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## **EXPLORING THE GENDER GAP IN THE HOTEL AND RESTAURANT INDUSTRY**

Gender inequality is a significant issue that is still present in our society at the local, national, and global levels. Not only does it affect the lives of individual men and women, but inequality also slows economic growth and hinders development. The unequal social dynamics between women and men impede the effectiveness of policies, institutions, and processes, resulting in widespread exclusion from decision-making and limiting many people's ability to reach their fullest potential. The consequences of gender inequality can be far-reaching and complex, affecting individual well-being and societal progress.

The hospitality industry is not immune to the issue of gender inequality, which can have a significant impact on service quality, workplace safety, customer

satisfaction, and ultimately, the profitability of the business. In addition to limiting the career opportunities and earnings potential of female employees, gender inequality in the hospitality sector can also contribute to a culture of discrimination and harassment, which can drive employees away and harm the overall culture of the organization.

Addressing gender inequality in the hospitality and service industries is not only a moral obligation but also a strategic imperative for businesses seeking to remain competitive and thrive in the age of social consciousness. By prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion in hiring and training practices, and working to create a culture of respect and belonging for all employees, hotels and restaurants can not only build a more equitable workplace but also better serve their guests, attract and retain top talent, and drive bottom-line growth.

Over the past decades, Ukraine has made significant progress in ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all spheres and has acceded to all major international treaties on gender equality and women's rights: The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and its Optional Protocol, and relevant ILO conventions [1].

The Ukrainian gender distribution by occupation in general terms repeats the global situation, where the most «female» areas are health care (61% of employed women) and education (59%), the most «masculine» - manufacturing industries (only 23% of employed women), energy and mining (only 25% of employees are women) and information technology (27%). The only exception is financial activities, in which women predominate in Ukraine: 72,1%, as opposed to 41% in the world. Also, women are most in demand in such areas as education, hotel and restaurant business (about 40% of vacancies in these areas contain an indication of the gender of the job applicant) [2-4].

The hotel and restaurant industry in Ukraine is a dynamic and rapidly growing sector, with a diverse range of job opportunities available for women. That's why there are occurring more and more jobs for female employees. A significant number of women are employed in this industry in a variety of roles, including:

- Front-of-house positions. This includes roles like receptionists, hosts, bartenders, waiters, and floor staff. Women in these positions are responsible for providing guest services, ensuring guest satisfaction, and maintaining a professional appearance.
- Back-of-house positions. Women can also work in the kitchen as chefs, cooks, banquet servers, and kitchen helpers. They are responsible for preparing and serving dishes, as well as maintaining proper hygiene standards.
- Management positions. Women can also work in management positions, such as hotel managers, assistant managers, and catering managers.
- Cleaning and housekeeping staff. Women can also work in roles that require extensive cleaning and maintenance, such as housekeepers, cleaning staff, and laundry staff.
- Sales positions. Women are responsible for selling hotel or restaurant services to customers, including corporate events, weddings, and other special occasions.

The State Statistics Service of Ukraine estimated the total population of the country (excluding Crimea and some areas beyond the control of the Government of Ukraine) on 1 January 2022 at around 41 million [5].

This indicates that there is an increasing demand for high-quality services in the tourism and hospitality sector. Moreover, the population growth has also created an opportunity for women to enter the workforce in various roles, including those related to hotel and restaurant services. We can surely say that our country is taking steps to tackle gender-based discrimination and provide equal opportunities to women.

In conclusion, while there are still challenges and barriers that women face in the hotel and restaurant industry in Ukraine, the future is hopeful given the current population trend and the government and corporate efforts to address them. By continuing to strive for gender equality, the industry can create a more inclusive and equitable environment that benefits both women and men.

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