LGBTIQ+ Inclusion in the workplace and the Response of Foodservice Industry: A study on Vancouver Visitor Destination

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Introduction

Liddle et al. (2004) argued that "Workplace climate matters" (p. 33). This statement is truly supported by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and other sexually and gender diverse (LGBTIQ+) communities. Over the last two decades, this community has substantially received significant attention about their liberties globally. LGBTIQ+ community has also been significantly affected by the presence of support and hostility perceived at their workplaces (Velez et al., 2013). More than half of gays and lesbians have experienced bullying or been fired at work (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001). Further, there have been many incidences that have shown the clash of global standards and traditional values. For instance, foreign companies were banned to sponsor LGBTQ+ events by the Singaporean government (Lewis, 2016).

Recently LGBTQ+ inclusion has become highly relevant to many global businesses and received much scholarly attention (Blanck et al., 2020). The United Nations (UN) has demanded that business enterprises should advocate for LGBTIQ+ inclusion and act as active agents of change (Scolaro, 2020). However, there are existing disparities between and within the countries in respect of LGBTIQ+ rights, such as gay and transgender rights that are not well developed in Switzerland (ILGA-Europe, 2015).

There is a growing number of organizational studies that have found LGBTIQ+ community people face numerous workplace discrimination in expressing their sexual and gender identities (Holman, 2018), and suggest that it is still a relatively widespread phenomenon (e.g., European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2013). In the USA, it is revealed that between 15 and 66% of gay men, lesbian, and bisexual employees have experienced sexual orientation discrimination at their workplace (Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2012). Thus, these challenges create enormous economic and social costs for LGBTIQ+ individuals (Alonso, 2013). Several studies have stressed that business organizations suffer from loss of potential employees, turnover of qualified employees, and legal costs due to the discrimination against LGBTQ+ employees (Holman, 2018).

Over the last decade, a growing number of large-sized organizations have implemented a wide range of policies and strategies for equal treatment concerning LGBTIQ+ inclusion (Van Beek et al., 2016). For example, leading Fortune 500 companies in the USA have implemented non-discrimination policies and domestic partner benefits for their LGBTIQ+ employees (Ng & Rumens, 2017). Apart from this policy, a growing body of literature has also stated that organizations are adopting numerous LGBTIQ+ inclusion strategies as a part of their diversity and inclusion (D&I) missions that aim to promote inclusive workplaces for employees regardless of their differences in sex, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE), ethnicity,

color, and physical ability (e.g., Capell et al., 2018). However, the results remain controversial because the policies and inclusion strategies may have large, small, or nonexistent effects on an organization's outcomes and the promotion of equity (McFadden, 2015).

In the tourism and hospitality context, LGBTIQ+ is not a new concept; rather it has a long global history of LGBTIQ+ tourism and hospitality development (e.g., Vongvisitsin & Wong, 2021). Literature from tourism and hospitality has examined the LGBTIQ+ community on several primaries focuses including the economic impact of LGBTIQ+ travel market or *'pink dollar/pink-money'* (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2017), social impacts (Hughes et al., 2010), vacation motivations (Clift & Forrest, 1999), destination and travel product selection (Ram et al., 2019), best marketing strategies (Gonzalez et al., 2011), events (Kenttamaa Squires, 2019), and safety (Weeden et al., 2016). A statistic report from LGBT Capital (2020) stated that the global LGBT population has approximately 371 million and contributes US$3.9 trillion in GDP through LGBTQ+ theme products, events, and promotions. However, tourism and hospitality industry organizations are constantly experiencing challenges in supporting LGBTIQ+ equality and promotion of LGBTIQ+ inclusion in the workplace (Jordan, 2017). Thus, LGBTIQ+ inclusive workplaces became an important strategic position in these sectors.

Furthermore, diversity management in the organization brings positive benefits for LGBTIQ+ employees as well as for the organization. For example, Ragins and Cornwell (2007), argued that organizations with a gay-friendly workplace culture are more successful at reducing perceived workplace discrimination than state-level legislation barring discrimination against lesbian, gay men, and bisexual employees. Several earlier studies have found that both a supportive workplace climate and the implementation of LGBTIQ-supportive policies tend to improve the experience of homosexual and bisexual employees (Badgett et al., 2013). Employees working for companies implementing such policies and providing domestic partner benefits tend to be less depressed, distracted, exhausted, and stressed at work (Day & Schoenrade, 2000). However, Barclay and Scott (2006) pointed out that managing diversity which is comparable to managing organizational change, requires identification of workplace issues, proper implementation of strategies, mobilization of responsibilities, and provision of resources. Generally, organizational change is driven by multi-level, cross-functional, and action-oriented strategies (Worren et al., 1999) and the outcomes may differ according to the objective of the change which is either to improve current performance or manage new ways of operations (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). While several studies of LGBTIQ+ communities have been examined from general businesses, hospitality, and tourism organization perspective for enhancing the profitability and customer satisfaction (e.g., Ram et al., 2019; Hughes et al., 2010), from the organizational change context LGBTIQ + inclusion in the foodservice operations have received very limited research attention across North America, especially from Vancouver context (e.g., Vongvisitsin & Wong, 2021). Vancouver is selected as a study place for its unique LGBTIQ-supportive locations. One of its most achievements is the famous "Davie village", which is in the heart of Vancouver. Vancouver is also seen as a safe haven for LGBTIQ people from around the world (CBC News, 2021). Vancouver celebrates a colorful pride parade and is rated one of Canada's largest LQBTIQ-themed parades (Vancouver's Best Places, 2021). In addition, it is recognized that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and other sexually and gender diverse rights in Canada are some of the most advanced in the world, and the Government of Canada has a strong history of commitment

to protect and advance the right of LGBTIQ community both within Canada and worldwide (Queer in the world, n.d.).

To measure LGBTIQ+ inclusion in the foodservice operations, this research, therefore, will explore how foodservice operations achieve LGBTIQ+ workplace inclusion from employees' perspectives through organizational change. Especially this study will be aimed to identify any intervention and challenges that may arise for LGBTIQ + inclusion in different stages of organizational change.

Literature Review

Inclusion

Inclusion can be defined as "the degree to which an employee perceives that he or she is an esteemed member of the workgroup through experiencing treatment that satisfies his or her needs for belongingness and uniqueness" (Shore et al., 2011, p. 1265). While World Bank (2012) defined inclusion as "a process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged based on their identity, to take part in society" (p. 4). Several other studies have described inclusion as a state where employees feel valued, respected, supported, and can contribute fully and effectively to their organizations (e.g., Van Beek et al., 2016).

LGBTIQ+ inclusion in organizations

For promoting equal rights for LGBTIQ+ people, LGBTIQ+ inclusion has been forefronted by many leading global organizations and proposed several solutions to the problem faced by the LQBTIQ+ people at the workplace. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2011) has also addressed various issues, such as refusing to employ and/or promote LGBTQ+ people and depriving them of benefits (e.g., parental/family leaves, pension, and medical insurance). However, gender, disability, race, and knowledge about LGBTIQ+ inclusion remained limited (Ng & Rumens, 2017).

In the business context, inclusion removes obstacles that prevent employees from participating and contributing fully to their organization. This can be specifically related to the LGBTIQ+ inclusion that addresses fundamental issues related to the treatment of LGBTIQ+ employees (e.g., non-discrimination, employee welfare, benefits, and medical coverage (Martinez et al., 2017). LGBTIQ+ inclusion further creates an inclusive environment where LGBTIQ+ employees feel safe and comfortable disclosing their gender identities without fear and discrimination (Holman, 2018). A healthy relationship can also be achieved between LGBTIQ+ employees and their supervisors, and co-workers for the development of continuous psychological support (Anderson, Knee, & Ramos, 2020). Thus, overall well-being, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction increase for LGBTIQ+ employees (Allan et al., 2018).

Further, at the organizational level LGBTIQ+ inclusion has positive business outcomes. To this aspect a number of several studies have shown that promoting LGBTIQ+ inclusion can reduce an organizations' costs, increase revenues, and improve their bottom lines (Lee Badgett et al., 2013),

attract a higher quality of human capital, receive creative and innovative ideas, increase customer base, retain qualified employees, and enjoy a diverse workforce (Van Beek et al., 2016). A growing number of other studies have also supported the positive effects of LGBTIQ+ inclusion including avoiding legal costs by complying with non-discrimination legislation (Lee Badgett et al., 2013; Van Beek et al., 2016), creating a positive brand image, and gaining the reputation by sending the message to others that discrimination against LGBTIQ+ individuals is an unacceptable behavior (Law et al., 2011).

Organizational change

Organizational change has been defined as "the process of adjusting the organization to changes in the environment" (Michael, 1982, p. 68). In another word, Canning and Found (2015) argued that change (organizational change) is the movement from the current known state to a future unknown state. Change management studies generally focus on organizational change at different levels such as individual level (e.g., emphasizing attitudes, perceptions, and emotions) (Castillo et al., 2018), teams, and organizational level (e.g., emphasizing organizational environments and populations, specifically the norms, roles, values and interaction amongst employees (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). However, most of these studies have adopted the classic *freezing-changing-(re)freezing* approach of Kurt Lewin's change theory to refine and guide the implementation of their models (Rosenbaum et al., 2018). Lewin (1947) illustrated a three step-model, namely, unfreezing, moving (or change), and (*re*)freezing. The *'unfreezing'* stage involves emotional disruption or psychological disconfirmation by identifying the status quo, setting goals, creating urgency, and communicating the vision of change (Burnes, 2019). The *'changing'* stage is driven by different intervention strategies that facilitate transition and adaptation towards new behaviors, values, attitudes, skills, competencies, structures, or processes in the organization (Rosenbaum et al., 2018). And the *'(re)freezing'* stage aims to maintain and stabilize the changes through long-term structures and mechanisms (Burnes, 2019). Lewin's change theory model has also been criticized by some authors due to its linearity and teleology which may fail to address complex issues and the dynamic nature of changes (Sturdy & Grey, 2003). However, in recent research, Lewin's change theory has been widely regarded as foundational work in change management studies with consistent and valid results (Rosenbaum et al., 2018). Hence, this theory will be adopted in this study to examine organizational change toward LGBTIQ+ inclusion in the foodservice industry in Vancouver (Carter, 2008).

Methodology

A qualitative approach will be used to investigate the research objective because its exploratory nature is given the limited previous research on the topic (Creswell & Cheryl, 2017). Qualitative methods are inherently useful in examining the daily lives where people live, work, and interact (Yin, 2011), and are therefore appropriate and are a useful instrument for this study.

As a part of the exploratory nature of this study, individual semi-structured face-to-face interviews will be conducted to allow detailed information to be gathered, providing an opportunity for the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee's responses (Weiss, 1994). The sample of foodservice operations will be acquired from telephone directories and websites that maintain extensive foodservice business addresses. A purposive sampling and non-probability method will be used not only to gathering information but also to completing the interviews as quickly and as

cost-effectively as possible (Neuman & Robson, 2009), and "the results can almost be considered to constitute a population" (McBurney & White, 2004, p. 248).

Conclusions

Overall, the outcomes of this study will provide valuable knowledge and directions to develop clear and informed strategies for the foodservice operations wishing to adopt LGBTIQ+ inclusion at their establishment in Vancouver and Canada as a whole.

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