

Driving accessible tourism development through research priorities for Destination Management Organisations in New Zealand

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- Presents research priorities for accessible tourism development in New Zealand.
- Positions Destination Management Organisations as key drivers of accessible tourism development within a destination.
- Confirms the significance of research for understanding the 'why,' 'how,' and 'who' of accessible tourism.
- Raises important questions for how academic research can inform and influence accessible tourism development and industry practice.

1. Introduction

Increasingly, tourism researchers are questioning how tourism, and its inquiry, might drive an agenda for a more inclusive, responsible, and sustainable future (see Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020). In New Zealand, this too is the case. Tourism has long been an important export earner for the country, however, the nature of tourism considerations remains overwhelmingly environment-centric and largely devoid of a social imperative (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015). Destination Management Organisations [DMOs], with significant involvement in, and influence over, the management and marketing of New Zealand, need to prioritise accessibility to remain competitive, especially given the changing demography of domestic and major inbound visitor markets. Despite local accessibility champions calling for more strategic leadership in this space, there remains no coherent or coordinated strategy relating to accessible tourism development in New Zealand (Cockburn-Wooten & McIntosh, 2020).

While we, as researchers, seek to provide appropriate knowledge and direction, the New Zealand tourism industry does not always have awareness of, or access to, such research, and if they do, can raise conflicting views and concerns. Compounding this, is the ableist attitudes that may prevail, and a lack of understanding around what accessibility entails, and what is required to achieve it (Figueiredo et al., 2012). There is thus a need to understand what research the industry actually wants and needs, and if and how it may make a difference. Determining research priorities can enable evaluation of the current state of accessible tourism in a destination and prioritise a more focused approach to research to support its development

(Darcy, 2006). To this end, the chapter will reveal findings of our study that sought to establish research priorities for accessible tourism development through an identification of stakeholder perspectives of representatives from DMOs, using New Zealand as a case destination.

Elsewhere, we have argued the need for researchers to critically engage with the language and terminology of disability, and its discursive aspects and implications for accessible tourism development (see Gillovic et al., 2024; Gillovic et al., 2018). Consequently, in this chapter we employ the term 'people with disability.' This aligns with the social model of disability and preference for person-first language that emphasises the personhood and humanity of individuals before their impairments (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2016). We recognise that stakeholders may use different terminology for varying reasons, including that which aligns with the nomenclature employed in a destination's legislation.

2. Literature review

2.1. Accessible tourism development at the destination level

A focus on accessible tourism is not new internationally. Globally, DMOs in countries like Australia and England have noted the size of the potential market opportunity and invested resources into aiding access visitors in trip planning and businesses in improving accessibility (Tourism Australia, 2024; Visit Britain/Visit England, 2024). International collaboration has led to the establishment of guidelines and standards, for example, ISO 21902:2021 'Tourism and related services – Accessible tourism for all – Requirements and recommendations' (International Organization for Standardization, 2021), and key non-governmental organisations have even proclaimed it to be a 'game changer' for destinations around the world as they look to recover and bounce back from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to its contribution to sustainability strategies (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2020; World Travel and Tourism Council, 2021). Focusing on the access market has the potential for substantial impact, both in terms of the social inclusion of individuals and groups, as well as providing the industry with financial gains, and contributing to a more inclusive, competitive, and ultimately sustainable, destination (Darcy et al., 2010; Porto et al., 2019).

Some destinations have taken a more proactive approach to accessible tourism development than others, recognising it as a function of destination competitiveness (Domínguez Vila et al., 2015; Porto et al., 2019). Driving the creation of more inclusive and enabling environments has been the existence of strong policy foundations, effective collection of statistics, political will, disability discrimination legislation, and building codes for structural environments, in addition to accessibility initiatives and dedicated accessible tourism programmes (Darcy et al.,

2010; Domínguez Vila et al., 2015; Porto et al., 2019). For other destinations, there are still questions of “if and how policy makers and planners are addressing the impact of accessible tourism in a sustainable manner” (Michopoulou et al., 2015, p. 180). Usually, this inaction stems from a lack of political will and the minimal degree to which accessibility is prioritised by policy makers and planners in the destination (Porto et al., 2019), due to competing focuses and potentially ableist attitudes and preconceptions about disability (Nyanjom et al., 2018). This affects the potential for accessible tourism development outcomes and impedes upon the extent to which social change can be delivered (Cockburn-Wootten et al., 2018; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015; Oliver, 1990).

Stakeholder collaboration has been widely argued as critical for tourism development, and as a highly complex process that engages multiple, heterogeneous groups with diverse perspectives and varying levels of interest and influence (Byrd, 2007; Jamal & Getz, 1995). Stakeholder collaboration across and within the public, private, and not for profit sectors has too been considered an essential foundation for accessible tourism development (Darcy, 2011; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015; Michopoulou et al., 2015; Porto et al., 2019). It has been noted, however, that this process is even more complex due to “the contentious and contextual nature of issues that must be addressed” (Nyanjom et al., 2018, p. 680), and fragmented nature and heterogeneity of the industry (Michopoulou & Buhalis, 2011). Complexity is heightened further when noting that collaboration needs to take place within tourism businesses and across the wider tourism system if an accessible visitor journey and accessible tourism value chain is to be achieved (Cockburn-Wootten et al., 2018; Michopoulou et al., 2015).

While accessible tourism related inquiry and industry practice is increasing, there is less focus on destination management (Michopoulou et al., 2015). Strategic leadership is needed to drive the concerted efforts and collaborations of destination managers from planning and development stages through to implementation and operationalisation (Michopoulou & Buhalis, 2011). While a logical place for this leadership to come from is the national government and its related agencies, due to their role in policy and governance and influence over legislation and regulation, it also needs to come from the regional and local government levels (Nyanjom et al., 2018). DMOs working at these levels can undertake a myriad of actions to progress accessible tourism, including strategic planning and setting of priorities; applying regulatory frameworks to govern minimum access requirements and standards; coordinating the implementation of accessibility programmes and initiatives; distributing information and resources to businesses about the access market and how to accommodate it; developing training schemes to improve workforce capabilities; providing financial support and incentives to businesses adapting or innovating for accessibility; and implementing measures to

benchmark progress (Ambrose et al., 2012). Unfortunately, leadership in accessible tourism development is not always demonstrated at the government level, nor should it necessarily be relied upon (Darcy, 2011; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015; Sisto et al., 2022).

Accessible tourism development at the destination level requires strategic leadership and coordination of a much wider range of key stakeholder groups, including government and its related agencies, but importantly, extending to businesses, the disability community, and people with disability (Michopoulou & Buhalis, 2011; Nyanjom et al., 2018). Perhaps most critical, is the need to ensure the disability community and people with disability are truly heard and engaged meaningfully in the policy, planning, and governance of accessible tourism development (Cockburn-Wootten et al., 2018; Darcy et al., 2020; Sisto et al., 2022). These individuals and groups, along with the wider community, are the primary beneficiaries of accessible tourism (Darcy et al., 2010; Michopoulou et al., 2015), and have much tacit, lived and localised knowledge, expertise, and insight to share (Cockburn-Wootten & McIntosh, 2020; Michopoulou & Buhalis, 2011). Despite people with disability historically lacking power and voice in decision-making, it is imperative that other stakeholders look for practical and authentic co-creative ways to involve them as active not passive participants (McIntosh & Cockburn-Wootten, 2021; Nyanjom et al., 2018) and to ensure they can not only consume tourism as visitors but co-produce it as employees, entrepreneurs, business owners, and regulators (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020).

Furthermore, the role of champions that advocate for disability rights, accessibility, and inclusion, should not be underestimated for their ability to keep relevant stakeholders engaged and moving towards the vision of a more accessible and inclusive tourism future (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2021). Champions may or may not have lived experience of disability and can include individuals and groups within the disability community or professionals and businesses in the tourism industry. Businesses in the private sector, whether that be accommodation providers, transport companies, attractions, or ecotourism operators, also play an important role in making reasonable adjustments, modifications, and improvements related to the accessibility of their offerings (Garrod & Fennell, 2023). Even so, “until disability is firmly on the agenda across all levels of government and the private sector, even the most effective advocates are likely to achieve only ad hoc outcomes rather than build a more strategically grounded approach to creating accessible tourism destinations” (Darcy et al., 2010, p. 519).

2.2. *Accessible tourism development in New Zealand*

There is both a social and economic case for accessible tourism in New Zealand that has not yet been fully realised. As the country looks to future proof the industry, it is timely to consider who the visitors will be, and what the visitor experience will look like. Currently, more than one million New Zealanders live with disability (Stats NZ, 2014), and an estimated 1.3 billion people live with disability globally (World Health Organization, 2023). These numbers are increasing and important given the changing demography of New Zealand and many countries around the world; New Zealand's population is ageing (Stats NZ, 2020), as are the visitor profiles of all its major inbound markets (Be. Lab, 2019; Rhodda, 2012).

To date, there has been little attempt to determine the size and value of New Zealand's potential domestic and international inbound access markets (Rhodda, 2012). Unfortunately, the capacity to measure the real-time size and value of the access market is constrained by a lack of available data and systematic methodology to measure. Yet, having this kind of data available in New Zealand would help communicate the significance of this market and its potential economic opportunity (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015). It could also garner buy-in from tourism businesses, noting that one study in New Zealand found that providing accessibility generated business benefits relating to improved product offering, brand and reputation, revenue potential, competitive advantage, and longevity and sustainability (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015).

What we do know about accessible tourism in New Zealand, both through research and anecdotally, is that many people working in the industry understand the social rationale behind accessibility but are not necessarily acting on this. Some businesses are making adaptations to improve the accessibility of their offerings, while others are simply offering advanced customer care when they encounter a visitor with disability, rather than proactively planning for it (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015). There are also champions opening up dialogue about accessible tourism and pushing for change (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015). Some of this change has been evidenced in initiatives being rolled out by local community groups at the grassroots level, like beach matting in coastal destinations (Bay of Plenty Times, 2016, December 21, 2017, March 5), airlines and airports training staff to accommodate people with invisible disability (Air New Zealand, 2024; Auckland Airport, 2024), and by Regional Tourism Organisations, with dedicated website provision of accessibility information (Tourism Bay of Plenty, n.d.; Venture Taranaki, 2024). These efforts are to be commended however caveated by the fact that an accessible business or offering does not equate with an accessible destination (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020), highlighting the significance of the accessible tourism value chain and the need for a more holistic consideration of the whole tourism system (Michopoulou & Buhalis, 2011; Nyanjom et al., 2018). Compounding this, is the issue of communication channels and

the relaying of information (Eichhorn et al., 2008). The provision of accessibility information is inconsistent among New Zealand's tourism businesses and offerings, fragmented and scattered across different sources; greater integration and standardisation of information in a credible place would make the journey planning process more streamlined for access visitors (Rhodda, 2012).

It has previously been argued that accessible tourism development in New Zealand requires a "meeting in the middle"; a coming together of small to medium-sized businesses and larger companies working at the operational, visitor facing level, with the national and regional DMOs tasked with strategic leadership, coordination, management, and marketing of the industry (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015, p. 234). Currently, no strategy exists for accessible tourism development in New Zealand (Cockburn-Wootten & McIntosh, 2020). It is not a priority or even a focus of national destination management and marketing organisations like the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment or Tourism New Zealand (Rhodda, 2012). "Given New Zealand's reliance on tourism and international reputation for tourism marketing, and its human rights legal framework, this is somewhat perplexing" (Porto et al., 2019, p. 180). One of the biggest gaps identified and necessary to push this agenda forward, is top-down leadership, yet, DMOs working at this level have been criticised for their apathy and complacency (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015). This lack of strategic leadership and coordination is hindering the ability to deliver on an accessible visitor journey in New Zealand, and is an issue also reported overseas (Darcy & Dickson, 2009).

Access visitors overseas are already familiar with expectations in their own countries. There is an opportunity to ensure that the industry can meet their expectations should they wish to visit New Zealand, and to better provide for the 83% of New Zealanders with disability and other access requirements that regularly engage in domestic travel (Be. Lab, 2019). Research has shown that New Zealand has fallen behind its competitors, especially Australia, even though the country is more reliant on tourism as a major invisible export (Porto et al., 2019). As it stands, New Zealand is not well placed to accommodate this growing market. More than 10 years ago, there was a call to "create a research agenda, identify research gaps and opportunities for research collaboration, and dedicate funding for research in accessible tourism" (Rhodda, 2012, p. 122). This call was left unanswered and hence became the focus of our study. This chapter will offer some insights and direction based on the findings of that study.

3. The study

Consistent with previous accessible tourism studies, our study employed an interpretivist methodology and semi-structured interviewing as a means of gathering diverse stakeholder perspectives (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015; Nyanjom et al., 2018). Whilst we had initial intentions to use co-creative methods to inclusively garner stakeholder priorities for research (Darcy, 2006; McIntosh & Cockburn-Wootten, 2021), this was not possible at the time of the study due to New Zealand Government pandemic restrictions. Our stakeholder participants included representatives from DMOs, at the national and regional levels of the industry, who could provide their perspectives on, and suggest priorities for, research on accessible tourism development in New Zealand. Our final sample included 18 participants working in the roles of administrator (1), chair (1), CEO (1), executive (1), director (2), and manager (12) for 16 different DMOs, including government agencies (2), a government-funded agency (1), membership based and funded organisations (2), and Regional Tourism Organisations [RTOs] (11). A summary profile of participants is provided in Table 1. To maintain the confidentiality of the participants and the DMOs they work for, pseudonyms have been given.

Table 1. Profile of participants.

Pseudonym	DMO	Location
Abigail	RTO	North Island
Alice	RTO	North Island
Bella		
Bradley	Membership based and funded organisation	North Island
Brody	Government funded agency	North Island
Claire	RTO	North Island
Damian	Government agency	North Island
Daniel	Membership based and funded organisation	North Island
Gabrielle	RTO	South Island
George	RTO	South Island
Harvey	RTO	North Island
James	RTO	South Island
Lily	RTO	South Island
Lucy	RTO	North Island
Mila		
Samuel	Government agency	North Island
Taylor	RTO	South Island

The data was collected through semi-structured online interviews which were audio- and video-recorded for accuracy and subsequent checking by participants. The interview schedule included three main questions: *Are you aware of data or research about accessible tourism in New Zealand and/or overseas? Do you have specific questions about accessible tourism that you would like addressed through research? What key themes can we prioritise through research?* Additional questions were posed as the interviews formed part of a larger study. However, our focus here is on the questions that sought to garner participants' perspectives and priorities for research to support accessible tourism development in New Zealand. These questions were analysed using content analysis to identify common themes among the participants' responses; the 'why,' 'how,' and 'who' of accessible tourism. Our study was not simply concerned with counting and listing the identified research priorities, but also making sense of the perspectives, meaning, and context behind them, which is why we adopted Lune and Berg's (2017) stage model of a qualitative content analysis.

4. Research priorities for accessible tourism development in New Zealand

4.1. Theme one – why

The most commonly reported research priority (N = 17) was the need to understand **why** accessible tourism was important. The following quote summarises well, the comments made by participants:

It's hard data and soft data; quantification of the opportunity. What other benefits have been realised due to going into this market, and exemplars of other areas that have done it; what it has meant to them across the spectrum, why they did it, do they think it's actually been of benefit and in what ways? (Bella, RTO).

Perhaps not surprisingly, almost all of the participants (N = 15) were not personally aware of any data or research about accessible tourism in New Zealand and/or overseas, justifying this as not their area of expertise or focus. Participants saw the need for research that incorporated both quantitative and qualitative justifications for accessible tourism development. The quantitative justification related to determining the "economic impact," "commercial opportunity," "a way to measure legacy outcomes," "non-economic benefits around further investment," and "the cost benefit analysis." This quantification analysis was described as being about "monetising it," "brutal as it sounds," "it's all about the numbers, I'm going to be honest, it's all about numbers." As Tessa (RTO) explained, "I think you want to know what

you're opening your cheque book for." The qualitative justification related to understanding "community benefits," "social outcomes," and "legacy outcomes." As such, there was wider appreciation among participants of the social imperative, "not just the business case." Additionally, participants wanted to understand what was happening in "other jurisdictions," and especially "in a country that has some equivalence to New Zealand," for "benchmarking," and in order to learn from their "initiatives in this space," "case studies," and "examples of best practice."

The findings in this theme show the importance of data-driven knowledge to garner buy-in for accessible tourism development. As Mila (RTO) surmised, it "gives a bit more credibility, eh, when you've got the numbers behind it." Understanding the quantitative value of accessible tourism was one element of this, but participants commonly relayed that it really comes down to "proof," "to justify it probably to the sceptics," of "what difference [accessible tourism] can make," and whether it is perceived as a worthwhile investment opportunity, notably amid other strategic priorities. There is some evidence to suggest that a research priority to understand 'why' accessible tourism is worth developing signals that the DMOs in our study remain unconvinced.

This is perpetuated by the lack of tourism data more generally available to the industry. Whilst not necessarily having knowledge of previous accessible tourism research, participants did raise that "data is very important for the tourism industry." Currently, New Zealand has "the International Visitor Survey, which could possibly give an indication" but does not "have a domestic visitor survey," instead "bluntly measuring visitor travel" by relying on limited "credit card data" of tourist spend. As a result, Bradley (membership based and funded organisation) explained how "this is one of many elements in the tourism industry that is flying blind because of the lack of good quality data" and thus determining the value of accessible tourism would be "very challenging."

Other destinations have been found to have accessibility related legislation and/or more robust tourism data systems (Darcy et al., 2010; Domínguez Vila et al., 2015). This may be a reason why New Zealand remains uncompetitive in this space (Porto et al., 2019).

4.2. Theme two – how

The second most commonly reported research priority (N = 12) was the need to understand **how** accessible tourism can be achieved. The following quote summarises well, the comments made by participants:

What the requirements are. It's all-good people saying, "oh we need to be more accessible."

What do you need? What is it that you actually need? Some specifics would be really helpful. What do we need to be accessible? (Abigail, RTO).

Participants commonly made comments about needing to know *"what is defined as accessible tourism"* and guidance about what *"could help us to develop products or just infrastructures that work for everyone ... because we've never been trained on this, right?"* Knowledge about 'how' accessible tourism can be delivered, and then subsequently promoted, was also expressed in the need for a gap-analysis to *"understand what the greatest needs are that aren't being catered for."* Highlighting the barriers to participation, this analysis would then enable organisations to, as Taylor (RTO) put it, *"determine what those needs are, and then understand better how businesses can help with modifying how they do things, or what they provide, to be able to be as helpful as possible."* There was an expressed need to know what products, solutions, and technologies might also be available. In attempting to understand how they can overcome the barriers to participation, a few participants mentioned their recognition of their own able-bodied position. As one participant recounted:

It's very easy as an able-bodied person, to come in with a lens of, "we're really accessible."

Is that actually true? So, a gap analysis and a critique, a SWOT analysis of "here's your opportunities, but here's where you're underperforming." (Lily, RTO).

There was also a common desire to know more about what others are leading with best practice in accessible tourism and to share this knowledge more widely. This included suggestions for greater training programmes around accessibility, not just in relation to physical access but also customer service. Participants felt they required more information about the needs of different disability types, especially those *"non-obvious disabilities,"* and *"identifying how you would remove whatever barriers are in place or perceived to be in place, so that you do become more accessible."* As James (RTO) described, this was typically couched as, *"there must be ways where you can say, if you were to do these things, you would get some really quick, easy wins for a particular group of people."* There were frequent mentions of operator perceptions being key to kickstarting their accessibility journey as well as knowledge about what *"quick, easy,"* and cost-effective *"wins"* can be enacted. In short, the imperative becomes *"more functional and granular"* for tourism businesses to understand, and as Brody (government funded agency) surmised, *"what's the opportunity? If I have to put x in place to be more barrier free, why would I do that?"*

It appears that without case studies of best practice informed by lessons about what works and does not work to inform development, training, and industry practice, DMOs and the tourism businesses they work with, remain unsupported in understanding and accommodating accessibility. This is a finding commensurate with elsewhere (Darcy et al., 2010; Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015). Of particular note here, was the perception that this guidance, analysis, and information should be convincing and convenient.

4.3. Theme three - who

The third most commonly reported priority (N = 9) was the need to understand **who** the access visitors are, as the beneficiaries of accessible tourism development. The following quote summarises well, the comments made by participants:

You also need to put some research into various groups of accessibility. There are quite different categories, and they have quite different needs. Some attitudinal research from those groups would be interesting, quite fascinating as well; I think that could unlock the social impact. (George, RTO).

Participants relayed the need to go “*down the qualitative route,*” whether that be through “*attitudinal research,*” “*surveying,*” or a “*feel-o-metre,*” to provide “*greater awareness*” and “*a deeper understanding*” of who the access visitor is. They recognised that access “*goes beyond physical limitations*” and that there is a “*range of users*” within this market with a “*broad spectrum of accessibility needs,*” including “*age, intellectual, or physical,*” “*deaf,*” “*visual,*” and “*dyslexia.*” Some recognised or questioned that accessibility needs might differ to that of someone with “*a fully able body.*”

To contribute to an understanding of who the access visitor is, in all its dimensions, was the need for an unpacking of information pertaining to “*who are they, what is their intent to travel,*” “*what is a consumer interested in, what do they want in that space,*” the “*motivations, the types of experiences.*” Additionally, information pertaining to what is “*easy,*” “*what empowered them, how has it made them feel,*” and what is “*hard,*” the “*limitations*” and “*those barriers that have been identified.*” The nature of such information would provide the detail behind and answers to the questions of: “*what makes a great barrier-free tourism experience,*” “*what makes a great accessible holiday,*” and “*what is it that makes you make a different choice?*” Ultimately, theme three – ‘who,’ was about, as Daniel (membership based and funded organisation) succinctly put, “*experiences; how experiences are meeting the expectations of those that do have accessibility challenges – not through the eyes of people who don’t have those challenges.*”

The findings in this theme point to the importance in understanding 'who' the access visitor is to drive the 'how' of accessible tourism. A research priority to understand who accessible tourism serves, and in what ways, is ironic, given academic research that increasingly examines the tourist experiences of people with different dimensions of disability and other access requirements (Darcy et al., 2020; McKercher & Darcy, 2018), despite Brody (government funded agency) aptly stating, "*I don't think that [research] exists anywhere, and it will be quite intense.*" This misconception coupled with the seeming lack of knowledge about the access visitor highlights that there are barriers to accessibility to overcome, but equally, potential to grow the focus on this market.

5. Conclusion

Determining research priorities is considered important for appraising the current state of accessible tourism in a destination and setting priorities for its development (Darcy, 2006). With reference to New Zealand being seen as a destination lacking in competitiveness and in its prioritisation of the planning for and development of accessible tourism (Porto et al., 2019), a research agenda has long been overdue (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020; Rhodda, 2012). Perhaps given a changed mandate from destination marketing to management since the pandemic, the participants in our study clearly communicated the need for research about accessible tourism in New Zealand. Priorities were signalled around the need to understand the 'why,' 'how,' and 'who' of accessible tourism. Being convinced of the value and benefits of accessible tourism development, how it can be implemented conveniently, and the specific needs of different access visitors were perceived as vital to elicit buy-in. Arguably, one might question the status quo of these perceptions given the increased emphasis to promote accessibility both in destinations overseas and within published research (Darcy et al., 2020). That said, a research agenda for accessible tourism commonly includes aspects relating to the why, how, and who of accessible tourism (Darcy, 2006).

Previous research has confirmed that accessible tourism is not a strategic priority among DMOs in New Zealand (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2015; McIntosh & Cockburn-Wooten, 2021). Our study provided some evidence to suggest that participants recognised the social imperative for providing accessibility, however, there appears an attitude to want to avoid accountability and push the problem, and thus the responsibility to do something about it, onto others. That the industry has an ableist attitude and lacks political will is a finding consistent with the challenges relating to accessible tourism development in other destinations (Nyanjom et al., 2018; Porto et al., 2019). This may be a consequence of the industry's lack of knowledge and supporting research to inform accessible tourism development in New Zealand, however, this requires further investigation. The findings of our study revealed that very few DMOs had any

awareness about accessible tourism data and research. Coupled with the problematic nature of tourism data for the industry more generally, this necessitates the need to understand where the barriers remain, for instance: Is academic research valued for tourism development? What channels and formats would make academic research more reachable and useable? Researchers should critically consider how accessible tourism research, and its dissemination, can better influence and inform DMO strategies and industry practice. Whilst our study has revealed the research priorities called for by DMO's, it has not detailed how outcomes can be achieved. Clearly, important knowledge is still required to drive accessible tourism development in New Zealand. Bridging that gap perhaps remains the greatest challenge.

Author bios

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