevents an individual from participating in meaningful activities such as work, school etc. (Pagan, 2012). Smith (1987) was one of the first to identify barriers to access in a tourism context and argued that barriers can be.

- Intrinsic (a person's physical, cognitive, or psychological state),
- Environmental (infrastructure related, including buildings and transportation), and
- Interactive (the barriers preventing the interaction of people and society).

Although disability has been traditionally approached from a medical perspective as a health condition, known as the 'medical model of disability' or the 'personal tragedy model', whereby the impairment is considered the individual's 'fault' (Randle & Dolnicar, 2019), our growing understanding of the societal implications on disability, and for PwD, has contributed to the development of the 'social model of disability', suggesting that it is in fact society that is disabling and that if people's attitudes toward PwD were to change, and there was public policy that legislated that environmental barriers be removed, then many of the problems associated with 'disability' would disappear (Morris, 1991). Collectively the social model of disability highlights how and why it is society and the physical and social environment we collectively produce that can lead to and/or exacerbate disability. As such, emphasis is on the identification and mitigation of attitudinal, informational and physical barriers to access for PwD (Randle & Dolnicar, 2019). As Small et al. (2012) describe in terms of use of tourist spaces, if they are not configured with PwD in mind, and if able-bodied persons fail to be compassionate to PwD′ needs, it can lead to PwD′ immobility and exclusion, as other studies also demonstrate (McKercher & Darcy, 2018; Oliver, 1990).

More recently, Brittain, Biscaia, and Gerard (2020) identify how ableist thinking is a key barrier as stakeholders design and deliver everyday experiences primarily for able-bodied persons. Therefore, promoting a system of "prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviours toward persons with a disability" (2020: 78) – which populations and societies can be socialised into. This can lead to social stigma and hostile behaviour toward PwD and insufficient physical facilities to meet PwD′ needs (Garrod & Fennell, 2021; Randle & Dolnicar, 2019). Physical barriers have been discussed more than attitudinal barriers, where scholars claim there is a pervasive ignorance toward PwD′ needs across service providers, architects, planners, and designers (Kong & Loi, 2017; Rebernik, Favero, & Bahillo, 2021). Critical scholars claim ableist thinking creates a power imbalance between able- and disabled-bodied persons, where PwD 'failure to fit the capitalist imperative' (Goodley, 2014, p. 11) as they are considered to be less contributing members of society in terms of economic input, or in the case of countries like Japan: Social worth (Saitō, 2021).

Although Japan serves as an extreme case, this is not exclusive to Japan, with outdated legislation across many nations and only a parochial view on what constitutes a disability (Hansen et al., 2021). This is problematic as there is a growing spectrum of disabilities that have been identified, some more visible than others, yet destinations often focus primarily on well-known and visible disabilities (e.g. wheelchair access, blindness) and partially or fully ignore others (e.g. intellectual disabilities) (Devile & Kastenholz, 2018; Rickly, 2018; Rickly, Halpern, Hansen, & Welsman, 2021). Exceptions exist where best practice among tourism organisations like Visit Visit, 2020 accessibility work that has inclusivity at its heart focusing on breaking down barriers. It is therefore unsurprising that there have been calls for a 'whole of life' approach, in which the core values of accessible tourism – independence, equity, dignity – are fully integrated (Gillovic et al., 2018). However, this remains a low priority (Benjamin et al., 2021; Darcy & Dickson, 2009), despite leisure settings like tourism, events and hospitality being notorious for disability discrimination (Dickson et al., 2017).

Recognised as *the* most critical barrier to participation for PwD (McKercher & Darcy, 2018), scholars suggest negative attitudes can be resolved through awareness raising campaigns, training networks, and educational programmes, aimed at urban planning, service workers to the public-at-large can be effective (McKercher & Darcy, 2018; Rickly et al., 2021). National information and targeted communication campaigns aimed to project positive representations of PwD to able- and disabled-bodied persons to increase acceptance toward and self-esteem for PwD is one well-evidenced intervention (Benjamin et al., 2021; Randle & Dolnicar, 2019). Furthermore, alongside reconfiguring physical infrastructure to support accessible tourism, providing PwD with accurate and accessible information before and whilst travelling to and within host destinations is critical (Cloquet, Palomino, Shaw, Stephen, & Taylor, 2018; Garrod & Fennell, 2021).

There are an overwhelming series of examples, particularly from cities that have less experience of managing and attending to PwD′ tourist needs, of information and promotional materials that fail to provide basic disability information, and inclusive language through to representation of PwD (Benjamin et al., 2021; Gillovic et al., 2018). For example, although Rio 2016 made significant changes to transport hubs, installing lifts and tactile tiles, Dickson, Knijnik, and Darcy (2016) repeatedly found a lack of awareness among operators where "barriers to manage pedestrian flow were placed across tiles" (2016: [online] – see article for example images). The International Paralympic Committee's (2013) Handbook identifies policy recommendations to create a positive social legacy of hosting for PwD. Examples include physical barriers including accessible urban and sports infrastructure like venues, through to the development of sport organisations to encourage and enable participation of PwD in society and in sport, alongside similar aforementioned methods to transform attitudes toward PwD through informational and communication campaigns. The handbook is also one of the most scaled up examples of accessibility and tourism where the volume of tourists in a limited time and spatial framework can easily overturn the global ambitions of becoming a world tourism destination that is fit for purpose.

Although previous host cities have implemented initiatives to tackle physical and attitudinal barriers, evidence from the last two decades of mega-events provides a mixed picture of success. For example, for the Sydney 2000 Games, although the percentage of accessible railway stations rose to 8%, this had only risen to 20% approximately 16 years later (Darcy, 2017). Furthermore, the Athens 2004 Games increased accessibility across the city's transport system (buses, trains) and at popular tourist attractions, including the addition of a lift at the Acropolis World Heritage, there remained "no significant change in accessibility in the main areas of downtown Athens" and the author claims "it is still quite unusual to see people with (visible) disabilities out and about on a daily basis" (Hums, 2011, p. 104). Repeatedly, scholars note similar findings, including Sun and Le Clair (2011) who identified some specific accessibility improvements to the transport system following the Beijing 2008 Games, yet still critique the broader "gap between stated goals and what takes place on the ground" (2011: p.123); as also evidenced after the Rio 2016 Games where Pereira (2021) concluded "a series of studies have also found that many BRT [Bus Rapid Transit] stations present barriers to people with physical disabilities; buses are frequently overcrowded, and the BRT corridors are generally poorly integrated with other transport modes" (2021: p.156). With both positive and negative sides, Pointer (2011) argues host cities have successfully extended "the boundaries of the urban regeneration debate to include PwD in a discourse driven by concepts such as design, access and social inclusion' (p. 224). This therefore, begs the question of what the gains will be for Japan, what legacies will be bequeathed, and where do physical and attitudinal barriers persist after the Games?

3. Methodology

Between July–November 2019, interviews and on-the-ground observational work was undertaken in Japan, primarily Tokyo. Our multimethod qualitative study, guided by a social constructivist paradigm, was informed by three complementary data sets: (i) 32 interviews, (ii) observational data, and (iii) a document analysis. Observational evidence included imagery of physical transformations to Japan's built environment and tourism infrastructure, particularly useful given our focus on physical and mobility-related challenges, alongside informational and communication campaigns identified through the various publications collected at different tourism and transport locations – from popular tourist attractions, tourist information centres, to Metro train stations. Whereas our documentary evidence includes a detailed analysis of official Tokyo 2020 bid and Japanese policy documents related to

the Games, alongside media and academic commentaries to identify accessibility and accessible tourism plans, policies and practices deployed across Japan to supplement primary data findings. All forms of data are triangulated together and presented in our findings, and we adopt an investigator triangulation with numerous researchers who have been working in the Japanese context for up to a decade now – attempting to influence both policy and practice at senior level in both government and across the Japanese and local Tokyo tourism industry.

Our semi-structured interviews provided a mixture of high-level tourism and event perspectives, alongside on-the-ground tour operator and PwDs, specifically those with physical disability and mobility-related challenges. Together, they provided both macro- and micro-level view, and helped to corroborate and/or generate new themes un-attainable or not identified by the other two data set types. It is important to note that the principal objective of this research is to focus on the strategic and social policy opportunities mega-events provide (aligned to our field configuring lens) – this is why we focused more on the top-level governmental policies and stakeholder perspectives as we wish to contribute to this space. We appreciate incorporating local PwD perspectives are vitally important to the story, but our primary focus is on the strategic and social policy opportunities mega-events provide, which we believe can be best understood through engaging with senior event and tourism managers and the tour operators responsible for service delivery on the ground. We do however present a future research agenda to address the need to bring in diverse disability perspectives, including less visible disabilities, for subsequent research to build on our work and the excellent work existing in this research area. Aligned to our research questions, our line of questioning focused on three themes.

- historical and current accessibility and accessible tourism development, and recognised physical and attitudinal barriers
- initiatives deployed to overcome identified barriers and align to the social model of disability
- the persistent barriers to PwD′ inclusion in and beyond the Tokyo 2020 Games.

Utilising a purposive sampling technique, we interviewed those with responsibility or interest in these themes. Most interviewees spoke English proficiently, apart from our 6 Japanese PwD residents who we used a translator for. PwD residents were recruited through a privileged access to 'Disabled Peoples' International – Japan'. For clarity, we split our interviewees into 4 stakeholder groups (Table 1), and who comprise our stakeholder triangulation approach.

All interviews lasted approximately 60–75 min, were recorded and manually transcribed verbatim. To protect anonymity we used general titles and interviewees are referred to by a code (e.g. #12), to help understand whose perspective is being referred to. Full ethical approval was granted to the project by Coventry University and we received informed consent forms back from all participants. NVIVO11 (https://lumivero.com/products/nvivo/) was used to manage, analyse, code and synthesise all data sets, including textual and visual data, and we organised the data using Attride-Stirling's (2001) 'Thematic Networks Analysis' to build Global, Organising and Basic themes to connect empirical findings with our broader interpretations presented in the following sections. First, we iteratively coded interview data to surface overarching general themes. Inductive coding was used as each interview was transcribed, meaning that subsequent semi-structured interviews remained dynamic and responsive to the key emerging themes. We then sought to corroborate emerging findings with our growing body of observational and documentary data. We present our Findings, Discussions and then Conclusions utilising the analytical approach we have just described.

Table 1
Stakeholder groups and interviewees.

Stakeholder group	Detail	Interviewees
Stakeholder group 1	Senior Japanese and Tokyo regional government officials responsible for tourism (e.g. Japanese Olympic Committee and Destination Management Organisations).	#1 Japanese Olympic Committee, Senior Manager #2 City of Yokohama (Tourist Bureau), Senior Manager #3 Japanese Olympic Committee, Senior Manager #4 Japanese Tourist Board, Senior Manager
Stakeholder group 2	Influential policy, consultancy, and/or media commentators who have significant presence and well placed to comment on Japan's tourism industry.	#5 Sasakawa Sports Foundation, Senior Manager #6 World Travel and Tourism Council, Senior Manager #7 Japanese Tourist Board, Consultant #8 Japanese National Tourism Organisation, Consultant.
Stakeholder group 3	Tour operators across Japan and Tokyo.	#9 – #10 – Tour operators across Japan, Director #11 - #26 Tour operators in Tokyo, Director.
Stakeholder group 4	Physically disabled Japanese residents of Tokyo.	#27 - #32 residents with disabilities.

4. Findings

4.1. Behind the development curve: barriers to accessible tourism in Japan

4.1.1. Understanding Japan's national stigma toward persons with disability

Tokyo 2020 presented an opportunity to foment new, and catalyse existing social policy, aimed at attending to the needs and rights of PwD. This comes over 60 years after Japan levered hosting the first 1960 Games in Japan (Tokyo & Olympic Games Bid Committee, 2020 Games) which led to disability and disabled sport being developed as part of the country's welfare policy led by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare – but the country is still far behind the level of inclusion and participation in comparison to other global tourist destinations (Saitō, 2021).

Considering national stigma toward PwD, it is therefore unsurprising that, as recently as the 1980s, Japanese society did not perceive confining PwD in institutions for life as a human rights violation (Hayashi & Okuhira, 2001). "It is better that the disabled disappear" claimed Satoshi Uematsu who entered into Tsukui Yamayuerina, a home for PwD outside Tokyo, and murdered 19 and injured a further 26 in 2016 (McCurry, 2016). Although an individual and extreme case, Findlay (2016) argues this represented something deeply problematic, "… there was no hashtag. No public outcry. Not even prayers." (2016: [online]) – reflecting Saito's view that PwD are treated fundamentally differently in Japanese society.

PwD have always been separated, physically and socially, from able-bodied peers; after Japan ratified the UNCRPD (United Nations, 2006) in January 2014 [four months after winning the bid to host Tokyo 2020], segregation continued in schools and workforces across Japan; therefore, "the term 'inclusivity' still does not mean much to the average Japanese" (Sakurai, 2019: [Online]). Another factor that makes the case of Japan and disability of international significance is that it has the most aged population of any country. Since disability and the demand for more accessible environments will tend to increase with age (McKercher & Darcy, 2018), this has particular salience for Japan as 28% of Japan's population is over 65 and is set to rise to 33% by 2036.

An ageing society compounds the debates on PwD as ageing will exacerbate the need for accessible tourism environments for domestic tourism and leisure as well as for the ageing travellers from other countries who will comprise a greater proportion of the world's population in the near future (Benjamin et al., 2021).

Furthermore, Tokyo 2020 was the first Games to embed UN Sustainable Development Goals and pledged to improve accessibility for – and national acceptance toward – PwD. Specifically, Mori Yoshiro, Chairman of Tokyo 2020 organising committee declared, "the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games would be a catalyst for helping those with disabilities to be part of society (…) [and] leave a legacy of changed attitudes and acceptance of people with disabilities" (Saitō, 2021), helping to progress Japan Disability Act, 2005 commitment and align to the UNCRPD (United Nations, 2006). Responding to the country's exponential growth of in-bound international tourists, from 7 m in 2010 to 38 m in 2019, and ambitious plan to position Japan as a leading tourist destination, these pledges enabled Japan to consider how to reconfigure its expanding tourism industry to achieve similar levels of PwD participation compared to competitor cities like London, Paris, and New York.

4.1.2. Physical and attitudinal barriers to accessible tourism

Primarily and overwhelmingly, interviewees claim how deep-rooted stigma has produced country-wide negative attitudes toward PwD – which has been historically ignored and swept under the carpet. #6 noted,

> "*there are a lot of social problems that sometimes get swept under and there are issues that need to be dealt with (…) there is a definite need to save face and certain topics or issues do not get discussed and just sort of get swept away (…) [and the view that] we are all harmonious and everything is wonderful [this is] something that can sometimes scupper constructive discussion and dialogue about certain issues.*" (#6).

Similar critique is applied to other endemic social problems in Japan, including women's labour rights through to the predicted 1.1 m isolated Hikikomori community who have withdrawn from Japanese society (Shirasawa, 2014). As an example of this avoidance, when asked about how Tokyo 2020 has attended to PwD rights, one senior manager at the Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee declined to comment, stating "I'm sorry but I can't make a decision from the standpoint of the Organising Committee of the Tokyo 2020 Games" (#1).

Interviewees either directly claimed, or indirectly inferred, that Japan was still in early accessible tourism development, recognising numerous physical barriers for PwD. One noted,

> "*… we still have a lot to learn. It's a long way to go I think because the cities are not designed in such a way that people with disabilities are accessible to everywhere. Say in a shrine like cobbled stones and things and you cannot push a wheelchair in there. The subway you have to take the steps. I mean there are elevators but maybe not enough and it'll take three times as much time as it would usually take. For hearing impaired, it has signs which are getting better but for disabled like wheelchairs that kind of thing is still a long way to go.*" (#18).

Repeatedly, PwD themselves provided examples of how transportation and tourism systems in the city restrict mobility, from trains, tourist hotspots, to entertainment districts. Though numerous interviewees recognised this is primarily because of Japan's past, not a reflection of where the city wants to go as the environment in question is a product of earlier times when disability rights were not a policy priority:

> "*I lived in the US for seven years. Compared to the US, Tokyo and Japan are still not accessible to those who have a disability, use a wheelchair, mobility cars, because most of the town, the city was developed in the 1960s and 70s, so it's very old and a lot of stairs, no escalators, no elevators*" (#10).

The question is whether Japan is sufficiently tackling both physical and attitudinal barriers – but there was mixed opinion from interviewees. One interviewee claimed much of what we see is rhetoric and in real terms there is little concern for PwD needs:

> "*There is a huge gap between what we think that we know and what we actually do, certainly in terms of, take for example accessibility. Tokyo as an example, when I was there with my colleague who suffers with limited mobility, trying to navigate the underground is very interesting. I was very surprised at the lack of accessibility routes to be honest (…) there was no planning and there didn't seem to be any concern either about it when I raised it.* (#7).

Although recognising the historical and present challenges Japan faces, some interviewees claim things are improving, albeit slowly: "It [accessibility in the city] has been improving, but more efforts are needed" (#11). Whilst others took a more optimistic line, suggesting the Games is a pivotal turning point: "Oh yeah, dramatically, the progress [toward accessibility] are amazing over the last past years and I think that's going to get really better after the Olympics." (#18). Our observational and documentary evidence identified how Tokyo 2020's vision was primarily planned and operationalised through Japan's national 'Barrier-Free' programme. The aim of this policy was to address both sides of the social model of disability: The physical built environment and tourism infrastructure whilst raising awareness and educating Japan's population and service industry to generate compassion and support for PwD and alleviate negative attitudes. This was reflected by the Minister for Transport who described the aim of the programme is to: "make it easier for people without disabilities to tell where barrier-free areas are (…) we want them to be considerate to people with reduced mobility and make room (for disabled people) around barrier-free areas" (Budgen, 2021: [online]).

4.2. Initiatives to improve physical access and transform attitudes toward people with disabilities in the lead up to Tokyo 2020

Makoto Nakazawa, now President of the Barrier-Free programme, honestly claimed "many organisations for disabled people sometimes just complained to me about how tough things are for their members. My first reaction used to be 'so what?' as I listened to their claims. Now, I always try and find a solution to such complaints' (Fujimoto, 2009: [Online]). Though not exhaustive (due to time and space implications), this section provides evidence and examples of the solutions implemented by a range of stakeholders in the lead up to Tokyo 2020. This includes physical reconfiguration of Japan's built environment and tourism infrastructure – textured walkways to chirping noises at traffic lights (Fig. 1) to help blind tourists *"navigate by themselves"* (#21) which is critical to independence. Furthermore, metro stations with more than 3000 users per day across Japan [but primarily in Tokyo] have been transformed to house lifts for wheelchair users (Fig. 2) and step free access to navigate stations and access onto trains. Similar initiatives have also been deployed at popular tourist attractions (Fig. 3) to tourist information centres (Fig. 4) and are becoming the norm across the country.

Although they represent positive developments, concerns were raised over the everyday reality of using some of these new services, raising various nuanced barriers that prevent full or partial use or access. For example, the placement, signposting and availability of the elevators often made it hard to find them or they were not actually accessible at all times or in some cases even switched on, indicated by #27 claiming

> "*the elevator is closed until a certain time, or the station is expecting the passengers to use the elevator from the nearby facilities. Like for example, some department stores attached to a station, but the department store doesn't open till 10am or 11am but when I go to work, I need to be in the station 7 or 8am, which I cannot access*" (#27)

Our findings here highlighted an underlying assumption that PwD do

Fig. 1. (Left) - Audible crossing for blind people.

Fig. 2. (Right) - Construction work in a Tokyo metro station.

not need to access the transportation system in the same way, and at the same times, that everyone else does. This idea was reinforced by #28 who stated, "… in general the attitude is that PwD don't travel is the cultural impression I think and that leads to an idea that PwD (sic) don't have the expendable income or ability to travel" – a viewpoint that reflects the work of Kong and Loi (2017) who found that service providers often assume PwD are apathetical and disinterested about travelling. This, of course, is not true – but is a widely held belief also highlighted by our findings. Interviewees who were wheelchair users specifically raised an issue concerning the actual size and weight restrictions of the elevators, and other accessibility aids in the stations, such as the stairlifts that are installed in some of the stations. As one respondent pointed out "It may be okay for the Japanese small user, but (if the) wheelchair is very heavy … the 180 kg is already not accessible" (#30). #24 linked the issues faced by wheelchair users to his own experiences as a father of a small child trying to use a pushchair:

> *"If you're in a wheelchair, stay at home. Yeah, it just doesn't work, and I know that from first-hand experience with my children and pushing them around in a stroller. There are no elevators anywhere, the aisles everywhere are so small, even steps in stations and that. When you do find a lift, you get about one stroller in there and you've got to wait. So really, if you've got an impairment with walking or mobility, it's definitely the wrong place to be (#24).*

Numerous respondents raised concerns over small elevator sizes, citing how non-disabled passengers often chose to also use the elevators rather than the stairs or escalators. Although primarily installed to make access easier for PwD, this raised an important attitudinal point as local populations either misunderstand or ignore this fact – indicating a general lack of awareness from the general public (Rickly et al., 2021).

Although raising a critical issue, we should appreciate that

Fig. 3. (Left) - Accessibility measures at a Tokyo tourist attraction.

accessibility aids not only make mobility easier for PwD but also to other cross-sections of society, including parents with children, irrespective of whether they are residents or tourists. This was reflected by #32 stating

> "we have only small elevator and we have the person with disability and without disability and they have sometimes the cart for the baby or a big suitcase then the wheelchair user should wait for a long time to use the elevator." (#32)

This highlights how accessibility – more generally – is a systemic

Fig. 4. (Right) - Sign designating wheelchair access.

issue in society and humans have complex needs. Therefore, designers, planners and architects should recognise how tackling PwD' exclusion can have benefits for other social groups, like the elderly, to parents and children (Rebernik et al., 2021).

A particular challenge for Tokyo is having the busiest Metro train system in the world; serving approximately 8.7 m daily users (Schulz Richard, 2019). Therefore, at peak times, the Metro is extremely congested, sometimes requiring guards to literally push passengers onto trains and densely pack them in. Interviewees claim that even if PwDs can safely navigate their way from the street to the Metro and get to the platform, peak congestion makes travel impossible. And if they do get aboard, as #27 pointed out, 'when I'm in the train in the morning I guess they have, like most of the people, have no patience whatsoever. And like why now, like why couldn't you wait until a less crowded time?" – where PwDs are made to feel like an inconvenience because they do not adhere to normative bodily function and ableist narratives (Wolbring, 2012). All PwDs interviewed claimed hostile attitudes are common – a theme that pervades toward the end of this finding section.

PwDs also recognised the need to plan transport very carefully and identify which stations were accessible – or not. Often, interviewees stated they did not trust accessibility information online or even in the station as Japan has a limited understanding as to what constitutes accessible for PwD, claiming "I don't really trust if they say 'fully accessible'. If I hear from disabled friends that it is accessible then I can totally rely on it. But if not like I really, really question it" (#27). Accurate information might be hard to come by for them in Japanese, but in English it is almost non-existent as highlighted in this quote: "finding general information is hard to come by … Speaking in Japanese I have to look at Japanese websites, and I like to compare back and forth, and there are way too many times where the Japanese site of information on accessibility exists and the English version nothing really exists fully at

all." (#28). This is obviously problematic for non-Japanese speaking citizens and for incoming tourists – a key barrier if Japan wishes to become a leading global tourist destinationm and recognises that informational and communicational barriers play a key role in preventing PwD from accessing critical information making certain environments inaccessible even before they have arrived at the destination (Benjamin et al., 2021; Randle & Dolnicar, 2019).

Beyond physical changes, building awareness among Japanese citizens around PwD needs and rights emerged as a dominant theme, as #11 noted "… now, it is about time that ordinary citizens should be aware of the issue and help them [PwD] voluntarily." (#11). We identified numerous guides developed by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, in conjunction with Tokyo 2020, to 1) communicate accessibility guidance, 2) enable mobility across both the transport and tourism industry, and 3) to promote Japan's Barrier-Free campaign. There were 10s of example, several presented below, including a step-by-step Barrier-Free guide to getting around Tokyo (Fig. 5), through to literature proposed PwD friendly itineraries across the city and the disability-friendly support and amenities available (Fig. 6).

Interestingly, virtually all accessibility initiatives were co-branded with Tokyo 2020 logos, indicating a symbiotic link between the event and intervention (eg Fig. 9), to achieve Games' pledges. In Tokyo and across Japan [including Kyoto and Osaka], posters littered the city, strategically placed in transport hubs and popular tourist hotspots (Figs. 7 and 8). Research indicates that marketing plays a crucial role in enabling and empowering PwDs, increasing their motivation to engage in tourism activities, particularly where there is a lack of representation of PwD in marketing materials (Benjamin et al., 2021; Cloquet et al.,

Fig. 5. (Left) - Document outlining accessibility requirements.

Fig. 6. (Right) - Guide to accessible tourist attractions.

Fig. 8. (Middle) - Official Tokyo 2020 poster entitled: 'Unity in Diversity'.

Fig. 7. (Left) – Official Tokyo 2020 poster entitled: 'Be better, together'.

Fig. 9. (Right) – Braille used to denote Japanese tourist information centre sign.

2018). It was hard to ignore this messaging as city-wide marketing campaigns urged onward lookers to "Celebrate Diversity" consider "Unity in Diversity", and "Be better, together" – the prominent slogans of Tokyo 2020 on city streets, in 2019, a year before the Olympics was due to begin (though eventually delayed due to COVID). This is how Japan sought to normalise positive representations of PwD, alongside long-read promotional pamphlets clarifying why we must have "respect for diversity" and "rethinking human rights through the Paralympics" (Figs. 10 and 11). These messages were continually reiterated in bid publications to policy documents (Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games Bid Committee, 2020). Accessible tourism research has highlighted how hostile attitudes to PwD is the greatest barrier to inclusion (McKercher

and Darcy, 2018; Randle and Dolnicar, 2019). Research indicates that language and imagery is critical in forming, describing, condoning and/or justifying behaviour and attitudes (Gillovic et al., 2018). Our empirical work illustrates a strategically planned and operationally co-ordinated effort to raise awareness and educate the Japanese population on PwD needs and rights.

Several interviewees highlighted that just by simply exposing Japan and Tokyo's Olympic city to the Paralympics and policies required for athletes to participate, have helped to implement necessary physical measures, and will, overtime, help reshape the attitudes of local and national populations. This aligns to Benjamin et al.'s (2021) view that by

Fig. 10. (Left) – Information publication linking human rights with PwD rights and the Paralympics.

simply representing PwD on television and social media can help tackle stigma against and negative societal views of PwD. In other words, attitudinal change plays a key role in relegitmising particular stakeholder groups that have been historically less legitimate (Saitō, 2021). One example of this has been the way the Tokyo Gorin Ondo official anthem of the Games, shared online by the IPC, explicitly features PwD in the video and calls on the national population to celebrate the Paralympic Games (Fig. 12). Further, in terms of exposing local and national populations to this movement, as one walks through the host city it is impossible to ignore the plethora of Paralympic symbols and signs promoting this movement (Fig. 13). We also found features in popular city magazines disseminated around the city, promoting the Paralympic Games and the Paralympic Torch Relay (Fig. 14). The key point here is that Tokyo 2020 provided an opportunity to present PwD in a new light and expose those with negative attitudes to the abilities and disabilities of PwD to generate awareness and education, as summed up well by #15 below:

> "It [the Games] is a good opportunity to get to know the importance of diversity and inclusion. The problem is the people in Japan really haven't got real experience. The Japanese hospitality is well-known these days. However, the attitude will change once "different" people come into their social boundary." (#15)

Finally, it is important to note that the rest of Japan is still playing catch up in comparison with Tokyo, and therefore policies and practices implemented in Tokyo city can be articulated and implemented in areas outside Tokyo to raise standards for PwD. As #9 notes

> "Tokyo is far more accessible than the rest of the country for the visually or physically impaired. However, Japan as a whole has not reached that point yet. There is more infrastructure in place for the visually impaired but not as much for the physically impaired. Those traveling in a wheelchair often find navigation difficult and cannot visit a number of the most popular and important tourist destinations." (#9).

The general view is that Tokyo is more advanced than all other cities in Japan, yet there is still a way to go to come in line with other global cities. However, if we are to attend to the needs and rights of PwD, interviewees suggest we need to look beyond the cities – as this is where

Fig. 11. (Right) – Pamphlet outlining all Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games' pledges toward PwD.
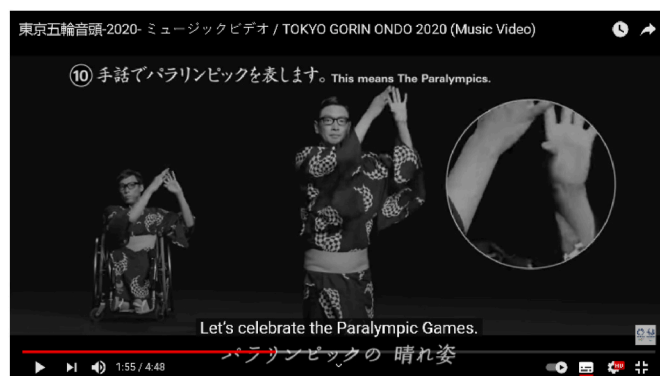

Fig. 12. (Left) - Online video of the official anthem for the Games including PwD.

Fig. 13. (Middle) - Signs promoting the Paralympic Games.

Fig. 14. (Right) - Articles about the Paralympic Games in popular magazines.

inaccessibility issues become even greater. As the quote from #13 below highlights this is a mammoth task that will probably not be achieved in our lifetime. However, hosting the Games can clearly act as a catalyst for wider accessibility field development than just the host city: "Stations in main cities have been improved (e.g. elevators). But, if you go to the countryside or historical temples, accessibility is limited. It is probably due to lack of funds for investment." (#13). Resident and tourist

accounts still litter news articles, concerning both pervasive negative attitudes and physical barriers. Cited in Rose (2021), one local resident: Mizuki Hsu highlights how stigma against PwD is still a problem claiming: "I feel it's very common that people gaze at me in public and some strangers tell me how pitiful I am. Inclusion of people within the community still has a long way to go." (2021: [online]). Furthermore, transportation options like the Japanese Rail and Shinkansen network still require a month or two advance booking taking much longer to plan and organise travel for PwD, both in and out of metropolitan areas including cities, towns and villages (Rose, 2021). We now close the article by detailing the key conceptual implications and significance of this work, the article's contribution, and present policy recommendations and managerial implications, alongside future research directions to address one dominant theme identified by our literature review and findings: The need to address what we call the 'disability-attitude gap'.

5. Discussions and managerial implications

Our study details how Japan sought to lever Tokyo 2020 to expose and tackle physical and attitudinal barriers to PwD – a historically neglected social group and a distinct tourist market in Japan. This is significant as Japan aims to compete as a leading tourist destination in the coming decades. Therefore, accessibility and accessible tourism initiatives played a central role across bid promises and policy agendas – and for achieving inclusivity and social sustainability agendas. Tokyo 2020 illustrates how mega-events foment new and catalyse existing social policy to tackle endemic social problems to host destinations – one-off interventions helping to tackle everyday challenges people and places face.

Conceptually, field configuring mega events, particularly the Olympics are aided by having a protracted planning stage, complete with dates for institutionalised termination. This allows bid promises to be institutionalised into policy agendas, in tractable settings that possess complex constellations of existing stakeholders (e.g. governments, local authorities, regulatory bodies, charities, NGOs) and new stakeholders (e. g. temporary event governing bodies like the organising committees and the Olympic Delivery Authorities) who intensely interact and come together to operationalise strategic plans. Our research helps capture field developments occurring *in situ* where everyday legacies are bequeathed at the host destination level, whilst at the same time, influencing global social policy agendas too. Specifically, we illustrate how targeted social policy can catalyse field development across geographic and industrial fields, simultaneously, to improve PwD′ mobility and inclusion – whether that's physical transformations to the built environment and tourism infrastructure, or informational and educational campaigns. These are two particular examples where McKercher and Darcy (2018) argues progress is urgently needed.

Our empirical work illustrated how travel information, transport use, and available tourist facilities for PwD sat alongside increased representation of PwD, inclusive language, and even linked tackling issues for PwD with human rights across official co-branded Japan government and Tokyo 2020 literature – illustrating a symbiotic relationship between the event and policy intervention. We argue, by reorientating the rationale for bidding for and hosting mega-events to primarily focus on tackling endemic social problems, event owners like the IOC and FIFA may be able to revive the image and contribution of mega-events for social good, instead of current perceptions that they produce more social problems than they solve, and awkwardly juxtapose global inclusivity and social sustainability agendas.

Although measures to tackle PwD′ needs and rights was a priority prior to bidding and hosting Tokyo 2020, without the Olympics, policy interventions may have taken longer to come to fruition – or in some case, may never have been realised. Furthermore, we argue how the strategic hosting of mega-event portfolios can cumulatively help advance national social policy agendas, illustrated by Japan's ambitious portfolio of events in the last and next two decades, including the 2002

FIFA World Cup prior to the formation of Japan's Disabled Persons Japan Disability Act, 2005, Tokyo 2020, to Osaka's forthcoming 2025 World Expo. Although numerous variables are in play, beyond specific cases and contexts, we suggest that the strategic hosting of international mega-events, over decades, can cumulate to inform global policy agendas – witnessed post-Stoke Mandeville 1952 Games (when they first became international) with the rise of the disability and Paralympic movement in sports. Therefore, mega-events can be argued to be a field configuring event, both at the national and international level, and catalysing field development across multiple organisational fields, simultaneously. This is what makes field configuring events, particularly mega-events, powerful and potential tools for social change.

Although significant work is required to tackle what we refer to as the 'disability-attitude gap' we argue mega-events have the power to disrupt systems of ableist thinking embodying normative values (Nourry, 2018) that can restrict PwD to particular parts of the city, country, and society, and bring together stakeholders to set new dominant designs (Hansen et al., 2021). Tokyo 2020 and Japan represents an extreme case here. This is significant as instead of the city and tourism industry being an exclusionary space often recognised for being exclusionary environments, leisure spaces can become an *ibasho* – a safe and welcoming environment that fosters positive interactions between residents and tourists (Saitō, 2021), and one that attends productively to the intrinsic and extrinsic needs of PwD (Randle & Dolnicar, 2019; Smith, 1987) – and both elements of the social model of disability (physical environment and social attitudes).

Aligning to the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), 2013 2020; pledges concerning dignity and respect for PwD, in philosophical terms, Tokyo 2020 played a part in reprioritising whose interests are salient in contemporary Japanese society. Mega-events therefore hold up a mirror to the host's society to question whose needs and rights matter most, at a particular time and place in history – conforming to the view that events can subvert social hierarchy and promote egalitarian outcomes. They can serve as Northern Stars, and we suggest Tokyo 2020 helped relegitimise PwD within Japanese society by attending to both physical and attitudinal barriers. Countering the view that PwD fail to fit the 'capitalist narrative' (Goodley, 2014), decades of evidence confirm that PwD represent an untapped tourist market (McKercher & Darcy, 2018), and a social group who, on moral grounds, *should* be attended to. This is significant as mega-events are delivered in wildly contrasting social contexts, with differing norms and standards and social groups whose interests are ascribed more or less legitimacy. Therefore, event owners and host destinations, must recognise whose needs and rights may be vulnerable in the local context and how the event can be used, proactively and reactively, to expose and tackle every day and event-related social injustices.

Attending to physical and attitudinal needs, in a more informed way, requires a deeper understanding of what constitutes disability and the everyday challenges residents and tourists face. We argue that a 'whole of life' approach where all aspects of accessibility are fully integrated into accessible tourism is key but remains a challenge in practice (Benjamin et al., 2021; Darcy & Dickson, 2009). First, planners prioritise the physical side of the social model of disability – this must stop and both sides must equally be attended to. Therefore, second, significant attention is required to develop policy and managerial solutions to influencing attitudes to overcome stigma towards PwD. For both, all stakeholders, internal and external, must work together toward a shared objective across the geographical field of the host country and city, and the industrial field of the host's tourism industry. Although we have seen a progressive shift from the *medical* model of disability to *social* model of disability (Randle and Dolnicar, 2019), we must do more to expose and tackle barriers to PwD′ inclusion, critiquing that we live in a society where it is the environment and people's attitudes toward PwD that must change, not PwD themselves.

To address the 'disability-attitude gap' we present policy recommendations and managerial implications (Table 2 below). We recognise

Table 2
Policy recommendations and managerial implications to address the 'disability-attitude gap'.

Attitudinal problem being addressed.	Policy recommendation and managerial implication(s).
Limited awareness of disabilities and challenges PwD face from service providers and general public. **National stigma and negative attitudes toward the socio-economic contribution of PwD.**	Training and awareness programmes to be compulsory, mandated by IPC and the IOC's Host City Contract to ensure that a key legacy outcome of hosting is to tackle negative attitudes and stigma that prevents PwD inclusion. This is currently just a recommendation and not a contractual obligation, therefore making it difficult to achieve UNSDG Goal 10 and related targets of an inclusive society. For example, this has been tested in the hospitality sector, where peer-to-peer accommodation networks like AirBnB have responsibility to educate hosts on accessibility (Randle & Dolnicar, 2019). Our analysis of the IPC's (2020) 'Accessibility Guide' only includes 3.5 pages (out of over 200) on training and awareness, focusing on the importance of communication and assistance, with the rest primarily focused on background and technical information related to built environments and physical accessibility. Large-scale national awareness campaigns presenting PwD requirements and rights in everyday life, whilst highlighting the physical and attitudinal challenges they face to develop awareness and compassion. Depending on the country and social views toward PwD, clarifying the socio-economic importance of including PwD equally is vital as particular cultures have a stigma that persists and promotes PwD exclusion. This may also improve PwD self-esteem. Therefore, similar to the training and education policy and managerial objective above, a clear informational campaign leading up to and after the Opening Ceremony is critical to slowly change views toward PwD and increase acceptance, globally and nationally. This should not be a recommendation; but should be mandated as part of commitments to inclusivity and social sustainability.

this is an on-going learning process for countries, cities, and hosts, but one that requires long-term stakeholder commitment beyond events themselves – similar to other endemic social problems from gender disparity to racism and xenophobia. Commitment is required as disability is complex with different impairments that require different types and levels of policy and practical intervention to ensure wide inclusivity. For scholars, we suggest a future research agenda should consider the efficacy and effectiveness of initiatives deployed to tackle physical and attitudinal barriers for PwD and triangulate qualitative and quantitative data sources to do so, whilst also maintaining scrutiny on what, how and why barriers persist, as prior evidence from Athens 2004 to Rio 2016 claims PwD inclusion remains a challenge. We recognise Japan is still in the early stages of field development and we should part-critique and part-appreciate where gains have been made but also play critical friend by drawing on evidence and examples from related contexts where Japan can learn from other well-developed global cities with more experience of attending to the needs and rights of PwD. Based on the two central attitudinal problems identified in this research, we present two policy recommendations and managerial implications focused exclusively on tackling negative attitudes as this side of the social model of disability is often ignored, therefore producing the

'disability-attitude gap'. This gap refers to negative attitudes being the roof of all barriers to access for PwD, as a result of a lack of awareness from service providers, the general public and policy makers (Benjamin et al., 2021; Randle & Dolnicar, 2019). Thus, if tourism and events are to have a chance of being truly accessible and inclusive to PwD, negative attitudes must be eradicated before meaningful changes to informational and physical barriers can be addressed.

6. Conclusion

This paper identified a series of research questions to structure the study and we have been able to demonstrate the process by which mega-events catalyse industrial and geographical field development to advance accessible tourism agendas, building upon the experiences of previous mega-events and their inability to advance accessible tourism. The example of Tokyo reviewed here has a wider application than the Olympic Games in terms of illustrating how mega-event planning and programming may have to recognise the existence of a disability-attitude gap, particularly in this case focused on physical disability and mobility-related challenges, irrespective of state legislation, so that destination development associated with event hosting can future-proof its planning and development processes by ensuring that accessibility is one of the key principles. Recognising development agendas now being influenced by Universal Design principles and thinking around making places people-friendly mean that destinations will be able to challenge structural and attitudinal aspects of the social model of disability through event hosting. This is a key outcome of this study and has significant traction when designing events in terms of the places, spaces and ideology that informs the event concept.

Unlike more piecemeal changes that are associated with approaches to making the tourism sector more accessible, on a business by business or sector by approach, the mega-event development process may create a greater awareness and requirement to ensure accessibility is a hallmark feature of the event. In this respect, the concept of field development has a vital role to play in attending to the rights of PwD across event bidding, planning, live staging, and legacy phases of event development as it offers a much greater impactful effect on accessible tourism for a destination where there is a major impetus to future-proof the event to avoid the negative publicity of an inaccessible event for different groups of tourists and residents. As social movements like age-friendly, people-friendly, and dementia-friendly show, making an event or destination accessible for a broad range of resident or tourist needs in one domain often has a knock-on effect to make it more accessible for other groups and so it begins to make event development and destination development more 'people-focused' as opposed to the traditional development process being directed to major infrastructure projects without adequate attention to who will access and use venues and sites before, during and after an event has been held. Consequently, the example of Japan has many important lessons for how one destination has sought to make changes and learn from other cities, which in time will help other cities to share these experiences in pursuit of a more inclusive tourism sector that is less divisive and still posing barriers to PwD.

Credit author statement

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Impact statement

We illustrate how mega-events are crucibles where social problems endemic to host destinations can be exposed and tackled through targeted social policy. We draw on the social model of disability (our first theoretical lens) to examine how Japan utilised Tokyo 2020 as a field configuring event (our second theoretical lens) to disrupt systems of ableist thinking and tackle physical and attitudinal barriers historically restricting Persons with Disabilities to accessible tourism. Our work has significance beyond the case and context presented and we outline policy recommendations and managerial implications, alongside future research directions to attend to what we refer to as the 'disability-attitude gap' by focusing on two key areas: 1) raising awareness of disabilities and challenges PwD face by service providers and general public through training programmes, and 2) tackling national stigma and negative attitudes toward the socio-economic contribution of PwD through national information and communication campaigns. We believe this paper, if published, will clarify to event owners like the IOC and FIFA and other major event at a global level, as well as specific host destinations, how they can implement new training, educational and informational campaigns to tackle barriers identified and how mega events serve as powerful platforms for advancing accessible tourism in host destinations.

Declaration of competing interest

No competing interests to declare.

Acknowledgments

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