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Comparative Analysis of Social Representations, Attitudes and Behaviours Towards Paralympic Sport in Germany, France, and Cameroon

Abstract

Disability is a commonly encountered and apparently self-evident concept which we encounter on a daily basis in our societies and the media. Yet, this concept is actually contentious and does not readily lend itself to a consensus understanding, as several models have been used to explain disability. It is common sense that the concept of impairment is as old as *Homo sapiens*. The concept of disability—as a response to impairment—might also be as old as *Homo sapiens*, and has often been used by scientists to assess the solidarity level of prehistoric human groups or societies.

Unlike the concept of disability, that of high-performance disability sport (hereafter often referred to as Paralympic sport) is recent in the millennia-long history of sporting and physical practices (Schantz & Gilbert, 2012a, b). This recent phenomenon struggles—along with its practitioners—to meet the same level of acceptance and “naturalisation” as its Olympic counterpart (Silva and Howe, 2018). This work is an inquiry into our current society’s response to impairment in a sporting context, aiming to analyse it from a mixed social psychology and marketing standpoint—that is, researching variables that can help us to describe, explain, understand and model people’s Paralympic sport consumption behaviour(s) from an inter-national perspective.

Compared to its Olympic counterpart, Paralympic sport has received very little attention from social scientists. Among the few existing works of social science on Paralympic sport, the overwhelming majority has been conducted using a qualitative methodological approach. Very few studies have investigated people's Paralympic sport consumption behaviour(s) from a quantitative perspective. While these quantitative efforts have been exclusively based on a single theoretical approach for explaining Paralympic sport consumption behaviour, and geographically carried out in a single city, this work offers to analyse and deepen from a syncretic and quantitative perspective the



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understanding of people's consumption behaviour towards Paralympic sport during the Tokyo (2021) Paralympics.

It is theoretically grounded in (1) the revised theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), (2) the theory of social representations (Moscovici, 1961), (3) the North American motives and constraints (Kim and Trail, 2010, 2011) and points of attachment (Trail, Robinson, Dick and Gillentine, 2003) theories of sport consumption behaviour, and (4) the theories of media influence on groups' perceptions (McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Gerbner 1967), and it was geographically carried out in three countries: Cameroon, France and Germany.

Due to the conjectural Covid-19 situation that compelled the International Paralympic Committee to stage the Tokyo (2021) Paralympics without (onsite) spectators, and the fact that media has already been well established as the main channel through which people experience Paralympic sport (Schantz and Gilbert, 2012a, b, Brittain, 2016), we operationalised Paralympic sport consumption behaviour into Paralympic sport media consumption behaviour and word-of-mouth. However, we gave priority to Paralympic sport media consumption in the interpretation of the results.

The results suggest that at an international level, the affective attitude is the only direct predictor of Paralympic sport media consumption. Besides this cross-country predicate, while knowledge, past behaviours, and media publicity are direct predictors of Paralympic sport media consumption in Cameroon, social norms and national identity are direct predictors of Paralympic sport media consumption in France, and media publicity, national identity and past behaviours are direct predictors of Paralympic sport media consumption in Germany. On the basis of these results, we have made several recommendations to national and international Paralympic sport governing bodies and media for increasing the Paralympic sport audience.