Guest editorial: (In)equalities in hospitality and tourism – exploring diversity and equity issues

Hospitality and tourism (H&T) industry (including airlines, hotels, resorts, cruise ships, restaurants, etc.) is one of the most important sectors of the economy. It is a major source of employment, where the share of part-time, temporary or seasonal work and self-employment is generally higher than in the overall economy (International Labour Organization [ILO] 2014 ILO] 2014, 2017). Very often, H&T employment requires little or no formal training, and work is associated with precarious working conditions, such as low wages, long and unpleasant working hours, high work pressure, etc. (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions [Eurofound] 2004; ILO, 2014). The H&T industry attracts mostly young people, migrants, members of the LGBT community and women (Kalargyrou and Costen, 2017), with the latter making up as much as 60–70% of the global H&T workforce (ILO, 2014, 2017).

Although international tourism in 2022 continued to recover from the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, it still "remained 61% below 2019 levels" (World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2022) according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer 2022. The H&T workforce has been and continues to be severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
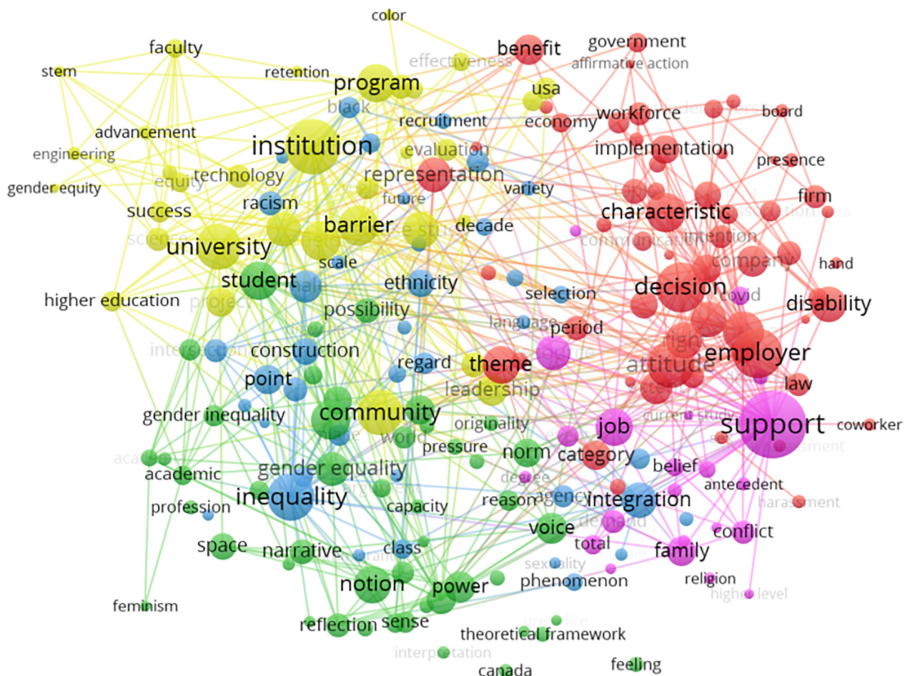
We invited contributions addressing labor and employment in the H&T industry in order to present various perspectives on this important topic concerning vulnerable groups of workers and to draw attention to widespread precarity in this sector. The idea for this special issue was inspired by a professional development workshop (PDW) organized by this guest editors' team for the first virtual Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management (AOM) in 2020 with an impressive and inspiring panel of internationally known scholars: Jean Helms Mills, Albert J. Mills, Dennis Nickson, Renate Ortlieb, Anna Schneider, Alexander Trupp and Chris Warhurst. With the PDW, we aimed to raise awareness for the (in)equalities faced by workers in the H&T sector by discussing issues of gender, race and class and to identify ways to address them. We were encouraged to host this special issue by Eddy Ng, then PDW chair of the AOM *Gender and Diversity in Organizations (GDO)* division [1].

To highlight the significance of the various contributions on H&T published in *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal (EDI)* and identify prospects to further research in this field, we conducted a semantic network analysis using VOSviewer. We identified high-frequency words of all the 627 articles' titles and abstracts published in *EDI* since 2010 [2] and generated a semantic network map (Figure 1). The main advantage of using a semantic network analysis lies in its ability to systematically and objectively identify thematic trends. From the initial item bank, several items were deleted (e.g. study, sample, size, qualitative, quantitative, data collection) to refine the cluster results. The semantic network map helped capture the diversity of subject categories: The analysis revealed five distinct yet overlapping regions: (1-red) workforce issues, (2-purple) support structures, (3-yellow) institutional context, (4-blue) equality/inequality discourse and (5-green) gender equity research.

On the right side, the red "workforce" cluster was linked to "employer" (55 occurrences), "decision" (55), "attitude" (52), "behaviour" (45), right (40) and disability (39). Also noticeable in this region were "representation", "benefit", "diversity management" and "implementation". A prominent theme – disability – encompassed disability disclosure

Figure 1.
Semantic network map

discussions, disability discrimination at work, disability rights and disability inclusion initiatives.

The red cluster on workforce issues was semantically close to the purple cluster on support structures, which had links to "job" (41), "resource" (38), "family" (32), "conflict" (26) and, of course, "support" (75). The support structures include supportive working environment, pro-minority policies and supportive legislation. Also visible within purple cluster were LGBT+ employees experiences at work, work–life balance and parenthood as well as conflict management. Both purple and red clusters explore workforce issues, with strong accent on employer biases and discrimination, support and inclusion initiatives and conflict resolution.

Grouped on the left, but more spread out and intertwined were clusters (3-yellow) institutional context, (4-blue) equality/inequality discourse and (5-green) gender equity research. The institutional context (yellow) dominated the left, with links to "institution" (61), "university" (50), "community" (50) and "barrier" (44). The latter encompassed institutional barriers to career advancement as well as barriers to information flow. Also prominent in the yellow region were inclusive education and issues of diversity in academia. The blue cluster, largely defined by discourse on inequality (52), was more thematically intertwined with the other two clusters (yellow and green) compared to the rest. With a focus on social constructs (29) and policies of integration (39), it was semantically close to the green cluster. The green cluster on gender equity had two distinct subsets: impact of gender (in)equalities (61), restrictive norms (31) and research designs with students as subjects (42). The use of students as subjects was quite common.

A search of the Scopus database revealed that research focused on H&T issues has yet to gain a strong foothold within *EDI*. Of the 627 articles analysed, less than 2% had hospitality

and/or tourism specific focus. Most articles were published after January 2020, with 50% published in 2022. Regarding the geography of publications, the articles were not limited to any geographical region and had a broad international coverage.

The H&T subjects considered in *EDI* were related to employee wellbeing, barriers to career progression, antecedents and consequences of workplace sexual harassment, migrant workers in precarious employment and various discriminatory practices embedded in organizational cultures. Many adopted a gendered approach that considered the experiences of men and women. Areas for further research include looking at the disability employment in H&T, religious literacy and interreligious understanding, as well as discrimination in the lives of racial-ethnic minority employees working in H&T.

Contributions in this special issue

Together with the authors, we contribute to a broader understanding of *EDI* themes in the H&T industry relevant for scholars, practitioners and society at large. We are delighted to share with you the six contributions in this special issue with a brief summary of each in the following.

The first article, "Reflections on the evolution of a long-term study of airline cultures: an interview with Albert J. Mills and Jean Helms Mills" by *Vanessa S. Bernauer* originated from the conversation in the PDW mentioned above. The article is based on the conversation with Albert J. Mills and Jean Helms Mills about their lifelong research experiences in the field of organizational culture and workplace discrimination, particularly in the airline industry. They provided insights and reflections on their motivations for this research, their methodological journey, the challenges they faced and ways forward.

Ulla Forseth also focused on this exciting research field of airlines. In this special issue's second article, entitled "Take-off, turbulence, and turnaround. Constitution of gender and emotional labour in Scandinavian aviation in three eras", she highlights changes in the work nature of cabin crews from the 1970s to the present. From glamorous, feminized and temporary work to professionalization with a more diverse workforce and full-time employment to a time when cabin crew work is devalued, precarious, temporary and very demanding, e.g. in terms of emotional labour.

The third article "'You can call me Susan!' Doing gendered class work in luxury service encounters" by *Vanessa S. Bernauer, Barbara Sieben and Axel Haunschild* takes up the airline field by investigating the service encounters of workers and customers in the luxury segments of hotels and airlines. They conceptualize "gendered class work" by pointing out intersecting patterns of inequality reproduction, such as perceptions and practices of status enhancement as well as status dissonance and gender practices and meanings in service work.

The fourth article, entitled "Robotic life of casino employees: exploring well-being dimensions in the gambling industry in Malaysia" by *Kamelia Chaichi, Alexander Trupp, Mageswari Ranjanthran and K Thirumaran,* explores the dire consequences on employee well-being exacerbated by the pandemic. The findings indicate that employees face challenges in achieving work–life balance due to irregular working hours, insufficient break time and managing customer temper tantrums, among other factors. The study suggests a need for better working conditions, counselling support for stress management and creating promising career pathways.

The fifth article is entitled "Board gender diversity, firm performance and corporate financial distress risk: international evidence from tourism industry". *Lee Kin Wai and Tiong Yang Thong* examine how contextual factors, such as country-level corporate governance structures, economic empowerment of women and economic crisis, affect the association between the proportion of female directors on boards and firm performance or corporate financial distress risk in the tourism industry.

This special issue's last article "20 years of workplace diversity research in hospitality and tourism: a bibliometric analysis" by *Zohre Mohammadi, Abhishek Bhati and Ed Ng* charted the development of diversity research in H&T as a field of study. The authors are interested in how diversity has been studied, where diversity scholarship has been published, who are the leading diversity scholars and whether the scholars work has been influential. In addition, the authors identified the institutions and countries that contribute significantly to diversity scholarship in H&T. They propose a future research agenda and suggested benchmarking the metrics from H&T outlets to a broader set of management and organization journals. Findings show diversity research in the H&T workplace is limited to work/life balance, and gender equality and generation therefore encourage more H&T research attention to focus on race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, migrant workers and workers with disabilities.

The six papers in this special issue provide important insights into how equality, diversity and inclusion are interwoven in precarious forms in the H&T industry. The precariousness of work environments and inequalities in H&T addressed draws our attention to the need to give voice to this vulnerable group of workers from diverse (and intersecting) backgrounds. In addition, this special issue's articles contribute to promoting *EDI* issues among various actors in the field by helping to inform research, practices, legislation and policies.

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Notes

1. Renamed in 2022 in AOM's *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)* division.

2. After the renaming in 2010 from Equal Opportunities International.

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