

DIGITAL CURTAIN CALL:

Accessibility as seen in opera houses' online platforms

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University of Lapland, Faculty of Social Sciences**Title:** DIGITAL CURTAIN CALL: Accessibility as seen in opera houses' online platforms**Author:** Faith Flynn**Degree Program/Subject:** Tourism Research**Type of Work:** Master's Thesis**Number of Pages:** 49**Year:** 2025, spring**Abstract:**

Accessibility is a crucial part of the tourism industry, especially in this day and age when opportunities for all are increasing with the advancement of different technologies. However, it is important to note that accessibility is not always considered when developing tourism experiences, as there is a preconception that a majority of tourists are individuals without disabilities.

This thesis aimed to understand how opera houses, as important cultural spaces, communicate their accessibility features on their websites or social media platforms. Event tourism is an important part of tourism; hence, accessibility in the cultural sector is so important to ensure equal participation for all.

Grounded in the Social Model of Disability, Universal Design, and Framing Theory, the research explored the linguistic choices, tone, visuals, and the framing of their accessibility-related information. The main research question is: *How do opera houses communicate accessibility features on different digital platforms?* To help answer this question, the study has two secondary questions: (1) *What language choices and tone are used in discussing accessibility, and how might they influence perceptions of inclusivity and accessibility?* (2) *What differences, if any, exist between website and social media accessibility communications?* The study used a qualitative approach, using content and framing analysis to analyse these communications. The data in this study consisted of textual data, such as descriptions of accessible services, and visual data, such as images or videos showcasing any accessibility-related concepts.

The findings did reveal rather notable differences in the quality and quantity of communication across institutions and platforms, highlighting gaps in how cultural institutions communicate accessibility. The most notable difference was the quantity of information provided between social media sites and websites, with the latter proving to have a much more abundant offering of content. There were also significant differences across institutions, with some pages offering very slim pieces of information about their accessibility offerings and others having extra pages and hyperlinks all related to their commitment to accessibility. Linguistically speaking, there were some discrepancies, and in some places, the language used was not up to par with inclusive guidelines.

KEYWORDS: Accessibility, Event Tourism, Social Model of Disability, Inclusive Tourism, Accessibility Online, Framing

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1. Introduction

Accessibility is a critical aspect of inclusivity in cultural tourism, and thus, it should not be so easily neglected. There is a large and profitable market out there that the tourism industry has been largely ignoring for a long time (Souca, 2010). Opera houses should be expected to communicate their accessibility features effectively as cultural institutions. Accessible tourism enables people with access impairments, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments. This definition is inclusive of all people including those travelling with children in prams, people with disabilities and seniors (Darcy & Dickson, 2009, p. 34)

In this day and age, people travel abroad for a multitude of reasons, one of these being to visit different cultural spaces and to experience events and shows, the most prevalent in this research being opera houses. Event tourism refers to tourism, which is motivated by participation in organised events (Haanpää, 2017, p.120). On the other hand, from the point of view of a destination, the term refers to the development of tourism through events and festivals (Haanpää, 2017, p.120).

More often than not, people plan their trips before they travel, especially in this modern age with everything being digitised, making plans has never been easier. To many people, making sure different sights and venues are equipped with accessible features is not up for debate, and online sources are where people turn to first to find information about their destinations of choice. As cultural institutions, opera houses have a responsibility to ensure that what they are offering is accessible to all, which fits in with The European Accessibility Act, which requires that both public and private sector actors guarantee the accessibility of certain products and services (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health), as well as The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (DDA) in Australia, which states that it makes it against the law to discriminate against a person because of disability when providing goods, services or facilities, or access to public premises (Australian Human Rights Commission).

Analysing how the opera houses that were chosen for this research communicate accessibility helps us understand whether they meet this responsibility and where improvements are needed. While this research focuses on opera houses, it is important to note that other locations should be held under the same scrutiny.

The researcher has chosen to focus on the Sydney Opera House, Opéra National de Paris, Teatro Real in Madrid, Finnish National Opera and Ballet, and the Royal Ballet and Opera (RBO) in the UK. The reason for the selection of these houses, in particular, is the amount of information available on these sites as opposed to many others, their multilingual platforms, the renown of these locations themselves, as well as the author's proficiency in the languages available on these websites. This reason will benefit the data collection phase as it will offer a broader and more nuanced understanding of the information since the research will be able to use both the native languages of these sites as well as their English translations.

The need for this research comes from the importance of accessibility in the inclusivity aspect of cultural tourism. While this thesis focuses on opera houses, there is a lack of research on how any other cultural institutions communicate their accessibility features online. With the growth of digitisation online information sharing is an important feature to attract people of all areas. This is the better way to establish better connections between users, industry or companies. (Garg et al., 2021)

Cultural institutions are no exception to that, as they rely on websites and social media to connect with their audiences, which is why understanding how they handle accessibility is important in helping spot potential deficiencies or highlight the better practices. Finding deficiencies can help these locations and other institutions build on their pre-existing information and make better the variety of information they present.

This research also has value in the sense that it explores important areas, such as the role of cultural institutions in promoting inclusivity, and how digital communication can influence our views on accessibility.

This study has based itself firmly on the Social Model of Disability, which redefines disability as a societal construct and an outside issue instead of an inherent limitation of an individual. This perspective will help investigate and critique how opera houses communicate their accessibility features on digital platforms. As this study is going to focus on looking at how online communication is used to speak of accessibility, it will focus on whether what they are putting out aligns with the principles of accessibility and social responsibility found in the Social Model of Disability. This will be spoken of more in the theoretical framework chapter.

The name of this thesis is "DIGITAL CURTAIN CALL: Accessibility as Presented in Opera Houses' Online Platforms". A curtain call, as defined by Merriam-Webster, is "an appearance by a performer (as after the final curtain of a play) in response to the applause of the audience". Naming this thesis Digital Curtain Call, the author is borrowing that spirit for the online environment of today, in a way celebrating opera houses stepping forward with their online presences, ensuring that nobody is left behind.

1.1. Prior research

There is not much prior research on how opera houses communicate about their accessibility features. However, studies about accessibility and the usage of online channels have been studied in other ways that can be used in this study, as most studies focus on museums or other cultural spaces. This section will explore existing literature on accessibility in tourism and cultural spaces, the usage of social media as a marketing tool, event tourism and the communication of accessibility on online platforms. These themes are all interconnected within this research since social media does not only serve as a way to promote any potential events but also to offer information to potential visitors about the accessibility features provided, despite this research not being about the marketing that happens on social media. That is why the way that opera houses use their digital platforms to communicate about accessibility is an important aspect of cultural tourism and also a marketing strategy.

The Finnish disability association Invalidiliitto says on their website, that accessibility is about taking into account the diversity of people in the planning, implementation and maintenance of the built environment. In the context of this research, this principle can extend itself to the digital realm, where opera houses must effectively communicate their accessibility features on websites and social media to ensure that diverse audiences are informed about and able to participate in cultural experiences.

These days, people with disabilities are able to travel with greater ease, compared to years past. However, with so many aspects of daily life having been digitized, there are still significant barriers that need to be addressed. (Fleshman, 2024). This is why the study of inclusion and disability are increasingly important, which is what Buhalis and Darcy (2011) explore in their work “Accessible Tourism: Towards a definition.”

In tourism, physical accessibility refers to all spaces and environments encountered during a trip: buildings and other infrastructure, routes, and means of transportation. Additionally, the equipment used in tourism activities must be considered. The accessibility of the destination itself is also part of physical accessibility. (Juttila & Harju-Myllyaho, 2017, p.224).

Social media as a marketing tool has been explored by Stephanie Hays, Stephen John Page & Dimitrios Buhalis in 2012. Their study explored the transformative role of social media in how society consumes and contributes to the creation of information, with technology enabling individuals to easily share their thoughts, opinions, and creations online.

In 2021, Yanliu Lin and Stijn Kant studied using social media for citizen participation, and they describe social media to be a much more accessible participation method than traditional ones, as people all around the world can use their mobile phones anytime and anywhere for communication. Social media, being a more accessible and widely available communication tool, allows opera houses to engage with audiences in ways that traditional methods simply cannot. By offering mobile-friendly communication, social media is able to grant greater participation and interaction from people who might otherwise face obstacles while accessing cultural institutions, both in terms of the physical spaces themselves and information.

Annika Koskenkorva's 2022 thesis about the credibility of social media influencers in the purchase decision process was published. She discusses how social media has grown in recent years. Due to this, influencer marketing on social media platforms has also taken off almost explosively and established its place in the marketing field. This ties itself to the earlier claims about how visitors want and need to know where they are travelling to before they make any final bookings.

Rebecca McMillen and Frances Alter wrote an article in 2017 called: social media, social inclusion, and museum disability access. This study investigated how art museums might use social media to engage visitors in ways that have not been fully explored before, especially for individuals with long-term disabilities. Interviews were held with the participants to understand how social media affects their daily lives, their social interactions, and how they feel about their inclusion in museums through this technology. The study suggested that social media offers more than just a space for connection. At the same time, a study written by Will Triplett (2023) showed that technological tools and solutions can effectively break down barriers. A text published in 2021 by Kwangsoo Park and Shin-yong (Shawn) Jung called "Designing inclusive websites for people with disabilities as part of an event tourism strategic planning process" may also serve as a source of information.

As one of the houses this research aims to focus on, Sydney Opera House has a lengthy and detailed accessibility action plan which will be observed in this study. In it they speak about improving access within their building, experiences and people. Their action plan will help find more concrete concepts to focus on.

Business Finland OY and VisitFinland have compiled a guide to inclusive tourism in 2021, which according to them, is primarily intended to support tourism operators' work in order to promote the realisation of equal tourism.

Joaquim Rius-Ulldemolins (2020) wrote an article titled "Opera houses as cultural white elephants? The effect of the creative city model, bureaucratic mismanagement and lack of accountability in Valencia's Opera House", which in itself may not be directly connected to the research, but may be able to provide some form of context and ideas.

This thesis will also touch upon medicalisation. Medicalisation is a concept from medical sociology that describes medicine's expansion into non-medical life areas, for instance, into the realm of emotions, sometimes in order to challenge this expansion (Wechuli, 2023, p.1).

According to the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations (AFDO), in the medical model, disability is often viewed as something that holds a person back and is something undesirable that makes individuals different in a negative way. It is perceived as a personal problem, and within it, the belief exists that curing the person or reducing their disability will alleviate their problems. This is, of course, a very skewed perspective and a social approach to disability is indispensable, but due to the common nature of this issue, it is present in this thesis.

Despite the heavy criticism that this approach has faced with its narrow and othering views, its influence is still visible in many places in society, and that does, unfortunately, also include the cultural sector. Traces of the medical model emerge here and there throughout this research in how the opera houses communicate about accessibility, for example, in the form of some linguistic choices. To counter this skewed perspective, this thesis is primarily grounded in the Social Model of Disability, as discussed in the previous subchapter, but due to the prevalence of the Medical Model as well, it is important for the author to recognise and critique its presence when analysing the framing of accessibility.

This shows that accessibility and digital communication have been studied separately across various tourism and cultural contexts. As components of the research's aim, these texts will prove to be important sources of information. However, there remains a lack of research specifically focusing on how cultural institutions such as opera houses communicate their accessibility features on digital platforms. The topic is, of course, niche, so it is not too surprising that much of the existing literature emphasises museums and other broader cultural institutions or the tourism sector in a more general manner, with limited attention being given to the performing arts, and even less so to opera houses as unique cultural spaces.

While past studies and research have explored the technical parts of digital accessibility and digital accessibility itself, or the broader inclusion of people with disabilities in tourism and culture, few have examined the language, tone, and framing used to communicate about accessibility on websites or social media. The gap that emerges from this is especially pertinent when considering how important online platforms are in influencing people's travel decisions. In the context of opera, where a perception of exclusivity may already present barriers to access, the communication of accessibility is even more crucial.

This study is here to respond and fill that gap by delving into the framing strategies as well as the accessibility narratives employed by the selected opera houses. It goes beyond simply identifying available services in order to consider how language, framing and the tone shape the understanding of inclusion and participation, something that has not yet been thoroughly explored in this particular context.

1.3. Purpose and Aim

Opera houses are the largest, most complex and heavily-subsidised organisations in the cultural sector (Gomà, 2004, as cited in Rius-Ulldemolins, 2020, p. 2). They have to increasingly meet the demands of diverse and inclusive audiences. With this shift, the way they communicate about their accessibility features has become a vital part of making sure that equal participation is achieved. The empirical phenomenon at the heart of this research is the communication of accessibility and accessibility-related features and potential services on the online platforms of the chosen opera houses.

This study does not aim to evaluate the technical accessibility of the platforms themselves, though there may be brief mentions of it if seen as appropriate. Instead, it explores how these digital spaces are used to convey and inform audiences and reflect commitments to accessibility.

In order to understand how this is done, this study examines two different types of online platforms: (1) the official websites of five opera houses and (2) their corresponding social media pages (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter). On the websites, the sole focus is on pages that are explicitly about accessibility. On social media, the data is comprised of

posts that mention keywords that are explicitly accessibility related and then limited to a certain time period. The lack of accessibility references on both is noted, too, as it is an empirical observation of its own.

This thesis aims to analyse the different types of information, or lack thereof, presented about accessibility on the online platforms of opera houses, the language and visual content used, as well as the effectiveness of these communications in reaching audiences. With this aim in mind, the main research question of this thesis is:

RQ1: How do opera houses communicate their accessibility features on different digital platforms?

The principles of the Social Model of Disability, Universal Design and Framing Theory will guide this research. Briefly said, the Social Model of Disability views the origins of disability as the mental attitudes and physical structures of society, rather than a medical condition faced by an individual (Buder & Perry, 2024). Universal design is the process of creating products that are accessible to people with a wide range of abilities, disabilities, and other characteristics (DO-IT, 2022). Lastly, Framing Theory is the study of how rhetorical devices can be used to convince people of the value of any given position (University of Edinburgh Business School, 2022).

These concepts are expanded more in the next chapter; this is a brief initial introduction to them. This research will also explore the meaning of accessibility to shed light on the need for different accessible features and topics, such as event tourism and physical accessibility in tourism.

The secondary research questions this thesis aims to answer are:

RQ2: What language choices and tone are used in discussing accessibility, and how might they influence perceptions of inclusivity and accessibility?

RQ3: What differences, if any, exist between website and social media accessibility communications?

These questions will help the research assess the presence of the information on accessibility and how clear it is, which directly addresses the societal expectations for inclusivity. The secondary questions will break down this objective by delving into the specific topics mentioned in them. In a 2023 study by Mizrak Filiz, she describes societal expectations as the collective beliefs, norms, and standards that society holds regarding ethical behaviour, responsibility, and conduct from individuals and organisations.

RQ2 will help examine the language and the tone used across the data collected, which consists of visual data, such as photographs, and textual data, as well as the tone and intent behind the textual data. With the help of the Social Model of Disability and Universal Design this research can identify whether the language choices found online respects individuals' autonomy and avoids inappropriate or patronising tones. An example of this is using phrases such as "welcoming everyone" instead of "special accommodations for the disabled", as the former normalises inclusion unlike the latter, which is more isolating.

RQ3 is relevant to the research as social media platforms and websites serve different purposes and audiences, and this could potentially lead to different variations in the understanding of the different communicated features. Certain things may not be communicated on one platform over the other, so understanding these differences can help identify inconsistencies.

Understanding how the chosen opera houses communicate about accessibility online through visual and written information is the core of the study. This entails looking at how they present information in their accessibility options like seating plans, possible assistive devices, accessible entry options to the venue and other services for people with disabilities.

1.4. Context of Study

In today's world, many people are motivated to travel abroad for events and shows they may have heard about through social media, friends, news outlets, etc. Most times, preparation for such a trip includes groundwork for these events. Location, time, methods of arrival and accessibility are all big factors when deciding whether to go and attend or not.

Events are an important motivator of tourism, and figure prominently in the development and marketing plans of most destinations (Getz, 2008, p.403). Therefore, having a clear and concise spread of information on the event's channels is important to ensure visitors understand where they are traveling to and if it is even feasible for them to attend their events of choice.

Cultural events, such as operas in this case, play a big role in being motivators for travel for many people (Eichhorn & Buhalis, 2011, p. 46). Ensuring access to travel and tourism opportunities for people living with a disability as well as for the entire population requires knowledge and design structures that are inclusive for all citizens. (Eichhorn & Buhalis, 2011, p. 46)

Opera houses, especially those with international reputations, often act not only as cultural sites but also as tourist attractions. This places them right at the intersection of local cultural expression and current of global tourism. Getz (2008) writes that although arts and tourism linkages have been advocated by many, and certainly exist about festivals, concerts and staged performances, there will always remain tension between these sectors. The anthropological literature on cultural celebrations is vast, with tourism sometimes being viewed as an agent of change, such as giving rise to declining cultural authenticity. (Getz, 2008, p. 412). The relevance of this tension arises while considering how these institutions communicate about accessibility, trying to preserve a sense of cultural identity while including tourists and locals, and balancing the expectations of diverse audiences.

When accessibility services and features are clearly communicated online, potential visitors with disabilities are better equipped to decide whether attending the event would be worthwhile. However, most event tourism related studies focus on economic impacts, visitor motivations or some form of logistics over accessibility. This thesis hopes to help bridge this gap by focusing on how opera houses communicate accessibility.

1.5. Structure of the Thesis

The thesis begins with this introduction chapter, in which previous research on the topic is presented, as well as the research gap, objectives, research questions and context of the study. The second chapter of the study is a broader presentation of the theoretical framework and the key concepts that this thesis is grounded upon. Chapter three explains the methodology, data, and ethics of the study, going through the choices made and the reasons behind them. Chapter four is the discussion and findings chapter, in which the main identified themes will be summarised. Here, the online language choices will be analysed, the platform differences will be compared and expanded upon, and the findings will be reflected on in relation to the theories chosen. The implications of the research's findings will be discussed, and if any unexpected results arise, those will be highlighted as well. Towards the end, chapter five will hold a summary, as well as the conclusions. Finally, the list of references will follow all of these.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research focuses on social constructivism, which, according to Kretchmar (2021), is a sociological theory that posits knowledge and reality are created through social interactions rather than existing independently of individuals (Kretchmar, 2021). Similarly, in 2012 Pernecky wrote an article about constructionism, which brings up that it is an epistemological stance that considers all knowledge and meaning to be actively constructed through interaction with people, place and self.

In this context, accessibility is not only a normal technical or physical issue but also a socially created concept shaped by institutional practices, communication, and cultural norms. In 2013, Schreiber and Valle wrote that social constructivism, a social learning theory developed by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, posits that individuals are active participants in the creation of their own knowledge.

The choice to go with a social constructivist approach was due to its appropriate fit, as the aim is not the assessment of the functionality or design of these online platforms, but instead the critical examination of the meanings that are constructed through communications. The things these institutions choose to include or leave out in the digital messaging reflect a wider social idea about inclusion, disability and the expectations of audiences.

2.1. Universal Design

With the help of Universal Design (UD), the research will be able to identify whether the chosen online platforms show a proper commitment to inclusivity by integrating accessibility into their foundational design and their chosen communication strategies. Universal Design tries to challenge what the regular view of environments is, catering to "normal" or able bodies rather than promoting inclusivity based on societal values. In a Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the UN and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2007, they describe UD as follows: "Universal design" means

the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design. "Universal design" shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed. The intent of the universal design concept is to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications, and the built environment more usable by more people at little or no extra cost (Centre for Universal Design, 2003).

The seven Principles of Universal Design which will be kept in mind and referred to during the study. They were developed in 1997 by a team led by North Carolina State University, and they aim to guide the design of environments, products, and communications. These principles can be used to evaluate existing designs and educate designers and consumers on creating more usable products and spaces. (Centre for Universal Design, NCSU)

There has been a call for the tourism industry to adopt universal design principles as a foundation to achieving greater social sustainability as part of the triple bottom line (Rains, 2004, as cited in Darcy et al., 2008, p.4).

2.2. Social Model of Disability and Framing

Essentially, the social model says that individual limitations are not the cause of disability (Buder & Perry, 2024). Rather, it is society's failure to provide appropriate services and adequately ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are taken into account in societal organisation. Simply constructing sidewalks and entrances that are wheelchair accessible, for example, can turn a disability into an ability. (Buder & Perry, 2024)

The Social Model of Disability will be used to potentially either validate or rightfully critique how accessibility is addressed by these institutions, which shifts the responsibility from individuals to the communication practices of the institutions themselves. The social model of disability is a way of viewing the world developed by people with disability. Removing these barriers creates equality and offers people with disability more independence, choice and control. (AFDO)

An example of the Social Model of Disability in action taken from the Australian Federation of Disability Organisations' page: "You are a disabled person who cannot use stairs and wants to get into a building with a step at the entrance. The social model recognises that this is a problem with the building, not the person, and would suggest adding a ramp to the entrance."

2.3. Framing Theory

This research will also utilise Framing Theory through the Social Model of Disability to examine the materials. Framing theory, coined by Erving Goffman in 1947, understood the idea of the frame to mean the culturally determined definitions of reality that allow people to make sense of objects and events (Shaw, 2013). Framing theory explains how information is presented or "framed" to influence how people perceive and interpret it. The choice of what to emphasise, omit, or downplay in communication affects how audiences understand and respond to the message. This thesis will use said theory to analyse how these institutions shape their messages about accessibility. Potential visitors, most importantly those with disabilities, are impacted by how opera houses frame accessibility on their websites and social media and their commitment to it. Frames highlight some bits of information about an item that is the subject of a communication, thereby elevating them in salience (Entman, 1993, p.53).

When viewed through the context of this research and the Social Model of Disability, framing can become a tool for either reinforcing or dismantling some societal barriers. For example, frames that bring attention to accessibility as a shared societal responsibility align with the removal of environmental barriers that align with the Social Model of Disability, whereas frames that only focus on individual accommodations instead may perpetuate a medicalised view of disability. This research also uses framing analysis, which will be discussed in the methodology chapter.

Framing Theory can help unpack the construction of accessibility communication in the context of opera houses in this research, as well as the way that these are delivered through the various platforms. These spaces operate within the domain of event tourism, in which the performances are not only framed as cultural and artistic experiences but also travel-

worthy events. The way that accessibility is framed can influence how these events are perceived by attendees, specifically by those with disabilities, whether they feel included and welcome or if these events seem unattainable.

3. Methods and Data

This chapter will dive deeper into the research methods of this research paper, touching on the qualitative nature of it, the analysis methods used, as well as the ethics of the research, keeping in mind that the material for the analysis comes from publicly accessible sites and pages.

3.1. Research Methods

This study will be conducted using qualitative methods. Qualitative analysis aims to increase the overall understanding of the researched object or topic's quality, characteristics, and meanings (JYU). Compared to quantitative data, which captures structured information, qualitative data is unstructured and has more depth (Dye, 2024). The data in this research consists primarily of content from the selected opera houses' websites and social media posts. The material gathered from these sources will provide the visual and textual data needed to examine how accessibility information is framed and presented to the public. Qualitative methodology allows researchers to advance and apply their interpersonal and subjectivity skills to their research exploratory processes (Alase, 2017, p.9). That is something the researcher considered important during the writing process, which aided the choice of research method.

Within qualitative analysis, content and frame analysis will be utilised to examine the data and better understand it. Content analysis is used as the initial method to study the chosen data as it allows a good systematic categorisation of themes and patterns within the data. It will help identify themes such as physical accessibility, varieties of programming, visual design choices, and assistive services. Content analysis is potentially one of the most important research techniques in the social sciences. The content analyst views data as representations not of physical events but of texts, images, and expressions that are created to be seen, read, interpreted, and acted on for their meanings, and must therefore be analyzed with such uses in mind. (Krippendorff, 2004. P.13)

Basic content analyses are those approaches using word counts and other quantitative analytic methods to analyze data (Drisko & Maschi, 2016, p.3). However, in order to fit better into this research and its need, the content analysis utilised here can be called an interpretive content analysis. Interpretive content analyses are those approaches using researcher generated summaries and interpretations rather than word counts or other quantitative analytic methods (Drisko & Maschi, 2016, p.5).

Frame analysis follows content analysis, and it is applied to examine how language and framing shape our perception of accessibility within a broader cultural and social context. The use of framing

The sociologist Erving Goffman, who is credited with coining the term in his 1974 book *Frame Analysis*, understood the idea of the frame to mean the culturally determined definitions of reality that allow people to make sense of objects and events. (Shaw)

In this study, framing analysis is applied to analyse how opera houses build accessibility narratives on their websites and social media platforms by examining the tone, language and potential rhetorical strategies used in digital communications.

3.2. Data Collection

This chapter presents an overview of the empirical data collected to analyse how opera houses communicate their accessibility features on different digital platforms. The data presented will serve as the foundation for exploring the usage of language and imagery, framing, and the principles of Universal Design and the Social Model of Disability in the analysis chapter.

Online interaction overwhelmingly takes place by means of discourse (Herring, 2004. p.1). That is, participants interact by means of verbal language, usually typed on a keyboard and read as text on a computer screen. (Herring, 2004. p.1). Hence why, in the analysis chapter, the chosen analysis methods are content and framing analysis, both of which are qualitative in nature,

The data comprises the content on the websites and public social media posts from the chosen opera houses: Sydney Opera House, Opéra National de Paris, Teatro Real, Finnish National Opera and Ballet and the Royal Ballet and Opera. As mentioned in the prior chapter, these were chosen due to their renown and multilingual platforms.

The data collection took place between December 2024 and January 2025. It started with a general overview of the websites and social media channels. Then, more in-depth browsing was conducted, where the sole focus was the accessibility pages of the websites in both English and their native languages. The search function was utilised across platforms by typing keywords such as “inclusive” and “accessibility” to find results that fit the criteria.

When reviewing the houses’ social media pages, the year of publication was also taken into account. Posts made over ten years ago were not included, as they can no longer be considered trustworthy or current. Any prevalent information was noted and will be analysed in the later chapters.

3.1. Websites

The reason behind choosing websites as a source of data for this research was because they provide plenty information about accessibility, as well as general information and timetables, essentially covering anything one might need when planning a trip to enjoy a show.

In many industrialized countries, electronic or mobile governmental services are provided in almost all sectors [...] (Addous et al., 2016. P. 172). This would enable citizens and residents to easily and efficiently access different services without usual problems, i.e. long queues, much time and effort. (Addous et al., 2016. P. 172).

Herring (2004) brings up that internet research often suffers from a premature impulse to label online phenomena in broad terms, e.g., all groups of people interacting online are "communities". Which is why he mentions that an important challenge facing Internet researchers is thus how to identify and describe online phenomena in culturally meaningful terms, while at the same time grounding their distinctions in empirically observable behaviour.

A significant part of the data collected from the websites is textual data. In the case of With the data gathered from the different platforms and the knowledge from the prior chapters, the author compiled a table with an overview of the data that was collected from the websites (Table 1), as well as on social media (Table 2). The most visual data was collected from the websites of Sydney Opera House and Royal Opera and Ballet. Visual data in this context refers to videos, photographs, any icons that depict something specific, floorplans, etc.

Table 1. Overview of website data

Opera house	Available information
Sydney Opera House	Videos for accessibility and arrival guidance, sections on sensory services, mobility services, access programs, and action plan.
Finnish National Opera and Ballet	Mobility aids, accessible facilities and entrance, ticketing and refreshments. sensory services (e.g., hearing loops, surtitling, and sign language interpretation), as well as an accessibility statement.
Teatro Real in Madrid	Textual information of services provided for people hard of hearing and wheelchair users. Information on reserving seating and ticketing.
Opéra National de Paris	Information on booking tickets and visit planning for a wide range of needs, including mobility, cognitive, and visual impairments.
Royal Ballet and Opera, UK	Access scheme, event types, assistive listening, BSL, audio descriptions, touch tours, assistance dogs, emergency procedures, and venue navigation.

Overall, the websites presented a rather wide range of information regarding their services and amenities. Sydney Opera House, in particular, has a very comprehensive and commendable approach, and its site has clearly defined sections for different services, e.g., visual and auditory services, mobility support, etc. The Finnish National Opera and Ballet and Royal Ballet and Opera also offer a very wide range of information and details on their supply of amenities and services, with the RBO in particular having a very in-depth presentation of theirs. The Opéra National de Paris has a decently inclusive approach on their site as well, save from linguistic points that will be discussed later. The Teatro Real falls a little short in comparison to these sites, with their primary descriptions of services for visitors who are hard of hearing or who use wheelchairs. But these can not be overlooked either.

The Finnish National Opera and Ballet, some icons found on the page will be considered visual data, as well as the image of their floorplan that details their different accessible

amenities. The Royal Ballet and Opera have a video showcasing a performance interpreted into BSL (British sign language) and a photo of such an occasion.

The Sydney Opera House had a wide variety of links that further explained their offered services and amenities concerning accessibility. They also had videos for display to help visualise the access to their building.

The Opéra National de Paris, their Bastille location, had an information booklet about their “relax” performances aimed at people with “mental and/or intellectual disabilities” to enjoy. The booklet explains in straightforward terms and with images what happens during these performances, which was noted as valuable for the data.

3.2. Social Media

Unlike websites, the social media pages of the chosen houses have little to no information about accessibility on them. However, the inclusion of social media as one of the data sources, in this case, the lack thereof, for this research is still important, as we can see how the lack of information frames the importance of accessibility information in these spaces. Social media has revolutionized the way businesses reach and engage with their target audiences (Dilshodovich, 2023. P. 29). Thanks to this, leaving out such a large group of people without anything to turn to on social media sites can hurt these groups unintentionally and potentially even turn them away from visiting the businesses, which is never something companies strive toward.

The data available on the social media platforms was indeed close to non-existent. While some of the houses’ Instagram pages had story highlights about the buildings, none had any direct accessibility-related information. The Sydney Opera House had a story highlight about their streaming service, which can, of course, be of help to some and is mentioned on the accessibility page of their website; however, it was not marketed as any sort of accessible tool in their stories.

On the social media site Twitter, Teatro Real's account yielded one post about accessibility for people who are hard of hearing through the search function. However, this post was made in 2013 and will not be considered in the research further due to its age. Using the

same approach, the Finnish National Opera and Ballet yielded a post from 2023 for a questionnaire to improve their accessibility provisions.

The exact search employing the word "accessibility", however, yielded many posts from the Sydney Opera House. They had posts dating back to 2009, which is exceptional; however, due to the age of these posts, they will not be more than mentioned, as they cannot be considered reliable information anymore. The rest of the more recent posts will be included. The Royal Ballet and Opera yielded no results with the keywords "accessible" and "accessibility". The Paris National Opera did not yield results either.

Facebook mentions accessibility on some of the houses' pages. Sydney Opera House had usable posts that could be found using the search function on Facebook. For example, there was mention of their accessibility action plan, audio-described tours, and celebrations of days such as the International Day of People with Disability.

The Finnish National Opera and Ballet had posts similarly celebrating days such as the International Sign Language Day and the International Accessibility Day, with some mentions of the actions they have taken to enable better services for those who need these services.

In the case of the Opéra National de Paris, the search did yield posts about things such as audio-described performances. However, these were not posted by the establishment themselves, so they are not going to be included in the data. However, it is important to acknowledge that these things do exist.

The Teatro Real, located in Madrid, had similar results as the ones from Paris. There was mention of them being one of the first theatres in the world, in a protected historical building, no less, with audio accessibility; however, this was also not posted by them themselves.

The Royal Ballet and Opera had posted multiple links to stream performances when they were happening, as well as some mentions from other pages and people about their accessibility initiative. However, none of this will be included in the data analysis, as it does not come directly from the source and is thus not relevant to the thesis.

Below is an overview in the form of a table of the data that was scraped together from the social media sites' data gathering for a more comprehensive and concise viewing.

Table 2. Overview of social media data (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook)

Opera house	Available information
Sydney Opera House	High support needs facilities and accessible seating locations. Accessibility action plan and audio descriptions.
Finnish National Opera and Ballet	Awareness celebrations, mentions of actions to enable better services for those who need them.
Teatro Real in Madrid	Post celebrating the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Otherwise N/A posted by themselves.
Opéra National de Paris	Mentions of their audio described performances. Otherwise, N/A posted by themselves.
Royal Ballet and Opera, UK	Old streaming links for performances.

The overview of the data collected from the websites and social media reveals an apparent difference between the amount of information found on these two platforms. An initial observation suggests a bigger focus on physical accessibility over sensory or cognitive accommodations. What this means is that the opera houses all had one way or another mentions of physical means for accommodating the people with these needs, but not all of them spoke about non-physical disabilities. The Opéra National de Paris for example speaks of their “relax” performances, where the rules are less strict, and thus everyone is freer to be themselves in the environment.

Social media plays a major role in integrating these individuals who are disabled, into society, regardless of the purpose of use of those with limited health capabilities (Mammadova & Ahmadov, 2017. P. 49). There were some posts made by other separate institutions or individuals, however, those were excluded from the data as they are from outsiders in this context. In today’s world, a great number of people are on social media, hence why these large establishments could more than benefit from leaving this information out there for people to see. An example of how this could be done is a pinned post, which is possible on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. As of February 2025, there were 5.56 billion internet users worldwide, which amounted to 67.9 percent of the global population. Of this total, 5.24 billion, or 63.9 percent of the world's population, were social media users. (Petrosyan, 2025)

From the tables, it can be seen how the data gathering from social media was limited by the inconsistency of the posts available throughout the examined sites. This was expected

but unfortunate nonetheless, as social media is an excellent tool for communicating information to broad audiences. Digital tools such as social media, apps and websites offer new opportunities for online participation, through which citizens do not need to be physically present in a meeting (Lin & Kant, 2021, p.18).

3.3. Analysis Process

After having identified different key themes in accessibility communications, the next step was to categorise and interpret these findings through the lens of Universal Design and the Social Model of Disability (SMD). Analysing how different accessibility features are presented across all platforms, it was easier to evaluate whether these institutions emphasise inclusivity and barrier removal for all or perhaps reinforce a more medicalised perspective. Guided by Framing Theory, three analytic frames were made through the coding process of website and social media content. Framing Theory also provided insight into how accessibility is positioned, whether it is treated as an additional service, a fundamental right or a marketing feature.

The first step of the analysis was to use content analysis and to locate and highlight keywords, phrases or descriptions that were located frequently across the websites and social media. Once these were identified and gathered, the data was coded and grouped into broader themes. These themes were then used as a basis for the frame analysis that was conducted afterwards.

3.4. Ethics

The author of this study follows the Finnish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity in their research according to TENK's (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity) rules to ensure that the research is reliable. According to the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, the basic principles of research integrity are reliability, honesty, respect, and accountability. Research integrity (RI) consists of practices that ensure that RI

is maintained throughout the life span of any research. (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity [TENK], 2023, p.11)

The author of this research utilised AI programs such as Grammarly for grammar and spellchecking and ChatGPT to clarify questions or concepts for herself and to aid the author with the creation of the tables in this thesis. However, this research did not use AI tools to produce results or answers to questions. Additionally, no data that could be considered sensitive was fed to any AI programs. All the programs that were used are within the University of Lapland's guidelines about Artificial Intelligence.

As this thesis explores accessibility, a layer of social responsibility must be considered to ensure that its findings contribute to the positive awareness and improvement of accessibility practices. It aims to provide insights that can potentially benefit inclusive practices in cultural institutions.

This study will use data on websites and social media, all publicly available content, so formal consent will not be requested separately. The European Commission wrote about Ethics and Data Protection in 2018, and within the text, they state that if your research project uses data from social media networks and you do not intend to seek the data subjects' explicit consent to the use of their data, you must assess whether those persons intended to make their information public. As these are public sites for cultural institutions, all the data sought for this research is intended to be available to the general public.

In 2009, Kozinets (2010) acknowledged that it could be ethically just to study some online communities without asking permission to study them. One criterion to decide if the online community in question could be studied in a covert fashion is whether writing or posting in the online community requires registration. [...] If the material is publicly available, however, it can be used for research, and the legal question is separate from the ethical questions. (Kozinets, 2010, as cited in Tuikka et al., 2017, p.2)

One issue that the research will grapple with is how to handle and potentially store the data in a way that ensures that it stays the same as websites and social media can be edited and changed over time. While some websites exist that can let the user see past versions

of websites or websites that no longer exist, the usage of something like these was deemed not relevant for this purpose.

4. Findings and Discussion

As mentioned in earlier chapters, this study has set out to analyse the different types of information presented about accessibility on the online platforms of opera houses, the language and visual content used, as well as the effectiveness of these communications in reaching audiences or the lack thereof. With that in mind, the primary research question of this study is: How do opera houses communicate their accessibility features on different digital platforms?

The secondary research questions that the study aims to find answers to are as follows: What language choices and tone are used in discussing accessibility, and how might they influence perceptions of inclusivity and accessibility? And what differences, if any, exist between website and social media accessibility communications?

The use of content analysis here is to identify themes and patterns that are recurrent in the communication of accessibility across different platforms. By categorising the found content based on themes that are related to accessibility, for example, service descriptions, language choices and inclusivity markers, this analysis will provide insight into the narratives that these institutions are presenting to their audiences.

As opera performances tend to be big cultural events with the ability to attract both international and domestic crowds, the way that accessibility is communicated does also play a role in shaping the perceptions of the inclusivity and feasibility of these events for wider and diverse audiences. As Getz (2008) writes; “Events are an important motivator of tourism, and figure prominently in the development and marketing plans of most destinations. The roles and impacts of planned events within tourism have been well documented, and are of increasing importance for destination competitiveness” (Getz, 2008. P.403).

4.1. Themes on Websites

Below is a table that compiles the themes found on social media sites.

Table 3. Themes found on websites

Theme	Description
Physical Accessibility	Information on ramps, mobility aids, lifts, seating, stair access, etc.
Assistive Services	Information on various services for the hard of hearing, sensory-adapted and relaxed performances, assistive animals.
Ticketing & Discounts	Information on assistant tickets, disability discounts, and other pricing options.
Language & Clarity	Use of sign language, inclusive terminology, and clear, accessible language.

The chosen opera houses communicate various accessibility features on their websites, though the range and clarity of information vary notably across the different institutions. For example, regarding physical accessibility, the Finnish National Opera and Ballet explicitly states that visitors may request mobility aids such as wheelchairs, crutches, or walkers for their visit. This offer shows a visitor-oriented approach. Sydney Opera House goes further by, for example, providing detailed information about the number of steps between various entrances and the furthest rows in their performance halls. This level of detail is desirable and enables visitors with mobility concerns to assess and prepare for potential barriers in advance, contributing to a sense of autonomy and security. It can also help people travelling further away to prepare what they need for their trip.

Assistive services are also addressed in varying ways and to varying degrees. The Royal Opera House, for example, offers audio introductions to their shows, which provides the customer with information about the characters, cast, and setting, as well as audio descriptions and touch tours. This enhances the experience for blind or visually impaired visitors by giving them a well-rounded understanding of the performance beforehand.

Opéra National de Paris has adopted a more socially aware approach through its “relax” performances, which are shows specifically designed for audience members whose disabilities "can cause atypical or unpredictable behaviours during the performance". These performances are less rigid and thus provide a more welcoming and accommodating environment in order to make sure that everyone can enjoy the show freely. Teatro Real, on the other hand, emphasizes its use of advanced audio technology that enhances sound quality for hearing aid users. These things may seem small to some, however they may be very big deciding factors for others. One cannot claim that an event was successful unless every attendee was able to participate fully. Event organizers are responsible for

accommodating special needs from attendees to ensure all attendees have the same quality of event experience (Park & Jung, 2021, p. 2).

People planning their visits to these places should also consider the ticketing and discount policies, so it is important to display this information. The Finnish National Opera and Ballet presents the discounts available to visitors with disabilities and their assistants. In contrast, Teatro Real's accessibility page does not mention pricing or discounts; it simply states where to get tickets, which could indicate a gap in transparency. This exclusion is significant, considering the existing stereotype that Souca (2010) speaks about in his article, that accessible tourism is "low yield" due to assumptions that people with disabilities have less disposable income and are more likely to depend on pensions. As Souca explains, this perception has been used to discourage investment in accessible tourism despite statistics showing that accessible tourism is a valuable, growing market. Failing to communicate relevant pricing information may end up unintentionally reinforcing this outdated notion, and it represents a missed opportunity.

Most websites use inclusive and appropriate terminology regarding language and clarity, but some exceptions always have to exist. For example, the Opéra National de Paris uses the term "hearing-impaired", which is a phrase discouraged by the United Nations' Disability Inclusive Language Guidelines due to its medicalised framing of deafness, though it is important to note that the Opéra National de Paris' native language is French, so their likelihood of making mistakes is greater. In contrast, the RBO demonstrates a very high standard of inclusivity by offering the website's accessibility page's written content in British Sign Language (BSL) in the form of a small video on the side signing whatever section the user clicks on. This allows users who communicate in BSL to access the information in their preferred mode of communication, which is not an active part of this research, but it is a positive thing nonetheless and something that only gives the RBO an air of inclusivity and care of all their visitors.

4.2. Themes on Social Media

Below is a table that compiles the themes that were found on the websites.

Table 4. Themes found on social media

Theme	Description
Promotion of Accessibility	Posts highlighting accessibility features, services, and awareness days.
Engagement and Responsiveness	Interaction with users regarding accessibility inquiries.
Visual and Multimedia Accessibility	Use of captions, alt text, and sign language interpretation.
Language and Tone	Inclusivity, clarity, and framing of accessibility.

While the chosen opera houses use their social media platforms actively to promote their activities and venues, they fall short in highlighting accessibility features. Very little relevant information was found, especially without having to dig deep and only then were some mentions discovered. Some examples include the Finnish National Opera and Ballet using its platforms to celebrate significant awareness days such as International Accessibility Day and International Sign Language Day. Similarly, Teatro Real and the Sydney Opera House have posted about the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. It is not all just celebratory posts, as Sydney Opera House has also shared updates on renovations and upgrades to improve physical and sensory accessibility, demonstrating transparency and proactive development. These celebratory posts and updates are important to many people, so it is a shame these were so few. During the data collection, it was noted that these celebratory posts are not even yearly, which places the sincerity of these posts under some scrutiny since they run the risk of seeming simply performative.

Despite all that, any possible user engagement regarding accessibility-related issues remains limited or non-existent. None of the chosen institutions included interactive tools like surveys or questionnaires on any of their social media in regard to accessibility, which could be a valuable means for gathering customer feedback and improving services that are lacking. In terms of visual and multimedia accessibility on the social media pages themselves, the presence of captions or alt text remains somewhat inconsistent. According to an article written in 2023 for AudioEye by Jeff Curtis, alt text significantly improves the online experience for screen readers. Without these descriptions, screen reader users might miss key information communicated via images. Most screen readers will read the image file name if alt text is missing which can be confusing (Curtis, 2023). For that

reason, posts could include some alt text to facilitate everyone's equal usage, for example, in a booking situation where the customer wants to know what shows are going on, they could rely on alt text.

Some content from the Royal Opera House and the Finnish National Opera and Ballet does include captions in their Instagram reels. However, these are not explicitly tied to accessibility themes themselves. In the case of the Finnish National Opera and Ballet, much of the content is only available in Finnish, which can potentially limit their accessibility for international or non-native users.

It is essential to note that language and tone could vary across institutions, but minimal discrepancies arose on the social media side of things. Teatro Real, for example, shared information about their assistive technology for visitors who are hard of hearing and used accurate and respectful terminology in both English and Spanish.

From the gathered data in these tables and explained above, the most glaringly obvious fact is that there is little to nothing to be found on the houses' social media platforms. Another thing is that anything that was found on the social media pages (mainly Facebook) was significantly older, so the inclusion of that information was dubious, and the author had to set a limit to posts within those five years. For example, the Sydney Opera House communicated their development of audio-described tours for blind and low-vision audiences using the correct language. However, this post was from 2014, so it was excluded from the data in general.

Overall, the lack of communication from the opera houses on their social media pages gives off an air of minimal effort in the accessibility front, which can turn potential visitors, namely those with disabilities, away and altering possible travel plans, which can affect the opera houses negatively, be it through negative reviews or loss of valuable clientele.

4.3. Defining and Categorising Accessibility Frames

The first frame is the framing of accessibility as a right, which treats accessibility as an inherent right for everyone. On multiple websites, accessibility was framed as something for everyone, and the content found under this category emphasises inclusion and the

removal of barriers. This aligns with Universal Design’s goal of creating environments that are usable by everyone, as well as the SMD’s perspective about barriers being socially constructed.

Creating an accessible event or meeting is very comprehensive and difficult to achieve in a perfect manner (Park & Jung, 2021, p. 2). However, once completed to even a modest extent, it not only benefits attendees with visible or obvious disabilities but also allows all other participants with non-explicit disabilities to fully engage in the event (Park & Jung, 2021, p. 2).

The second frame is accessibility as a service or an extra feature. So, in contrast to the previous frame, some of the opera houses framed accessibility features more so as optional services or additional features instead of simply essential rights. The language encountered in these cases tends to echo the Medical Model in the way it does not focus on universal barrier removal but instead individual “fixes”, such as hearing aids or earplugs.

The third frame is the representation of the disabled identity. This means analysing how individuals with disabilities are portrayed or referenced in the materials, aiming to focus on whether the language and potential imagery empower them as cultural participants or reduce them to simply passive recipients of services.

An open coding process was conducted on all the institutions' accessibility pages in order to find and group similar expressions into preliminary categories. Essentially, any research project involving an exploratory research question [...] will often employ open coding as a part of its research methods (Sybing). After that, the categories were refined with the principles of Universal Design and SMD in mind, resulting in three frames with their own inclusion criteria.

Table 5. Frames

Frame	Theoretical Base	Inclusion Criteria
Accessibility as a Right	Universal Design & Social Model of Disability	Statements that express a right or universality (e.g. “for everyone”)
Accessibility as an Extra Service	Perspective of the Medical Model	References to equipment or services “upon request”

Representation of Disabled Identity	Framing Theory & the Social Model of Disability	Language or imagery that speaks about people with disabilities
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Framing strategies are essential in shaping how accessibility is perceived and understood in digital communication. This section builds on and examines more closely how opera houses frame accessibility through their language choices, an emphasis on inclusivity and other potential factors. By analysing systematic narratives, such as whether accessibility is represented as a legal obligation or an effort to facilitate belonging, this section will uncover underlying messages that may influence public perception. In this context, the application of framing theory helps reveal whether accessibility is framed as an integral part of the opera experience or as an added, separate feature.

In relation to frame 1, which is accessibility as a right, there was some variation in how disability and accessibility were discussed. Sentences such as “Sydney Opera House belongs to everyone” or “We want everyone to have the best experience with the Royal Ballet and Opera” can foster a sense of welcoming and inclusivity, which is on par with Universal Design principles. However, there was also a lot of more technical jargon that, while informative and technically not inappropriate, could exclude or alienate some audiences who may not identify with the used terms, e.g., “wheelchair users” instead of “people with access needs”.

These word choices can be examined through Framing Theory, as we can see the way some phrases can either limit or reinforce the perception of inclusivity. The tone of the information communicated also plays an important role in whether it welcomes diverse audiences or implies that accessibility is a secondary concern. These fall within the second frame, which was accessibility as a service or an extra feature, which, in contrast to the previous frame, shows that some of the opera houses framed accessibility features more so as optional services or additional features instead of simply essential rights. Teatro Real's website says that "Individual hearing aids can be provided if necessary", which in itself is not something incorrect to say, however this language somewhat echoes the medical model of disability. The medicalisation of disability is inappropriate and an

obstacle to effective analysis and policy (Shakespeare, 2006, p. 220). The Finnish National Opera and Ballet also suggest people to ask for things such as earplugs, however the way these sentences are presented, it does not have the same tone to it.

4.4 Communication of Accessibility

Overall, the language across the websites does support the SMD and does not imply that accessibility is about helping individuals “overcome” their disabilities, which would be more in line with the medical model of disability. However, it is important to note that saying the venue is “designed to welcome all visitors” is a more social model way of perceiving it rather than saying they “provide wheelchair access”, which is, of course, the more common case, as most if not all of these buildings have not been initially built with accessibility needs in mind considering their age.

As some of the chosen opera houses are not in English-speaking countries, it is not wholly unexpected to find terminology that is not exactly desirable or encouraged. On the English page of the Opéra National de Paris, we can find terms such as “hearing impaired”, “disabled persons”, and “...whose handicap...”. These are all terms that, according to the Disability Inclusive Language Guidelines by the United Nations Office in Geneva in 2019, are classified as language to be avoided. While the word “handicap” when referring to someone’s specific disability is not specified in the list, words such as “handicapped” about people or parking spaces are told to be avoided, so it would make sense to use this word with caution. That being said, in France, the term “handicap” is not only used as a noun but also as an attribute to designate people living with disabilities in the following term: “les personnes handicapées” (to be translated as “handicapped persons”). (Giami et al., 2007. p.200)

Moreover, in the same article by Giami et al., they write that in the US-English language, as opposed to the UK language, the word “handicap” is not to be totally avoided. So, as the website is that of the Opéra National de Paris, and they are not using the other term, they ought not be fined for this, but it is something that they should be careful with to avoid the risk of unintentionally offending or hurting potential patrons.

Something as simple as using passive or active language in communications can shape the way that the establishments communicate about their commitment to inclusion. Passive language may place the responsibility of inquiring about accessibility onto the individual, for example, sentences like "Upon request, we can provide you with a wheelchair, crutches, or a walker for the duration of your visit". This can have the potential to make the customer feel less like an expected or wanted guest and more like an exception, and the wording can imply that accessibility is not an inherent part of their design but more so an afterthought or specially arranged service. That being said, it does not seem possible to simply leave these details out of websites, as it is essential to reassure and inform customers of these options so that they can make their own decisions during the planning stages of their visits.

There is no clear indication of the fact that individuals with disabilities themselves would have been given a voice so that they are speaking for themselves in the materials. However, the available services are not described in a way that would speak about them instead of to them, which is something that the third frame is focused on. What this means is that sentences such as "These types of performances are also helpful if you are anxious about sitting in one place for a long time or need to access the bathrooms and exits quickly" are directly spoken to the visitor, which does not foster a sense of otherness. On the websites, overall, accessibility is framed as an important part of inclusion through all the establishments, and there is no feeling of obligation or as if it were a charitable effort.

On websites, businesses tend to use a more formal tone and language. Under Frame 1, the websites use an active voice and collective pronouns, for example, "Our goal at the Sydney Opera House is to provide barrier-free access, making the site, building and the experiences we offer accessible to all".

Social media, on the other hand, is a more informal platform where businesses can be more flexible with their messaging (12 Channels). This was also the case for the opera houses, as the very few social media posts had a more conversational tone than that of the websites, which may be driven by policies or other guidelines. It was initially expected that social media would show a bigger variety of framing and tones. Frame 3 could show

up as user testimonials or shared experiences by disabled visitors, but instead, there was little to nothing.

This formality can make information seem technical and neutral, which may create a distance between the audience and the institution. In this case, it is very unfortunate that the social media sites yielded very little to analyse, as the more dynamic and conversational tone that social media posts often carry would have been a valuable addition to this research. The absence of frames 2 and 3 eliminated any opportunities to observe how the use of casual language could potentially support direct user engagement or increase the visibility of disabled voices. There were no posts highlighting personal experiences or user testimonials, which could have made the content feel more inclusive and relatable. Additionally, where websites list their services and features as factual details, social media could frame them in more engaging ways, which could help with forming a stronger sense of community and inclusion.

Accessibility communication, which is unfortunately absent on social media, is in itself a form of discourse because it shapes the perspectives of the opera houses. Unlike websites, which, as previously discussed, offer more structured information on accessibility, social media offers a space for actual dialogue and more visibility. Unfortunately, the near-complete lack of accessibility-related posts across all the chosen social media platforms makes it seem like accessibility may be treated as a requirement rather than an active and ongoing conversation. When looked through a framing lens, this silence could be read as a reinforcement for frame 2, with accessibility as a mere afterthought. This omission only sustains the idea that guests with disabilities are not considered active parts of the audience, which aligns with the systemic exclusion that the SMD critiques.

It is also a missed opportunity for engagement, which can potentially indicate a lack of active dialogue with varying audiences. The few posts that are available and considered in this research's data have a more informational tone. However, the posts that celebrate days such as the International Day of Sign Languages do have a more upbeat and, in some cases, celebratory tone. These examples, although rare, can suggest that content fitting into frame 1 can also adopt a more engaging and inclusive tone when approaching accessibility as not an obligation.

The omission of accessibility on social media constructs a certain reality where accessibility is either not seen as relevant for audience engagement or is assumed to be "taken care of" elsewhere. In addition, one might argue that this silence might contribute to the marginalisation of audiences with disabilities by failing to acknowledge them in the same engaging or celebratory ways that other visitors are included.

Examining how accessibility is framed and which perspectives are being prioritised is an integral part of this research. One important thing to consider when doing this is whether accessibility is presented from an institutional perspective or if the individuals with disabilities' voices are actively included. Frame 2 tends to reflect the institutional perspective, in which accessibility is something the venue provides. Discourse from the institutional perspective tends to focus on providing services, for example, "There are a number of wheelchair and companion seating locations in all theatres," which makes accessibility a passive offering.

The most apparent gap emerges in frame 3, which would ideally include user-centred narratives that validate already lived experiences and reinforce inclusivity even more. However, as this research focuses on the information displayed on the accessibility pages on websites and social media pages, it does not consider what reviews on pages like TripAdvisor or Google would have to say. While undoubtedly, those websites would provide more user-centred feedback, it would be too far from the scope of this research.

An example of a user-centred expression that aligns with frame 3 would be: "I enjoyed my time at the show thanks to the accessible seating plan". These kinds of narratives bring more individual and lived experiences out to the front and validate the real-world impact of all these different accessibility measures. Bringing these kinds of voices to the forefront could benefit the opera houses in steering the discourse in a more equitable direction that aligns with the SMD and its emphasis on removing societal barriers.

The way persons with disabilities are portrayed in these different frames can impact the way that agency and inclusion are perceived. When accessibility is framed as nothing but a provision of services (especially per frame 2), it risks enforcing a perspective that, even if unintentional, can harm these individuals. This kind of language can place visitors with

disabilities as simply passive recipients of care instead of important and integral members of the community. But as stated earlier, in contrast, with more inclusive phrasing, the establishments can normalise accessibility and emphasise equal participation with ease.

Analysing these linguistic choices can reveal hidden power dynamics within accessibility communication that are likely not even in the minds of people writing these things. Comparing how these different narratives can position individuals with disabilities (as passive recipients or as active participants), this chapter aims to highlight the importance of language in shaping broader societal attitudes towards inclusivity.

Overall, in the collected data, whether in the accessibility sections of their websites or on their social media platforms, none of the houses quoted any visitors with disabilities, nor were they particularly "represented", which is what frame 3 focuses on. The closest to this is the RBO's optional BSL video on their site, which depicts a person actively signing. It is thus safe to say that this section highlights a significant absence of disabled voices across all their online platforms, with communication predominantly reflecting an institutional voice. The lack of representation suggests that the opera houses are not fully embracing the SMD and Universal Design principles, failing to prioritise the lived experiences of individuals with disabilities.

On occasion, opera houses emphasise the "uniqueness" of their performances, meaning they are unique experiences that should be attended in person to be fully appreciated. This kind of framing can also be seen in the way accessibility is or is not communicated in promotional content. Getz (2008) notes in his article that much of the appeal of events is that they are never the same, and you have to 'be there' to enjoy the unique experience fully; if you miss it, it is a lost opportunity.

This almost urgent tone can be motivating but also exclusionary, especially if any potential visitors with disabilities have not been clearly informed about how they can access and thus enjoy the event. If the communication about accessibility is incomplete or even vague, it poses the risk of placing these individuals as outsiders to these so-called unique experiences.

5. Conclusions

This thesis aimed to answer the question, "How do opera houses communicate their accessibility features on different digital platforms?". The research was guided by the Social Model of Disability and the principles of Universal Design. The aim was not only to identify how accessibility is presented but also to reflect on the underlying power structures and discourses that could be shaping these communications. The analysis combined thematic content analysis and framing analysis to examine both the content itself and the tone of all the accessibility-related messaging.

The research focused not only on the information provided but also on how individuals with disabilities were positioned in these narratives, whether as active participants or passive recipients. The study found noticeable differences in the quantity and quality of communication across institutions and platforms.

Accessibility information was certainly present in websites, though more often than not, the language used was more institution-centred, meaning that what was being highlighted were the provided services. This conveys a feeling that accessibility is often seen as an add-on rather than an embedded aspect of cultural participation. The medical model of disability was unfortunately implicitly present in some of the phrasing found across pages, which at times positioned individuals with disabilities as recipients of care rather than equal participants. Regardless of the institutionalised tone, most of the opera houses did a commendable job of presenting their services in a respectful and informative manner. Sydney Opera House had the widest array of information and choices present, with many accessibility-related pages to peruse. Opéra National de Paris, the RBO and the Finnish National Opera and Ballet all had good presentation and a pleasing amount of information on their sites. The Opéra National de Paris had some issues with linguistics, but those were cleared up. The Finnish National Opera and Ballet could work in some sensory-friendly experiences too, the way the Opéra National de Paris and the RBO are doing, for example.

Unfortunately, Teatro Real showed the slimmest presentation of information, with barely one page worth of information, though even that is much better than nothing. However, in comparison to the Sydney Opera House, with their multitude of hyperlinks and windows of information and offerings, Teatro Real does certainly fall flat.

The thematic content analysis showed a bigger overall focus on the features that support physical accessibility, such as accessible seating or ramps, which reinforces a relatively narrow interpretation of accessibility. With that being said, a couple of establishments specifically brought up sensory-friendly and relaxed performances, which is not a given but something that all these establishments should strive towards for the sake of everyone's enjoyment. Most often when speaking about accessibility, ramps and such physical aids come to mind, but it is important to take into account all people and backgrounds.

While the examined webpages had well-structured and formal presentations about their accessible services, it was easy to notice the significant lack of information found on social media, more often than not, only minimal scattered posts. This suggests a missed opportunity to engage with audiences in a more inclusive and dynamic fashion. And while certainly not everyone uses social media, a large number of people do, and it could serve as a useful tool in checking topical and current goings-on, especially for those planning trips from further away. These things are also found on websites, but the ease of social media permits easy and quick use of the platforms.

These findings highlight certain gaps in how cultural institutions communicate accessibility. Recording a y-o-y growth of 4.1%, the global event tourism market size is estimated to reach USD 1.63 trillion in 2024 (Future Market Insights, 2024). Over the forecast period, global demand for event tourism is projected to rise at a 4.3% CAGR, taking the overall market valuation to a staggering USD 2.38 trillion by 2034 (Future Market Insights, 2024). With event tourism's continuous growth, it is critical to improve the clarity, tone and inclusivity within the accessibility communication to ensure a sustainable and equitable development of the industry.

The results of this study have numerous practical implications for opera houses and other potential cultural institutions. Accessibility communication is not just a matter of an inclusive cultural approach but also an essential component of sustainable tourism development. Cultural events, such as big-name operas and opera festivals in this case, attract tourists from both domestic and international spheres, and accessibility communication in a welcoming, clear, and informative way becomes a deciding factor for visitors with access needs. In the realm of event tourism, where information prior to the travel is sourced from websites and social media more often than not, this is especially relevant, as it plays a key role in the planning for one's travels. What this thesis shows is that these institutions could benefit from moving towards genuine engagement, more than the mere compliance-based language. Adding testimonials may seem like a menial addition to some, but it can serve as the push somebody may need in order to finally book a visit.

While this study offers some insight into how the selected opera houses communicate about their accessibility offerings and features online, there are some routes for future research to explore. An example could be a wider comparative study that reaches across more diverse types of cultural institutions, such as theatres or museums. This could uncover whether there are similar framing patterns that show up across the wider cultural sector. Including audience perspectives, namely those of visitors with disabilities, would benefit potential future research in the understanding of how the different communication strategies are perceived and experienced.

Optionally, exploring accessibility communication within a much more tourism-focused context could be an interesting area of research, potentially collaborating with different destination marketing organisations (DMOs). There is a wide array of reasons why people want to and choose to travel to locations with such cultural, and often historical, ambience or impact, and finding a way to investigate those reasons and how organisations could tap into the different markets could be an interesting angle to take for future research.

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