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The (in)visibility of equality, diversity, and inclusion research in events management journals

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ABSTRACT

The field of events management has been critiqued for being overly focused on operational and managerial concerns to the detriment of critical analysis of power and representation, of which equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is an important aspect. This paper reports on an audit of the four leading events management journals over the period 2011–2021 to assess the current state of play in relation to engagement with EDI issues and consider whether this critique remains justified. After screening, 49 articles were included. Findings reveal that EDI remains a marginal issue in events management journals, often confined to special issues, with no evidence of increasing engagement over the review period. EDI needs to become more integrated in the core body of knowledge of events management to ensure that events research is socially useful to students, other researchers and practitioners, contributing to the development and reputation of the field.

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Introduction

Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) relates to efforts aiming to address inequality and discrimination, ensuring individuals and groups are treated fairly and with respect, and working towards more equitable institutions, practices and societies (Gagnon et al., 2022). Certain rights and freedoms are recognised as fundamental to human dignity, as captured in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948. This includes, amongst many other things, acknowledgement of the human rights of all people 'without distinction of any kind, such as 'race', colour, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status' (UN, 1948). This has been translated into legal protections, such as the European Convention on Human Rights and the UK

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Equality Act (2010). However, although the Declaration is nearly 75 years old, this does not necessarily mean that EDI issues are universally respected. Many groups and individuals routinely suffer discrimination, marginalisation and sometimes violence on the basis of categories referred to as dimensions of diversity, such as age, sexual orientation, disability, 'race', gender identity, sex, religion or belief, and nationality. In recent years, movements related to Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, #TimesUp, #WeThe15, among others, have illustrated both the contemporary importance of EDI to everyday life and the ongoing challenges and exclusions experienced by different groups and individuals.

Events management, as both an academic field and a business/social practice, can thus not avoid EDI issues, which run through all aspects of society and social interaction. As an emerging field, events management [FT1] is developing a body of knowledge around not only the management and running of planned events, but also consideration of the various impacts and roles of events in broader society. Some have critiqued events management for being overly focused on operational concerns to the exclusion of engaging with issues of power and representation (for example, Dashper et al., 2014; Lamond & Platt, 2016; Rojek, 2013). Indeed, Park and Park's (2017) review of four leading events management journals, over the period 1998–2013, found that approximately 70% of published papers focused on just three major themes: destination, management, and marketing. Getz and Page (2016) reviewed research related to the events tourism sector and proposed what they call 'the core phenomenon' of events research. This includes experiences, antecedents, planning and management, spaces, temporal issues, knowledge creation, outcomes and impacts (economic, personal, social and environmental), and future studies. Neither paper explicitly mentions EDI, meaning that it is not positioned as part of the 'core phenomenon'. Yeung and Thomas (2022) use Getz and Page's (2016) framework in their review of the international spread of events research, and similarly offer no insight on the importance of EDI to the development of the field. Most recently, Fletcher and Bostock's (2022) exploratory bibliometric analysis attempted to chart the core and periphery of events-related research. It too never mentioned EDI. However, as Morgan and Pritchard (2019) have argued in relation to hospitality, engaging with critical theories of power and social justice is an important marker of a maturing field of knowledge. Therefore, we argue that the field of events management needs to shift thinking beyond operational and/or managerialist issues pertaining to planning, to engage more fully in critical analysis and considerations of how power shapes and is manifested through different event practices. It is our contention that by deepening critique and critical analysis, events management as a field can address some of its critics and stand confidently as a distinct field, alongside, but separate to, cognate fields such as tourism, hospitality, and leisure.

The aim of this paper is to assess the current state of play concerning EDI in events management research. We do this through an examination of various EDI issues – primarily gender, sexuality, 'race', disability, and human rights – in the core events management journals: *Event Management*; *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*; *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*; and *Journal of Convention and Event Tourism*. These journals represent the leading journals that take events specifically, as opposed to tourism or leisure more broadly, as a core object of study. They are the four journals also reviewed by Yeung and Thomas (2022). The extent to which research published in these four journals engage with theories and practices related to EDI can be taken as a measure of the depth of engagement with these issues

in the wider field of events management. Research published in the leading journals of any field can be said to represent the issues considered to be at the centre of the field at particular moments. It may similarly set the agenda for future development. Therefore, this paper sets out to address the following research questions:

- To what extent do research papers published in the four leading events-specific journals engage with issues and/or theories associated with EDI?
- What are the dominant EDI issues explored in research papers published in these journals?
- What EDI issues are not addressed/under-explored in papers published in these journals?

The aim of the paper is to (a) provide an audit of the current state of play in relation to engagement with core EDI issues in the four leading events-specific journals, and (b) set an agenda for the field to engage more critically with questions of power and social justice related to EDI. Given the relative immaturity of events management research, especially pertaining to EDI, an audit of this kind is a necessary first step for understanding the existing situation of work in this area. A crucial outcome of this will be an acknowledgement of the current gaps in knowledge. In part, therefore, this paper represents an open call to action and engagement on EDI issues among the events management scholarly community. We argue this is necessary in order to strengthen the academic body of knowledge and contribute to the maturation of events management as a distinct field of study, as well as to critically explore the role of events in social life.

The paper begins with a discussion of EDI in relation to events and events management. This helps to justify our argument that these issues should be considered core to the development of the field. We then explain the methods used to review published papers in the four core events journals over the period 2011–2021 and present findings from this review. The paper concludes with a discussion of the current status of EDI research in the field and sets out recommendations – and our call to action – for future research development.

EDI and events management

On 15th June 2020, the Association for Events Management Education (AEME), The Academy of Leisure Sciences (TALS), the Leisure Studies Association (LSA), the Academy of Leisure Sciences Africa (ALSA), the Australian and New Zealand Association for Leisure Studies (ANZALS), the Canadian Association for Leisure Studies (CALS), and the Leisure and Recreation Association of South Africa (LARASA) issued a charge statement: *On moral imagination during these times* (see <https://leisurestudies.org/news/chargestatement/>). At the outset, it states, ‘This is not yet another anti-racism statement, *this is a charge.*’ The charge was partly in response to the murder of George Floyd and others, and the subsequent global Black Lives Matter movement. In large part though, the charge represented a call for academia to do better in addressing inequality and injustice. The charge advocated for three approaches to advancing any critical discussion of power and privilege within academic research. The collaborating organisations requested that, through those ways, we create a place, or return to a place, that includes:

- (1) Forums tied to the expression of, engagement with, and disruptions in power and oppression as a standard feature of any academic gathering of Leisure and its related fields;
- (2) Scholarship and published works devoted to discussion, implications, special issues, series, and special reports on matters of power and oppression;
- (3) Adding questions of power in our research and teaching, whilst advocating for others to engage with this difficult subject matter.

The field of events management, through its umbrella learned society, AEME, has thus committed to recognising the importance of power to any examination of events, and so the review provided in this paper is a timely opportunity to assess the current landscape of events management EDI research.

Conversations concerning EDI are often articulated through a social justice lens. Here, we conceive of social justice as a marker for concerns to do with fairness, equality, exclusion, discrimination, power differentials, and privilege (Miller, 2005; Rawls, 1993). In our own work, we advocate that everyone has the right to be involved in society irrespective of their gender, class, 'race'/ethnicity, sexuality, and whether or not they are disabled (see Dashper, 2018, 2020; Dashper & Finkel, 2020; Finkel & Matheson, 2015; Fletcher & Hylton, 2016, 2018; Kearns et al., 2022; Lamond, 2018; Ng et al., 2022; Richardson & Fletcher, 2022; Walser et al., 2022). Social justice research is, however, more than simply assessing the existence of disadvantage; it is (or at least should be) about embedding and assessing research influence and impact (Long et al., 2017). There may well be legislation in place designed to redress certain 'imbalances', but there are persistent inequalities in accessing and progressing in/through certain aspects of society. Clearly, conceptualisations of social justice differ, but what they share is a recognition of inequality and a belief that inequality fundamentally does matter and is not commensurate with a socially just society. Crucially, it is important to stress that a focus on social justice must be coupled with the belief in the existence of 'injustice', before change can occur (Fletcher & Hylton, 2018; Meir & Fletcher, 2020).

Conceptualisations of EDI are potentially broad and cover any aspect of social justice, discrimination, and marginalisation. For this review, we have chosen to concentrate on five domains which we believe are at the heart of EDI in and beyond events management. Four of these issues – gender, sexuality, 'race', and disability – are identified as protected characteristics (i.e. it is illegal to discriminate against a group or individual on the basis of these characteristics) under the UK Equality Act, itself derived from the European Convention on Human Rights. These four domains are also widely researched in fields beyond events management. The fifth domain – human rights – represents a broader category, also linked to the above legislation and the UN Declaration, and tied to the practices and impacts of events. Whilst we recognise that 'EDI' can and does cover other domains as well, we suggest that these five categories are sufficiently broad to provide an appropriate baseline for examining the extent to which events management research is engaging with EDI in its leading journals.

Gender

Gender equality has long been considered a core EDI issue. Gender is a contested term that is commonly seen as synonymous with someone's biological sex. However, Judith

Butler (1990) and many others dispute this narrow association between sex and gender, arguing instead that gender is normative and performative, related to often narrow and restrictive heteronormative values that both enable and constrain social interaction. Gender thus applies to cis men and women, trans men and women, and non-binary people as well. Over the last 50–60 years, a growing body of research has explored how gender shapes individual, group, and societal practices and experiences. Feminist researchers have identified four stages of development for gender research in the broader social sciences. The first was before the impacts of second-wave feminism, when gender was rarely considered in research unless ‘the family’ was the focus of study. In the second phase there was a critique of this inattention to gender. Third, there was a growth in research focused on women, to ‘add them in’. In the fourth stage, full theoretical integration of gender into social science research is an ongoing project (Carter & Charles, 2018; Walby, 1988). As West and Zimmerman (2009) note, gender is relevant in all interactions, social practices, and relationships. It is usually women and girls who are detrimentally affected by gender power relations (Pavlidis & Fullager, 2014), although men and boys also suffer from negative and often harmful implications of hegemonic norms of masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In addition, there is increasing recognition that dominant gender norms exclude and marginalise all those who do not conform to normative gender ideals, including transwomen and nonbinary people (Monterrubio et al., 2020). Debates about the classification and inclusion of trans athletes in sports competitions is a case in point.

Gender inequality is widespread in all societies around the world. The World Economic Forum (2021) estimates that it will take another 135.6 years until the global gender gap (assessed in relation to economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment) is closed; up from 99.5 years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, indicating that gender inequality is actually getting worse on a global scale. The United Nations recognises the centrality of gender equality to all aspects of sustainable development, with one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) being to ‘achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’ (UN, SDG 5, n.d.). As gender inequality is such a pervasive issue, it will certainly be relevant to examinations of events as economic, social, cultural, and political entities. However, Dashper and Finkel (2021) argue that the field of events management has thus far failed to engage meaningfully with gender theory and analysis, to the detriment of the development of the field; an issue we consider in our analysis.

Sexuality

Sexuality/Sexual orientation is a nebulous arena for any researcher. For Foucault (1978), sexuality is to be understood as emerging from a complex of juridical/legislative discourses of repression around human relationships; whereas, Butler (1993) concentrated their attention on queerness and performativity. For this paper, we adopt the widely used acronym LGBT+, whilst remaining cognisant of the ‘alphabet soup’ that sits behind this (Bach, 2022), leaving it open to the papers we reviewed to articulate sexual orientation and gender identity in their own terms.

Statistics around violence against people on the grounds of their sexuality are shocking and profoundly distressing. In the UK, the Government Equalities Office, in July 2018,

published the findings of its national LGBT+ survey, in which 40% of the 108,100 valid responses reported experiencing a negative incident relating to being part of the LGBT+ community within the preceding 12 months. Home Office hate crime statistics for the five-year period up to 2021/2022 (released in October 2022) indicated a greater than 40% increase in police recorded incidents on people because of their sexual orientation in the 12 months since their last report. Over the five years recorded in the report, the increase from 2017/2018 was around 225% (Home Office, 2022). Globally, the situation is, disturbingly, much worse. The Human Dignity Trust reported in late 2021, that there were 76 countries that criminalised same sex relationships (around 83% of those were countries that formed part of the UN and had signed the Universal Declaration on Human Rights), nine of which were countries where the death penalty, at least in principle, was still a legally recognised ‘punishment’ for a man found to have had some form of sexual relationship with another man. Within the US (ranked as the 20th out of 150 safest places to be LGBT+), limitations on LGBT+ recognition are also increasing (Human Dignity Trust, 2021). Recent legislation in Alberta, Canada (Bill 8), and, in March 2022, Florida’s ‘*Don’t say gay*’ bill, have placed significant restrictions on the ability of schools to openly discuss sexual orientation with their students. This also ignores the profound impact such discrimination has on the rate of suicide amongst members of the LGBT+ community and its related impacts on mental health and wellbeing.

In terms of EDI, the freedom to be openly part of the LGBT+ community needs to be addressed. Omitting the violence, restrictions, and open discrimination that exists around this community is tantamount to complicity in the oppression taking place regionally, nationally, and globally.

Race

Ideas of ‘race’, ethnicity and their intersections, and whiteness are neither currently addressed nor understood in the events literature. The 2021 *Black in the boardroom* (The Zoo XYZ, 2021) report, which examined board representation on 15 event trade associations in the UK, found a 99.1% White majority of senior board and/or leadership positions in these organisations. We adopt the view that White identity is not just phenotypic, but is also dynamic, performative, and contingent. We are also mindful that whiteness processes, while not always acknowledged, are omnipresent, permeating all facets of everyday life. Many of the privileges afforded by whiteness processes rely on its reported invisibility, hegemony, and supremacy. The result of conscious or unconscious ambivalence toward White privilege leads to a legacy of what has been described as ‘White supremacy’, where systematic, insidious processes of privileging manifest themselves across a plethora of arenas, including our leisure time (Fletcher & Hylton, 2016). The first step in combating these privileges and their effects is in explicitly identifying whiteness and making it visible. Acknowledging the lack of ethnically diverse people in leadership positions in events organisations and associations is a good starting point, but does little to extrapolate the root causes (Dashper & Finkel, 2020; Fletcher & Hylton, 2018).

Recent research into the events industry conducted by Conference & Incentive Travel and Event First Steps (2020) found that employees feel that there is currently little or no

ethnic diversity in the industry. The research also suggested that where there is diversity, it is primarily at junior levels of organisations. Similar findings are consistent across hospitality and tourism literature (e.g. Hornsby & Scott-Halsell, 2015). If not addressed, the processes that privilege White people and lead to them occupying a disproportionate number of leadership positions will lead to the manifestation of what Kline (2014) refers to as ‘snowy white peaks’ across the industry. Therefore, even where ethnic diversity exists, so too does inequality. Thus, it is important to stress that diversity and representation are not the same as inclusion and, moreover, diversity and representation in one role does not *de facto* lead to diversity and representation in other aspects of an industry or organisation.

Disability

The World Health Organisation (2021) states that disabled people are the world’s largest minority. In 2021, it was estimated that one billion people live with a disability, equating to around 15% of the world’s population (WHO, 2021). These figures are expected to continue rising due to the ageing population and individuals developing chronic health conditions resulting in disability. Disabled people are likely to face discrimination due to the stigma and negative perceptions relating to disability. Within the workplace, discriminatory attitudes can be displayed through perceptions that disabled people are unable to perform their role to the same competency level as non-disabled people; a situation exacerbated by the fact disabled people face an employment and pay gap. This means that disabled people are less likely to be in employment and, when they do have jobs, they earn less than non-disabled people (TUC, 2021).

Research from the TUC (2021) found that disabled workers were more likely to be employed on zero-hour contracts, which are widely used in the events industry (Filimonau & Corradini, 2020). This is problematic because those on zero-hour contracts are more likely to be subject to job insecurity, unstable incomes, and reduced employment rights (Filimonau & Corradini, 2020). Darcy and Taylor (2009) discuss disability in the context of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to argue that events professionals should consider the needs of disabled people when designing events to ensure they are accessible to all. Accordingly, the events industry must ensure that employment practices do not discriminate against disabled employees, including freelancers, temporary workers, performers, and volunteers, and adopt inclusive and accessible event design and operations to include disabled people as participants and spectators at events.

Human rights

Human rights are codified social justice values, which set out in law how the state or organisations of authority should treat individuals. Overall, human rights are defined in accordance with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which aims to ensure the dignity of all people by delineating fundamental freedoms and entitlements. This universalist position has, at its core, ethical tenets that can be legislated (Sen, 2004). Although some cities, and even nations, temporarily change their laws during high-profile mega events due to their extraordinary and political nature – and the

commercial interests and investments that are involved – it is still widely accepted that universal human rights should be respected, regardless of special events, such as the right to peaceful protest (Boyle & Haggerty, 2011), the right to accountable police powers (Caudwell & McGee, 2018), and, as is often the case among marginalised and vulnerable communities (Finkel & Matheson, 2015), the right to even exist in the public realm.

The intersection of human rights violations and critical events research mainly focuses on large-scale international sporting events, which have recently come under scrutiny by the media, NGOs, and national governments due to the detrimental impacts they can have on host communities (Talbot, 2021). The roots of mega sporting events and their complicated relationships with human rights can be linked to the important role of the media in creating an international platform for disruption (Boykoff, 2016; Ng et al., 2022) as well as potential for diplomacy and political dialogue. Recent scandals in the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) have furthered perceptions of corruption and greed, which have eroded trust in these organisations by the public when it comes to upholding human rights. This is not to suggest that such events are intrinsically harmful for destination populations; rather, it is the manner in which they are developed and implemented which determines their impacts (Adams & Piekarz, 2015; Talbot, 2021).

This short overview has illustrated that EDI issues of gender, sexuality, ‘race’, disability, and human rights are relevant to events management and are meaningful as foci for research and examination. Our focus is on the extent to which these issues are being examined within the leading events journals, and thus the extent to which EDI is positioned as central to events management research.

Research design and methods

Sample scope

The review examined research published between 2011 and 2021, focusing on journals where ‘events’ is a sole or core subject. Our focus was academic journals, for as Dart (2014) advocates, they are the ‘lifeblood’ of any discipline. The Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS) Academic Journal Guide (AJG) was used as a selection tool for identifying the sample journals. The AJG was chosen because, unlike other journal rankings which rely solely on weighted journal citation data, the AJG combines citation evaluation with a peer review process involving subject experts to determine the journal rank for each subject area (CABS, 2021). The selected journals are *Event Management*; *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*; *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism*; and *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*.

Systematic review

A comprehensive triadic approach was taken to identifying relevant articles for inclusion. This involved developing, reviewing and, subsequently, finalising a list of search terms related to the EDI topics discussed in the previous section (Table 1).

Table 1. Search terms.

Search terms
"Diversity" OR "Equality" OR "Equity" OR "Inclusi" OR "Accessibility" OR "Intersectional" OR "Colonial" OR "Social Justice"
"Gender" OR "Sexism" OR "Trans" OR "Non-binary" OR "Women" OR "Feminin" OR "Masculin"
"Race" OR "Racism" OR "Racial discrimination" OR "Whiteness" OR "Critical Race Theory" OR "Black " OR "thnic"
"Sexuality" OR "LGBT" OR "SOGI"
"Disability" OR "ableism" OR "disabled"
"Social class"
"Religion" OR "Religio"
"Human rights"

Due to the concentrated number of journals in the review, it was deemed appropriate to first attempt to gather data directly from the individual journal websites using their integrated search function. This approach was considered the most direct, as it would avoid instances of articles from similarly named journals being inadvertently included in the results, which can be an issue with other approaches. Unfortunately, across the journals, this approach was found to be limited, as the search function did not have the sophistication to process the Boolean string operators relating to some of the search terms. To address this limitation, two-further searches were conducted. The first used the advanced search function in Google Scholar to screen each journal for the specified time period. A final search was then conducted using the EBSCO Hospitality and Tourism Complete database. This database was chosen because it provides full text visibility and includes the selected journals from the AJG. It was not considered necessary to include additional databases such as Scopus due to the comprehensiveness of the EBSCO database (Downs & Velamuri, 2016; Kalagyrou & Costen, 2017; Kearns et al., 2022) and the small number of journals included in the review. The search terms were developed and reviewed to assess both their specificity and interrelatedness to associated words. Partial strings such as 'Inclusi' were also included as search testing found these helpful for capturing additional articles where 'inclusion', 'inclusive', 'inclusivity' etc., were included.

Search terms were restricted to occurrences within the article title, keywords, and abstract. This approach was considered sufficiently comprehensive to capture articles that have a primary EDI focus, as they could reasonably be expected to occur within these attributes. Full articles and editorials were included, but other submissions such as book reviews were excluded. Once the search had been completed across the three platforms, a process of manual collation was conducted to create spreadsheets of the returned articles for each journal. This enabled the authors to check the content scope, identify duplicate articles and instances where the search returned homophones of the same term, for example, articles relating to a motorsport 'race' rather than 'race' identity.

Screening

For the screening phase, the valid returned articles (Figure 1) were then grouped according to the following three categories:

- Gender and LGBT+ papers;
- General (but EDI related) and human rights papers;
- 'Race' and disability papers.

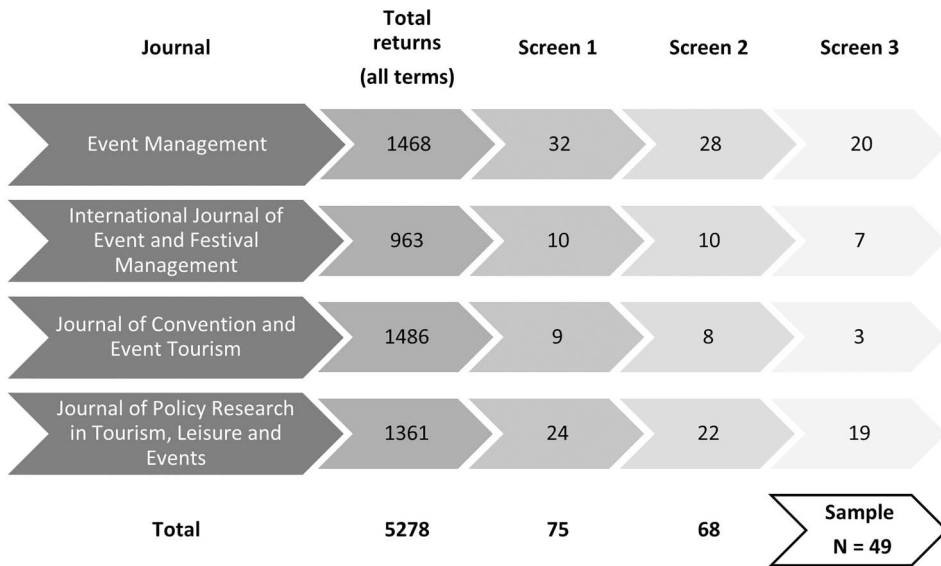


Figure 1. Sample screening.

The research team split into three groups to conduct a nine-stage circular screening exercise to assess whether the papers in each category should be included or excluded. The decision to include or exclude was made according to the following criteria:

- The relevance of the theoretical/methodological framework to EDI issues;
- The presence of intersectionality;
- The extent to which EDI is a critical focus of the paper and *not* cosmetic or contextual scenography;
- The claimed contribution (specifically in relation to EDI).

After each screening round, recommendations were made and then reviewed by the next team. The process was continued until all papers in each category had been reviewed in-depth three times by the research team. Where there was disagreement, the papers were assessed again by the whole team. After the final round, the sample was determined to contain 49 articles where EDI was the primary focus.

Limitations of methods

A strength and limitation of this study is the deliberate restriction of the selected journals to those where ‘events’ is a sole or core focus. There are, of course, many other journals (notably within the tourism, hospitality, sport and leisure domains) which routinely publish work relating to events and, indeed, EDI. The justification for excluding these related journals is because this study aimed to critically assess the extent to which EDI issues have been examined within work published in leading events-focused journals. As we have argued earlier, if these journals are to represent

successfully the core and vital knowledge in events research, EDI work should not only be present, but also evolving in order for EDI to be considered relevant and important for the field.

Findings

EDI journal footprint

Table 2 presents the proportion of EDI articles within the four journals. Of the 1100 articles published by the four journals between 2011 and 2021 only 49 (4.5%) met the screening criteria for inclusion. This headline finding highlights the peripheral nature of EDI research within the events management body of knowledge. This finding becomes even more acute when one examines whether the articles were published in a regular or special issue. Whilst special issues provide a valuable function for highlighting and collating research on a particular and often emerging topic, 21 articles – that is 42.9% – were located within a special issue. As has been argued, EDI should not be a peripheral or niche area of research within an established academic field. That such a high proportion of EDI articles published in the four journals were located in special issues suggests that EDI remains a peripheral ‘special issue’ topic and is not recognised as part of the core phenomenon of events management (Getz & Page, 2016). Consequently, there is considerable work to be done by journals and events researchers to address this imbalance and integrate EDI work within events management research.

Findings over time

Figure 2 identifies the years in which the journal articles were published. Counter to expectations, there is no clear trend to demonstrate an increase in the number of critical EDI papers over time to correlate with perceived increasing awareness and prevalence of EDI discourses in wider society. The Special Issue on EDI in the professional events industry in *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, contributes to a peak at six articles in 2018, but this is not significantly higher than the previous year with three publications. Interestingly, there were zero critical papers in the same journal in the years following the special issue; yet there was a rise again to nine publications spread across the other three journals.

Table 2. Proportion of EDI articles in the four journals (2011–2021).

Journal	Articles 2011–2021	EDI articles	EDI percentage	Number of EDI articles in special issues	Percentage of EDI articles in special issues
<i>Event Management</i>	473	20	4.2%	4	20%
<i>International Journal of Event and Festival Management</i>	221	7	3.2%	3	42.9%
<i>Journal of Convention & Event Tourism</i>	177	3	1.7%	2	66.7%
<i>Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events</i>	229	19	8.3%	12	63.2%
Total	1100	49	4.5%	21	42.9%

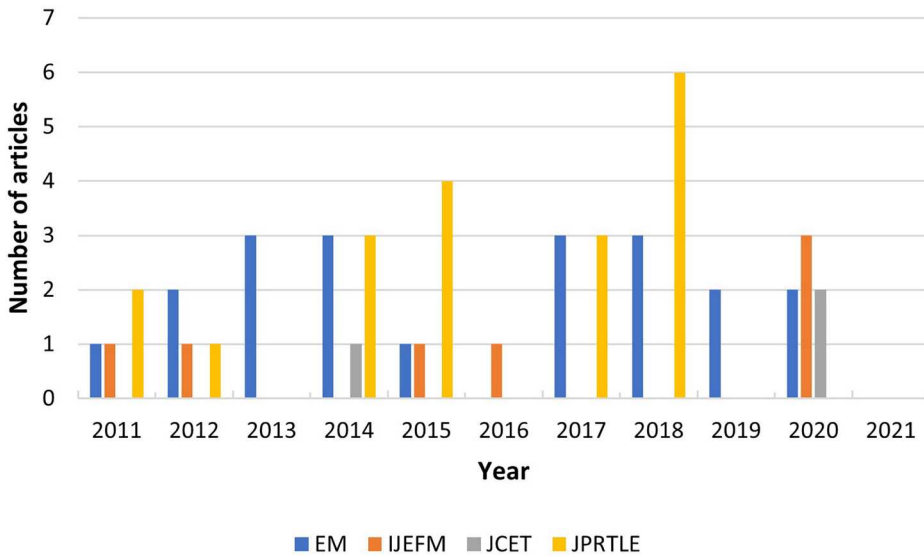


Figure 2. EDI Journal articles by year for the four journals.

Spread across EDI areas

Figures 3–8 show that the EDI area with the greatest number of papers is ‘race’ (16), followed by gender (14), although these numbers are low considering they represent a 10-year period across four journals. Human rights (5) and LGBT+ (2) are the most under researched. When looking at the number of articles by theme over time, there was a slight increase in disability related papers in 2020. In addition, the number of papers focussing on ‘race’ have fallen since 2015. Apart from these two observations, there does not appear to be a clear trend over time, except that focus on EDI remains limited.

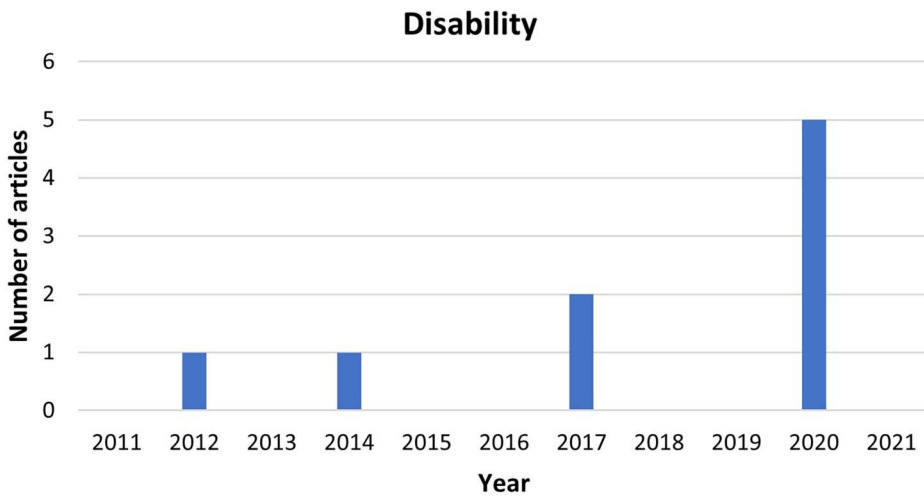


Figure 3. Disability.

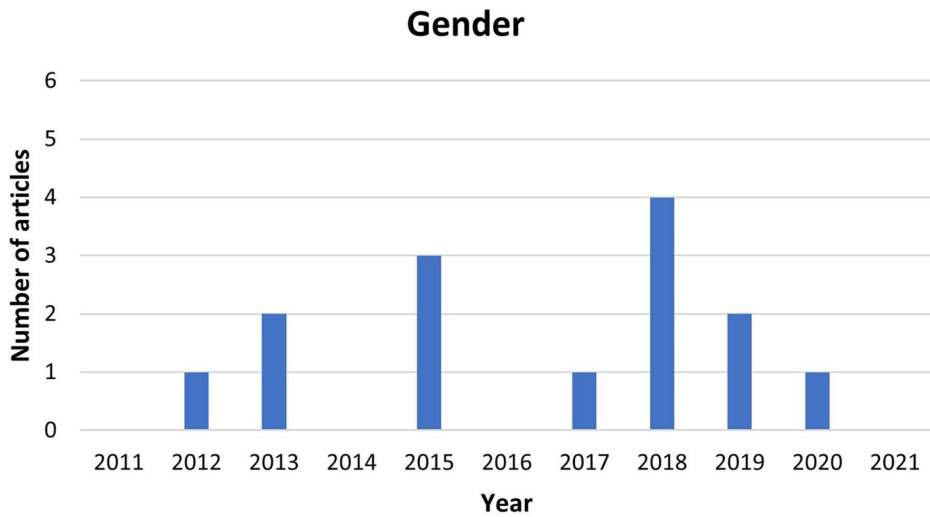


Figure 4. Gender.

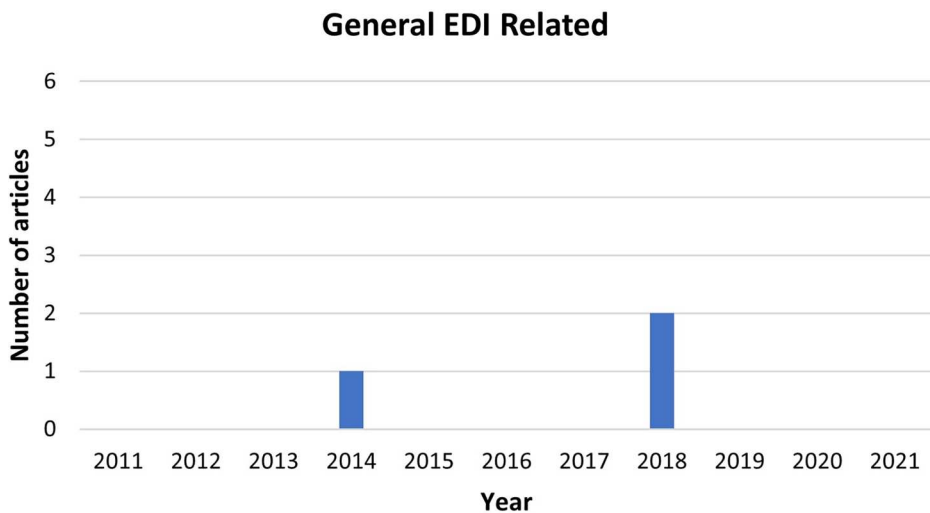


Figure 5. General EDI related.

Methods

Tables 3 and 4 present the methodological approach taken within the articles; firstly, as spread across the four journals; and secondly, by EDI area. Tables 3 and 4 illustrate a slight prevalence of literature review/conceptual papers and those drawing on secondary data analysis. This is particularly the case in *Event Management*, and *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure, and Events*. In part accounting for this, the *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events* has also published a

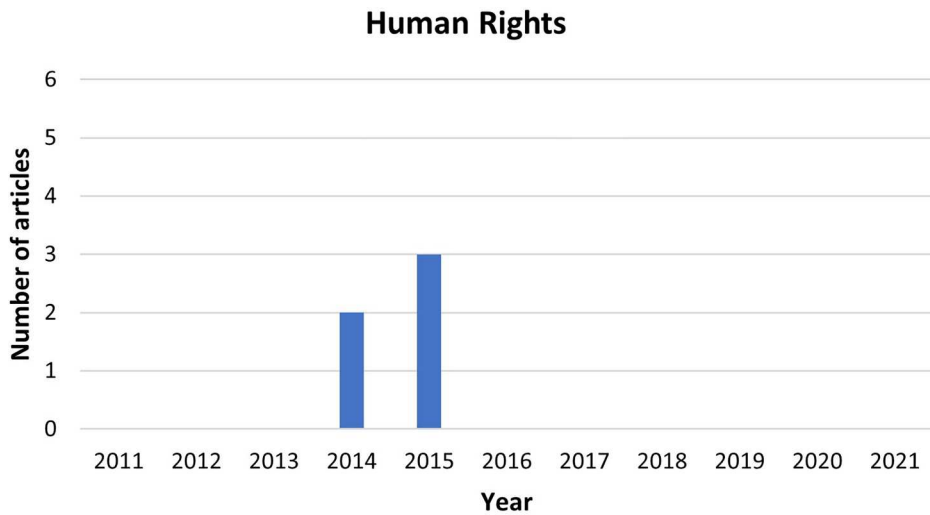


Figure 6. Human rights.

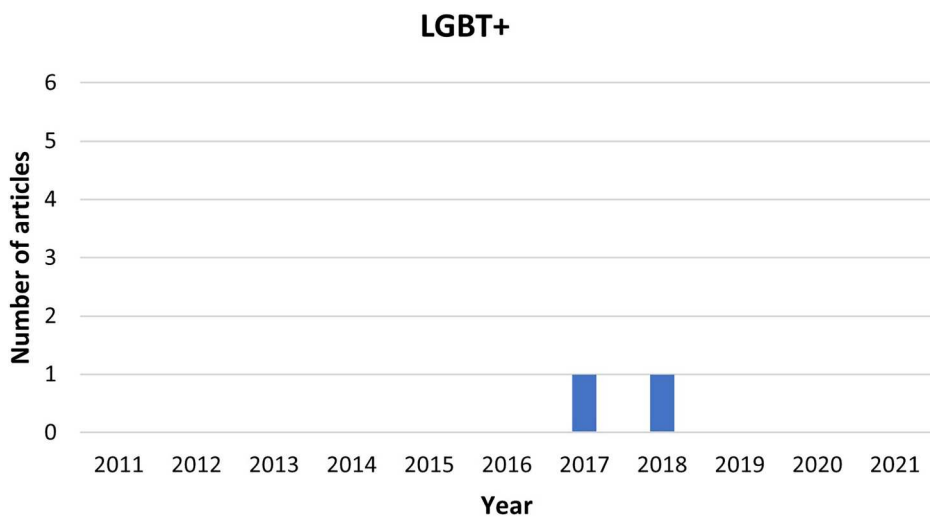


Figure 7. LGBT+.

number of editorials and journal-specific ‘Policy Debates’ which have addressed EDI areas.

Of the 49 papers included, 22 (44.9%) use a case study of a single event to examine a specific aspect of EDI. Case studies provide valuable empirical evidence and can be mechanisms for deeper, critical examination of complex issues. However, this high proportion of single event case studies does reflect Rojek’s (2013) critique of events management as an underdeveloped field focused more on examination of individual examples (cases) than it is on broader theoretical development.

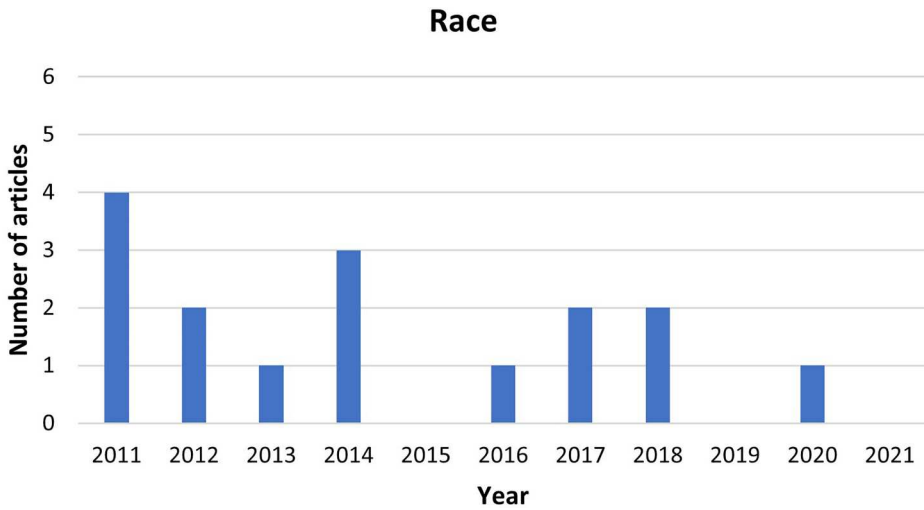


Figure 8. 'Race'.

Table 3. Prevalence of the EDI literature by journal.

	Event management	IJEFM	JCET	JPRTLE
Literature review/conceptual paper	2	1	1	5
Secondary data analysis (including content analysis, discourse analysis)	6	1	1	4
Observation		1		
Interview	3		1	2
Surveys	5			
Ethnography		3		
Multiple methods	3	1		4
Participatory				
Action				
Research	1			
Editorial/Debate				4
Total	20	7	3	19

Table 4. Prevalence of the EDI literature by EDI Theme.

	LGBT +	Gender	General EDI related	Disability	Human rights	'Race'
Literature review/conceptual paper		1		2	2	4
Secondary data analysis (including content analysis, discourse analysis)	1	5		2	2	2
Observation						1
Interview		3	1			2
Surveys		1		3		1
Ethnography		2				1
Multiple methods	1		1	2	1	3
Participatory						
Action						
Research						1
Editorial/Debate		2	1			1
Total	2	14	3	9	5	16

International perspectives

As is now apparent, this paper focuses on the prevalence (or otherwise) of EDI research published in event-specific journals. However, as research on decoloniality and cognisant debates argue, EDI covers not only *what* is researched, but also *where* and *by whom*. Therefore, we also reviewed both the geographic spread of research cases and examples, i.e. *where* research was conducted, and the country of institutional affiliation of paper authors (*by whom*). Where there were multiple authors but with different geographic institutional affiliations, we counted both locations – e.g. if a paper had authors affiliated to institutions in the UK and Australia, we counted both locations. We followed the same approach for location of research. Figures 9 and 10 present the findings in relation to these two issues and illustrate that EDI research in events management is dominated by researchers affiliated with universities in the Global North, particularly the UK and Australia. The UK in particular is a hotspot for EDI research with nearly double the number of papers (23) as Australia (12), the next nearest, which has more than double the number of papers of the third most represented nation, the USA (5). This reflects the findings of Yeung and Thomas' (2022) review which showed the dominance of these locations in the production of events research more broadly. However, it also suggests that EDI issues may be more recognised within these locations, and thus affiliated researchers may be more supported in conducting EDI-related events research than in other countries which have lower representation. This finding is also a reflection of the developing nature of events as a field in these locations. EDI issues are both universal and particular; that is, they apply in all contexts, but with local specificities and variation. Therefore, while it is positive to see more sustained engagement with EDI in the UK, the dominance of UK-affiliated researchers may lead to a particular perspective of EDI becoming dominant in events research. In particular, the paucity of researchers affiliated with institutions in the Global South may lead to a narrowing of understanding

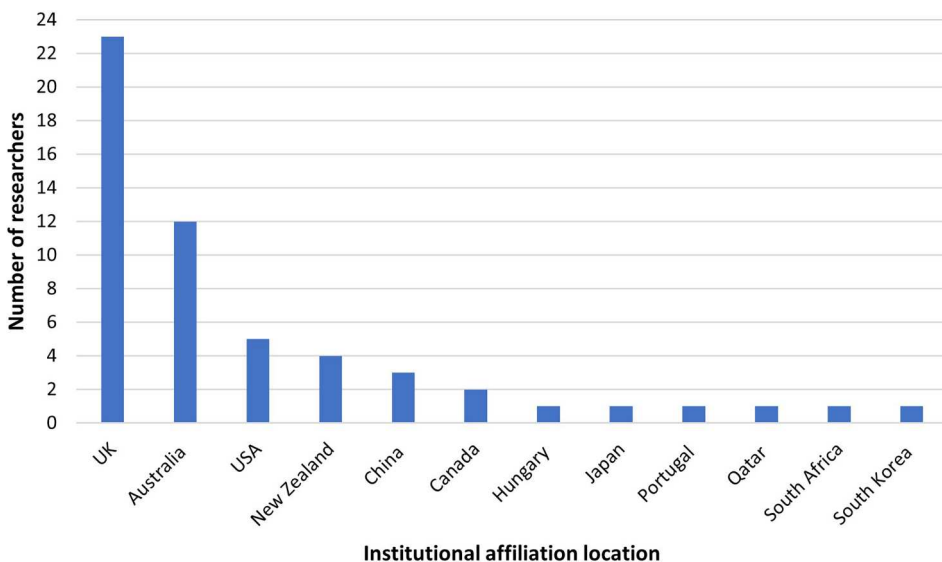


Figure 9. Geographical location of researchers' institutional affiliation.

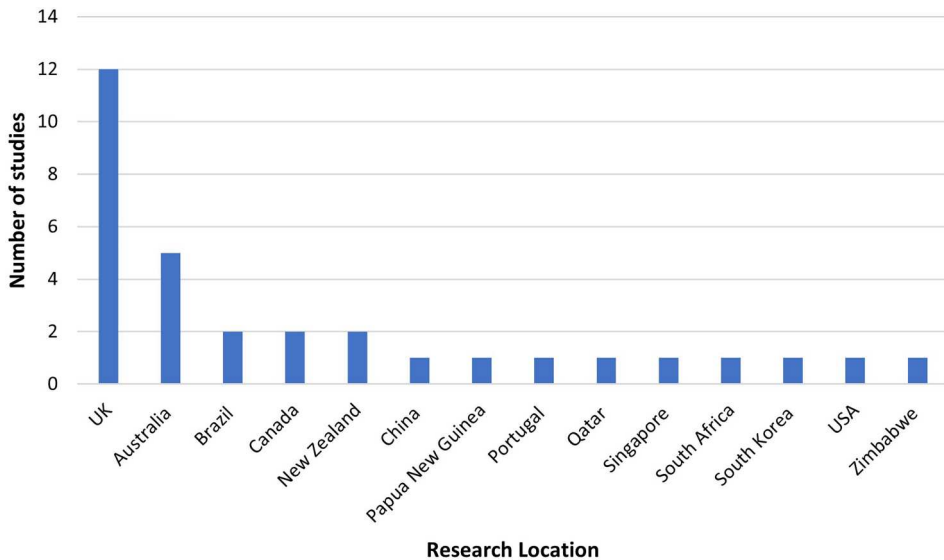


Figure 10. Geographical focus of published research.

that does not consider EDI outside of Western frameworks and societies (Carnicelli & Uvinha, 2023; Dowse & Fletcher, 2018).

These effects are likely exacerbated by the geographic location of empirical research on events and EDI. Not all papers in the sample present empirical evidence, but those that do focus predominantly on the UK (12) and, to a lesser extent, Australia (5). This further compounds the dominance of these locations in shaping the EDI agenda in events management and points to a lack of understanding of these issues in different socio-cultural contexts. Where research is conducted in different geographical contexts, particularly those in the Global South, it has mainly been conducted by, or at least in partnership with, researchers affiliated with institutions in the Global North. This may risk overlooking alternative perspectives on EDI and suggests both a need for broader perspectives and insights on EDI and more proactive approaches to commissioning research on EDI in events management.

Discussion

At the outset of this paper, we posed a series of questions:

- To what extent do research papers published in the four leading events-specific journals engage with issues and/or theories associated with EDI?
- What are the dominant EDI issues explored in research papers published in these journals?
- What EDI issues are not addressed/under-explored in papers published in these journals?

The findings of this audit demonstrate that EDI remains peripheral in research published in the four leading events journals, and thus is not currently positioned as central

or core to the field and its associated body of knowledge. There are obvious gaps in focus, with work concerning gender, ‘race’ and, to some extent, disability recurring more often than examinations of sexuality or human rights. Even so, these topics also received limited attention over the period we examined. As Morgan and Pritchard (2019) suggest, the extent to which any field addresses issues of power and representation is a useful indicator of its epistemological maturity. On the basis of the findings of this review, events management has considerable work to do to develop its epistemological maturity.

The relative ‘immaturity’ of events management as an academic field would be the easy explanation for the lack of critical EDI research. However, as has been noted elsewhere, there has been substantial growth in the field of events management education over the last 25–30 years (Park & Park, 2017). The market for degree level courses is now well established, underpinned by developments such as the formation of a learned society – Association for Events Management Education (AEME) – in 2004. Events management education is also a recognised strand within revised Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) benchmark statements, which set the scope for degree level events education in the UK. In addition to the establishment of a number of events-specific academic journals, event-focused special issues have featured in journals from a number of aligned fields, such as hospitality (Van Niekerk, 2017) and leisure (Caudwell & McGee, 2018), along with the growing number of event-related papers featuring in aligned fields. Each of these developments is a strong indicator of the growing maturity and diversity of this subject field (Dashper et al., 2020; Fletcher et al., 2022). This, then, has to beg the question, how long before a subject area is no longer ‘emerging’ and is, in actuality, stagnant?

More work is needed to understand the fuller picture. An obvious question is whether this work is lacking or, rather, being published elsewhere. We return to this discussion below. What is clear is that the paucity of work that directly discusses EDI within these four journals, which represent the *core* of the field of events research and events management education, is both notable and disappointing. EDI is peripheral at best and almost invisible at worst, through its limited presence and siloing within special issues. This hints at a hegemonic orientation that privileges a narrative of events management research being focused predominantly on operations, marketing, and management, locating EDI issues as the concern of someone else, i.e. not for events scholars or events management educators. As a group of academics united in our pursuit of social justice, this is profoundly concerning.

As outlined earlier, the journals we focused on are the only events journals in the Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS) Academic Journal Guide (AJG). In the UK – where all but one author is located – the CABS ‘list’ is used extensively as a barometer of research quality. Therefore, we must consider the pernicious role of metrics and rankings on the kinds of research academics conduct and where they publish. Indeed, in the context of ‘global challenges’ in business research, Harley and Fleming (2021) suggest the tail is wagging the dog and journal rankings and metrics mean that researchers play it safe to ‘fit’ into the elite journals’ aims and scope. Further, within events specifically, none of the journals here are rated above 2* on the CABS list which may be an issue for UK-based scholars who reside in business school settings where expectations to publish in the highest ranked (on a scale of 1–4 stars)

journals is insidious. Indeed, failure to do so will likely quash any likelihood of being recruited to academic roles and certainly will influence career progression. Researchers investigating EDI issues in events may, as a result, often turn to other broader journals, in fields ranging from tourism, to leisure, to sociology and management, where EDI is not side-lined and where critical debate on these issues is occurring (e.g. Dashper, 2020; Lamond, 2018). Leading events journals evidently need to take heed of Pritchard's (2018, p. 145) warning against what she refers to as creating a 'hostile environment' for EDI work, which lead towards what she calls a 'lite' research future, implying a lack of critical frameworks and significant advancements in the field.

The review presented in this paper focuses only on work published in the leading English language journals within the field of events management research. Whilst this carries a risk of overlooking work published in other languages (see Richards et al., 2022), the search criteria did not restrict the international reach of the events covered. Yet, that research also had a narrow international perspective. Most of the material we reviewed was published by anglophone academics and focused on events in Western-style, neoliberal democracies. This is problematic on multiple levels. Limited focus on EDI overall, coupled with Western and Global North dominance, inevitably contributes to a narrowing of perspectives available for events management education and courses. We agree with Young et al. (2017, p. 136), who suggest:

As university teachers, we are interested in how we can educate our students to be critical thinkers who are ethically mature and committed to social justice and equity.

Whilst beyond the scope of this paper to elucidate in detail, we argue that events management research needs to provide a diversity of perspectives, examples and voices to support education and student development. One such way is through decolonisation. Whilst processes of decolonisation and widening the curriculum through drawing in greater indigeneity are more commonly associated with issues of racism and ethnicity (as discussed in, for example, Begum & Saini, 2019; Harvey & Russell-Mundine, 2019), a wider approach to decolonisation recognises what Habermas (1992) refers to as the colonisation of the lifeworld. In such circumstances, colonisation is the overt and covert manifestation of dominant narratives and discourses; the indigenous thus extends to those located in communities *othered* by those narratives and discourses. As such, 'race', sexuality, gender, disability, etc., become the indigenous and frequently intersectional occupants of spaces colonised by dominant narratives and discourses, thus erasing the multiplicity of alternative narratives. As Mura and Khoo-Lattimore (2018, p. 17) have said, 'everyone in the research community, institutional structures and corporate publishers of academic work [should] reflect on the current meritocracy discourse that privileges entrenched ways of knowledge production which replicates exclusions of "other knowledges".' It is not clear yet whether these 'other knowledges' have been excluded – e.g. by journal gatekeepers – or whether they have simply not been articulated yet in events journals.

The closest indication we have been able to glean from our analysis would be the proliferation of special issues devoted to EDI issues. Almost half of EDI-related publications were presented in special issues. This segregates EDI in events research as, at best, *niche*. As a consequence, it sends a consistent message that such work is not truly considered part of the mainstream for these journals; instead, it belongs in specialised editions for

those peripheral scholars that are interested in such things. The effect of this is to sideline EDI research and EDI-focused researchers. Until EDI issues are normalised as part of routine publication, there will continue to be scarcity in academic investigation and, thus, a skewed perspective of what constitutes events research.

Conclusion

Events researchers (and we include within this existing and future academics and journal editors and leaders) have an important role in diversifying these narratives and discourses to ensure that the production of knowledge reflects the society(ies) it professes to impact. As an illustration, very few people would dispute the need for events research to contribute to debates around sustainability and climate change. How did these become accepted as core knowledge? The question then is, how do we get to a point where EDI is mainstreamed and considered core to events management?

Our review has identified an unquestionable gap in EDI knowledge production across the four journals. The aim of the remainder of this paper, therefore, is to ignite action to address the lack of events-focused EDI research being published in these journals. To achieve this will involve work with editors, editorial boards and reviewers, as well as developing strategies for decolonising the curriculum and the field more generally, supporting early career researchers (ECRs) to develop EDI related work and to advocate for funding for EDI work through our scholarly associations.

Inevitably, significant responsibility – and, indeed, influence – lies with journals, editors, editorial boards and reviewers. The joint charge statement introduced at the outset of this paper provides a call to action. In response to the statement, The World Leisure Organisation (2020) posed a series of additional questions which are pertinent to the findings of this paper: When it comes to publishing and the EDI research agenda in events, where are the seats of decision-making located? What is the demographic make-up of editorial boards of sector journals and of events organisations and associations? What are defined as the prerequisites for influencing what is published, and how are experience and education upheld in ways that exclude unlikely decision-makers? These are important questions that we are currently pursuing through primary research with various journal editorial teams.

A similar exercise (Lockstone-Binnie et al., 2021, p. 8) was recently completed in tourism, in which the authors found that there was a disproportionate concentration of male, professorial editorial board members compared to the overall community of tourism scholars. They argued that continuing the ‘status quo of a group of homogenous gatekeepers opens up the possibility for potential exclusionary practices such as placing priorities on narrow topics of interest, particular paradigms and preferred methods.’ They go on to argue that ‘Editors-in-chief have the relative power to make editorial board appointments that attenuate or reduce the dominant patterns in relation to gender, seniority and geography’ as well as ‘encouraging greater breadth in forms of knowledge production.’

In this vein, we would like to see the four events-specific journals actively promoting critical management and policy research where EDI is the focus. A focus on work and employment would be timely for, as we know, those who identify as women, ethnically diverse, LGBTQ+ and/or disabled experience a range of work-related discriminations.

While the global events workforce is inevitably diverse, currently there is a dearth of research examining the lived experiences of these communities. Given what we know about the benefits to businesses of having a diverse workforce, it is imperative that academic research is available to help event organisations understand how to manage a diverse workforce to optimise performance and employee wellbeing.

As there is currently no critical mass of EDI events research, it will, to some extent, take the courage of individual scholars to take on this mission of advancing the field. Is this possibly an issue with lack of interest in these issues by events researchers, or the dominance of metrics (such as citations) in recruitment and promotion that encourages researchers to focus on more 'mainstream' topics? We would advocate for a disruption of the status quo through creating and nurturing a community of activist scholars with an interest in EDI and events. This could similarly involve establishing EDI special interest groups across a range of learned societies. In the UK, lobbying the Association for Events Management Education (AEME) would be an appropriate starting point. Events scholars and associated scholarly associations must be prepared to work through some of the uncomfortable realities around intersectionality, diversity and under-representation, especially regarding patriarchal and racialised systems of inclusion and exclusion.

The prominence of EDI issues in wider society has advanced significantly over the last five years. To some extent, it could be argued that, as a result of this, there is a certain inevitability that early career events researchers will gravitate towards these topics, and publish in these journals. However, much like we hear regularly that society will become less racist, misogynistic, homophobic etc., as a result of a naturally-evolving tolerance towards diversity, these assumptions would be unwise. Research cultures need to be nurtured if they are to develop and sustain. In recognising this, we advocate the need for universities to actively encourage engagement with EDI issues by, for example, ring-fencing funding for PhD and research projects on these topics.

Similarly, if we want to see future events scholars engaging with EDI issues, events curricula and research must be oriented towards creating ethical leaders. For Pernecky et al. (2019), ethical leadership concerns moral responsibility: it is about making decisions that are underpinned by moral principles as opposed to solely business decisions, such as the bottom line. The need for more ethical education and decision making has been called for by a number of scholars from across related fields, such as leisure and tourism.

Moreover, to ensure this research is impactful outside of academia, academic and business associations ought to be encouraged to co-fund research and knowledge exchange on EDI issues. In our own work for example, we have seen that, as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic the UK events industry has, to some extent, opened its eyes to the benefits of being well-informed on various EDI-issues. This represents a significant opportunity for academics to influence industry policy and practices.

It is time for the field of events management to stop 'emerging' and become widely recognised as an established and critical subject area. This will be facilitated in no small part by the scope of research topics that are actively championed. The limited amount of EDI research published in the core subject journals, while concerning, represents a tremendous opportunity for academics interested in EDI and events to shape events management into a more socially and culturally sensitive and inclusive field. EDI needs to become an integral aspect of the discourse of the field of events

management, and this will not happen if the core subject journals do not engage in debate (s) on these topics and do not publish and promote related research. By raising awareness of exclusionary practices, such as White privilege, the dominance of Global North researchers and research, and by replacing it with a need to focus on inclusivity for those othered by dominant narratives and discourses, those already working and aspiring to work in the events industry will be better equipped to recognise inequalities and, more importantly, once recognised they can subsequently confront and challenge them.









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